

106 I Know You

Eve 1

I did not miss a beat. "You," I replied, praying that my voice kept stable. "You hurt me, just now." I lied. I gritted my teeth, fighting back the scream that wanted to launch out my mouth.

His eyes narrowed to slits. "You are lying," his voice was a low rumble that revibrated in my gut, turning my blood to ice. It was a voice that promised blood and retribution.

I rolled my eyes, sticking to the story. "Here you go again." I muttered, with an exasperated sigh. "You just hit me and you tell me that I am lying."

He took a step towards me, my body betraying my panic as I froze. "You must really take me for a fool." He ground out, his jaw flexing.

I caught myself and took a leisurely step back, acting like his suspicion did not rattle me in the slightest. "You are really something." I mumbled as I tried to exit the ring, putting more distance between us.

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But in a motion so fast that I almost could not comprehend it, he swallowed the distance between us. He trapped me in ...a cage of his own making, his arms braced against the ropes on either side of me. I had nowhere to go, the tension between us sharp enough to slice through steel.

"Let me out," I said evenly, forcing my voice to stay steady despite the throbbing in my shoulder. "We're done here."

"Not until you tell me the truth," Hades growled, his eyes boring into mine. "What are you hiding, Red?"

I met his glare head-on, refusing to flinch. "I'm not hiding anything," I said, my tone laced with irritation. "You hit me, it hurts. End of story."

His gaze dipped to my shoulder, lingering on the way I cradled it, my fingers trembling despite my best efforts to stay composed. "That is not true," he said, his voice dangerously calm. "I know that for a fact."

"No one," I snapped, attempting to duck under his arm. His body moved like a shadow, blocking my escape effortlessly.

"Red," he said, his voice low and menacing,

"Red," he said, his voice low and menacing, sending a shiver down my spine. "Don't make me drag the truth out of you. You won't like how I do it."

The threat hung heavy in the air, and for a moment, I faltered. My heartbeat thundered in my ears, but I couldn't let him find out—not about Jules, not about the cameras.

"I already told you," I bit out, summoning every ounce of defiance I had. "I'm fine. You hit me, and I'll get over it."

Hades leaned in closer, his breath brushing against my ear. "You're a terrible liar, little wolf. You forget who I am. I will find out."

A spark of anger flared in me, giving me the courage to push back. "Then go ahead," I challenged, straightening despite the agony radiating from my shoulder. "Investigate. Stalk me. Interrogate me."

His jaw worked as he glanced from my injured shoulder to my face, grey eyed darkened to almost black. "I won't do that. You are hurt. I will simply check the security footage."

My heart did a flip in my chest but I kept my face straight. "Why can't you just believe that you

He ran his hand through his hair, frustration radiating off him in waves. "You're not the type of woman to crumble from a punch," Hades bit out, his voice rough, filled with frustration that felt like it could shatter the air around us. His stormy gaze locked onto mine, the intensity almost unbearable. "You're stubborn. Resilient. Fierce in a way that leaves others shaking in their boots. You'd march through fire, teeth bared, before admitting you're in pain."

I blinked, startled, my defiance faltering under the weight of his words. His anger wasn't just frustration—it was layered with something raw, something I wasn't ready to name.

"You think I don't notice?" he snapped, taking a step closer, his presence swallowing the space between us. "I've trained warriors, Red. Men and women who've faced death a hundred times over. And none of them have the endurance you do. You've got this maddening way of refusing to bend, refusing to break, no matter what gets thrown at you."

My breath hitched, the ache in my shoulder momentarily forgotten. His words weren't just an accusation—they were a challenge.

"And that's why this lie of yours pisses me off," he

"And that's why this lie of yours pisses me off," he growled, his voice dropping to a dangerous low. His eyes bored into mine, cutting through every wall I'd built. "You think I can't tell when you're hiding something? You think I don't notice every wince, every flicker of pain you try to mask? You think I don't see how goddamn strong you are, even when you don't want to be?"

I opened my mouth to retort, to deny it all, but the intensity in his voice—his words—struck deeper than I expected.

