

140 Him

Her eyes snapped to mine, wide with disbelief and betrayal. She clenched her fists under the table, clearly fighting the urge to swat at me. I offered her nothing but a calm, unreadable smile as I poured her a glass of wine, careful and deliberate with each motion. 1

"Hades," she hissed through gritted teeth, leaning in slightly as if proximity would make her threat more effective.

I swirled the wine in my glass, the deep red liquid catching the low light. It was not tasty without the blood but I wanted to abstain for her. "I don't recall you being this jumpy during training. You seemed to handle worse without a sound."

Her glare sharpened. "I wasn't wearing a dress during training." She was not talking about the dress.

"Ah." I sipped my wine slowly. "That does change things, doesn't it?" 1

She squirmed, her spine stiffening as the device buzzed again—just briefly, but enough to send a shiver racing down her body. I could practically



see the heat creeping up her neck, the struggle to maintain composure under the weight of so many curious gazes.

I set my glass down with a soft clink. "Consider this a lesson in restraint, Red. You always want to be untouchable. Now's your chance to prove it."

Her fingers tightened around the stem of her glass, but she forced a neutral expression, lifting the wine to her lips as if the faint tremor wasn't there.

Beneath the table, her heel collided sharply with my shin. I swallowed a chuckle. "Careful," I murmured, voice silk-soft. "You're drawing attention." 1

Her eyes flicked toward the table across from us, where two Lycans—Alphas by their posture—sat watching. One of them smirked knowingly. 1

I pressed the button again.

She stiffened, a sharp inhale barely muffled by the wine glass. The flicker of tension in her shoulders was subtle, but I caught it. So did they.

"You..." she mouthed, setting her glass down with controlled precision. Her nails dug lightly into



the tablecloth, as if anchoring herself.

I leaned in, brushing my lips just over the shell of her ear. "Would you prefer I turn it higher?" My hand slipped to the small of her back, lingering at the zipper just below her waistline. "Or should I remind you why you agreed to this dinner in the first place?"

Her eyes darkened, though not with anger this time. Something else stirred there, something she fought to keep at bay. "I agreed because it is my punishment. I had no choice," she whispered back.

"Technicality." I eased back in my chair, fingers tapping lightly against the button. Her pupils dilated just slightly at the movement, enough to make me consider pressing it again.

But I decided to grant her mercy—brief as it would be.

"For now," I added, letting the threat linger.

A waiter approached, setting down two plates with a bow. As the food was laid out, she busied herself with cutting into her steak, avoiding my gaze altogether. Her jaw tightened as if that alone would keep her from snapping.



I smirked, lifting my fork. "Eat up, Red. You'll need your strength tonight."

Her hand paused mid-cut, eyes flicking to mine. The soft click of metal against porcelain filled the air as she set her knife down with deliberate care.

I watched her carefully, the faint flicker of rebellion simmering beneath her cool facade. She stabbed at her food again, but I could tell the battle wasn't with the steak—it was with me.

"As this is our first date, I want to you to tell me about yourself." 1

She ignored me.

I leaned back in my chair, swirling the glass of wine lazily between my fingers. "You know, for someone who is my date, you're not very talkative."

She didn't look up. "We're married, Hades. It is not necessary and I don't need to entertain you."

I smiled. "Oh, but you do."

Her knife slowed, and she finally raised her eyes to mine. They gleamed with barely contained irritation.

"Is that so?"

I held her gaze, letting the weight of my silence confirm it. The tension stretched between us, thick and unyielding.

Her lips pressed together, but she didn't speak.

A shame, really.

I casually slipped my hand beneath the table and pressed the button. This time, I turned the dial higher.

She stiffened instantly.

Her fork scraped against the plate, and I caught the slight tremble in her wrist as the sensation coursed through her. She clenched her thighs beneath the table, her breath hitching—audible enough that the Alpha from the next table glanced over.

Her eyes snapped to me, wide with disbelief and murderous intent.

I arched a brow. "Problem, Red?"

Her chest rose and fell quickly, but she swallowed whatever sound threatened to slip.

"You will regret this," she ground out, barely audible.

"Perhaps." I smirked. "But right now, you're the



one struggling to keep it together. If you want it to stop, all you have to do is answer one simple question."

Her grip tightened on the knife, knuckles turning pale.

"No."

I pressed the button again—higher this time.

Her back arched just slightly, and a strangled sound caught in her throat. Her nails dug into the tablecloth, as if she could anchor herself physically against the sensations wrecking her.

I watched with pure, unrepentant fascination.

She swallowed hard, head dipping as if to mask the blush spreading across her neck.

"You're... insufferable."

"And you're stubborn," I replied smoothly. "It's a miracle we're still alive, really."

Her hand twitched under the table, likely debating if she could reach for my knee and stab it without drawing too much attention. 1

I leaned in, voice dipping to a near whisper.

"Last chance, Red. Entertain me."



She glared, her breath shaky but sharp.

"No."

I pressed the button—and held it.

The moan she tried to suppress slipped free, soft but unmistakable. Her hand flew to her mouth, but the damage was already done.

I watched her slowly lower her hand, eyes blazing with humiliation and fury.

Her voice was breathy but firm.

"You will pay for this."

I smirked, finally easing my finger off the button.

"I'm counting on it."

She grabbed her wine glass, downing half of it in one go.

I gave her a moment to collect herself, letting the quiet between us settle again.

"Now," I said, resting my chin on my hand. "What's your favorite book?"

She set the glass down harder than necessary.

"Inhibitions" by Lois McFadden.

I chuckled under my breath, lifting my own glass.



"What's that about?"

"It's about a frustrated housewife that boils a pot of water and sugar until it turns to hot syrup—and proceeds to dump it on her husband." 1

I raised a brow.

"Creative. Hope you take inspiration."

"You do have a death wish," she commented.

"Why would you say that?" I leaned forward and swiped some sauce off her lips.

"All I want is some sugar."

She bit me. 1

"Careful," I murmured, flexing my hand as I wiped it casually on my napkin. "I'm not the only one here with a dangerous appetite."

Oh, she wanted to play.

I pressed the button.

The response was instant. Her body jerked, lips parting as the device roared to life beneath the fabric of her dress. A delicious flush bloomed across her chest, and I caught the subtle clench of her thighs beneath the table.

But this time—she didn't back down.



Her nails dug into the chair's armrest, and instead of glaring at me, she smiled.

"Push it higher. Let's see how long you last."

The challenge hung between us like a loaded gun, and I found myself studying her a little too closely.

I smirked, dragging the tip of my fork across my plate.

"You are so braven." 1

"Or maybe you're losing your edge," she replied smoothly, swirling the wine in her glass.

I leaned closer.

"Oh, is that so?"

Before she could fire back, I cranked the dial to the highest setting.

Her head snapped up, back arching in her seat as the vibration intensified. A soft, broken sound escaped her lips—one that made the Alpha from across the room glance over again, this time with obvious curiosity.

I didn't break eye contact with her as I lifted my wine, sipping it slowly.

She gripped the edge of the table, cheeks



flushed and breathing shallow.

"Damn you," she mouthed, voice trembling.

"You knew what you were signing up for, Red." I set the glass down, my thumb brushing the button lazily as if daring her to keep pushing.

"And I did tell you there would be war."

Her eyes burned into mine, but she couldn't hold the glare for long—not with the way her body betrayed her.

Finally, with a sharp inhale, she leaned forward, dropping her voice.

"Fine."

"Fine?" I arched a brow. "That's not very convincing."

Her jaw clenched, but she managed to muster a sickly sweet smile.

"My favorite flowers are lilies. I like strong coffee, thunderstorms, and knives."

"Knives?" 1

She licked her lips, eyes narrowing slightly.

"Yes. Specifically the ones that can cut through bone."



Fuck. She was intoxicating—a beautiful weapon for my growing arsenal. A deep, rumbling laugh escaped me.

"Noted."

I eased my finger off the button, and she collapsed slightly into her chair, exhaling slowly through her nose.

"You know," I added, tracing the rim of my glass, "it almost feels like you want me to push your limits."

She shot me a withering look.

"I want you to choke on that wine."

I grinned.

"Why don't you just choke me yourself?"

"Would love to oblige..."

Her eyes flickered, and in a split second, the flush of her skin receded as she paled. 7

"James?" she whispered, horror lacing her voice.