"You've got a fire in you," he continued, his tone darkening, his jaw tightening as he leaned in closer. "The kind that makes people stop and stare, whether you realize it or not. The kind that makes me push harder, because I know you can take it. And you're going to stand there and tell me this pathetic excuse for a story, like I don't know exactly what you're capable of?" 4

My heart pounded, my chest tightening as the truth in his words hit me like a blow. I wanted to shrink under his gaze, but some stubborn part of me refused.

His gaze softened, but only slightly, and his voice dropped, losing some of its harshness but none of its power. "I see you, Red. Every damn day, I

His gaze softened, but only slightly, and his voice dropped, losing some of its harshness but none of its power. "I see you, Red. Every damn day, I see what you're made of. And it's not someone who'd crumble under a little pain. So tell me the truth—because you and I both know this isn't it."

I swallowed hard, the walls around me threatening to crack under the force of his words. For a fleeting moment, the urge to confess bubbled to the surface, but then Jules' face flashed in my mind, and I steeled myself. 4

"You're wrong," I said, my voice trembling but steady enough. "I'm just a woman who got hurt. Nothing more, nothing less."

"Red..." I was stunned by the pleading in his voice. It was like seeing another glimpse of the man from last night. "You know I will find out."

"Then find out," I almost snapped from shock, my voice far more sure than I felt. "Just do it."

"I can't," he muttered.

My brows rose. "Why?" I found myself asking.

"I want you to tell me," Hades muttered, his voice softer but no less intense. His eyes, still darkened with frustration, searched mine for something—anything—that I wasn't willing to

His words hit me harder than his punch ever could. I stared at him, the resolve in his expression cutting through my defenses. This wasn't just about his anger or his need for control—it was personal. He wanted me to trust him, and that realization shook me to my core.

"I don't owe you anything," I said, my voice quieter now but firm. "You don't get to demand pieces of me just because you're curious."

His jaw tightened, and he let out a humorless laugh, the sound laced with bitterness. "Curious? Is that what you think this is? You're wrong, Red. Dead wrong."

"Then what is it?" I shot back, anger flaring in my chest. "Why does it matter so damn much to you? Why can't you just let it go?"

"Because you matter," he snapped, the words tumbling out before he could stop them. His eyes widened slightly, as if he hadn't meant to say it out loud, but he didn't take it back. Instead, he doubled down, his voice quieter now but no less forceful. "You matter more than you realize, and it disturbs me to see you hurting and lying about it like it's nothing." 2

I froze, his words stealing the air from my lungs. The air between us crackled with tension.



I froze, his words stealing the air from my lungs. The air between us crackled with tension, neither of us willing to break the silence first. His gaze bore into me, and for the first time, I saw a vulnerability in him that he worked so hard to hide.

"You don't know me," I said, my voice barely a whisper. "Not really." The first truth I ever told.

He shook his head, a small, humorless smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "You think I don't? I know you better than you think. I see the way you carry the weight of the world on your shoulders, pretending it doesn't crush you. I see the fire in your eyes, even when you're drowning in pain. And I see the way you try to push people away, even when you're desperate for someone to pull you back."

His words left me breathless, my chest tightening as I fought to hold on to my composure. He was too close, physically and emotionally, and it was suffocating.

"You don't know what you are saying. I am close to---"

"That help?" He snapped. "Kael? But you don't really know them, just like they don't know you."

"I'm already there," he said, his voice softening but losing none of its intensity. "And I'm not leaving until you tell me the truth."

I kept my mouth shut.

"What are you hiding, Red?" He asked, not demanded. I realised that he was not just talking about my shoulder, it dawned on me with a jolt. He knew I was hiding something, there were secrets he was not privy to. He wanted me to tell him that truth. To tell him everything.

My mouth opened, the words that would damn both of us on the tip of my tongue. I caught myself. "What are you hiding, Hades?" I tossed his question back at him.

Something shifted instantly, his grip on my arm tightened. "Do you really want to know?" His voice was distorted, another voice speaking with him.

A chill ran down my spine, my blood turning to ice, but my horror had only just begun. The whites of his eyes bled black, the stormy grey of his irises morphing into an eerie, glowing red. His grip tightened like a vice, and his voice—no, voices—echoed, a distortion of something ancient and unearthly.

"You don't want to know," the two voices—one his, the other guttural and alien—merged into a single, haunting sound.

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