



141 Message From Home

Eve **1**

The world beneath me tilted, my stomach dropping. I gripped my seat, stunned, and for a moment, the world stopped spinning. Everything was muted as I zeroed in on a familiar pair of brown eyes from across the room. It wasn't just a glimpse—his eyes were locked on mine. His stare was unreadable, but it chilled me to my bones.

The weight on my hand made me snap back, and I recoiled like I had been stung.

"Red," Hades' voice pulled me from my frightened haze. My eyes finally tore from James and settled on him.

He turned around, his intense gaze settling on me, worry mingling with suspicion. "Are you alright?" he whispered.

I opened my mouth, but then I realized the entire room had been engulfed in silence. I scanned my environment anxiously, only to be met with open stares from everyone around. Horror and humiliation washed over me like cold water. I must have screamed. Loudly.



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"I... I am... so sorry," I sputtered, my heart beating out of my chest.

I glanced back at where I had seen James, but like a ghost, he was gone. I blinked, putting a hand to my chest. Was I going crazy? **3**

But it had seemed so real. He had seemed so real. I heard a chair shift, scraping against the marble tile. Hades had risen from his seat and came over to my side. He got on one knee and covered the hand that gripped the seat.

Gasps tore through the watching patrons, who now seemed far less interested in their dinner.

The Lycan King was on his knees. For a werewolf.

But from the way his eyes were solely on me, he was not at all fazed—especially when his large hand came up and cradled my jaw, his thumb stroking my cheek.

His eyes retained their intensity, but his voice was soft as he spoke. "What happened?"

I blinked down at him, petrified and stunned. I swallowed hard, feeling the weight of so many eyes pressing down like a suffocating blanket. My skin itched.



"I thought I saw someone," I whispered, my voice echoing in the now silent room.

His brows furrowed, his hand never leaving my cheek. "Who?"

I hesitated, casting a wary glance toward the far corner of the room where James had been—or where I thought he had been.

"James," I finally admitted, the name tasting bitter on my tongue.

Hades' eyes darkened. A flicker of something dangerous crossed his face, but it was gone before I could grasp it. His thumb stilled against my skin. "James can't be here, Red." His tone was even, but I could feel the tension simmering beneath his composure.

"I know," I said quickly, gripping the edge of the table tighter. "I know that, but..." I trailed off, the certainty I'd felt moments ago unraveling. "It was like he was really there."

Hades rose slowly, his hand slipping from my face to rest on my shoulder. His stance shielded me from the prying eyes of the other guests, his broad frame a barrier between me and them.

"You are the only werewolf in this pack," he



whispered. 3

I nodded somewhat numbly. "I need to use the restroom." I rose.

Hades' hand lingered on my shoulder, his grip tightening for just a moment as if he wasn't sure whether to let go. His silver eyes searched mine, the worry etched into his features more apparent up close.

"I'll wait outside the door," he said quietly, his voice leaving no room for negotiation. 1

I nodded, grateful for the small reprieve. As I stepped away, I felt the heat of his gaze following me until I disappeared through the doors of the dining hall.

The marble hallway was cold beneath my feet, and the soft hum of flickering sconces along the walls seemed louder in the silence. I moved quickly, needing the solitude the restroom would bring, but I could still feel Hades' presence hovering just out of sight.

Once inside, I pressed my palms to the cool surface of the sink, trying to calm the tremor that spread through my fingers.

I saw him.

I squeezed my eyes shut, but James' face burned behind my eyelids. The way his eyes had locked with mine—there was no mistaking it. It wasn't just a figment of my imagination.

I turned the faucet, letting the cold water rush over my hands, hoping it would jolt me back to reality.

But was that reality?

I glanced at the mirror, watching the water drip from my fingers. My reflection stared back, pale and shaken.

"Get a grip, Eve," I muttered, but the words felt hollow.

I took a deep breath, steadying myself as I stepped into the nearest stall. The lock clicked into place with a soft metallic sound that somehow felt too loud in the empty restroom. My pulse thrummed loudly in my ears, each beat echoing in the quiet.

I leaned against the door for a moment, willing myself to calm down. It wasn't him. It couldn't have been. Hades was right—James wasn't supposed to be anywhere near this place.

The silence stretched on as I closed my eyes,



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inhaling deeply.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The soft sound startled me, and my eyes flew open. I stared at the door, heart hammering against my ribs.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

Louder this time. Insistent.

"Occupied," I called out, my voice tight.

The knocking didn't stop. If anything, it grew more rapid—more aggressive.

"Just a minute," I said, louder this time, hoping whoever it was would get the hint.

But then I noticed something that made my stomach drop.

The shadow beneath the stall froze me in place. Thick, heavy boots. Men's boots.

This can't be happening.

My breath hitched as I pressed myself harder against the door, as if that thin layer of wood could somehow shield me.

The knocking stopped abruptly, and the silence that followed was somehow worse. I couldn't



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breathe.

I glanced down again. The boots were still there, unmoving.

Why isn't he leaving?

I squeezed my eyes shut, gripping the lock with trembling fingers. Maybe if I stayed quiet long enough, he'd go away.

Seconds stretched into an eternity.

Then, without warning—Bang!

I jolted as the door rattled beneath his fist.

Panic shot through me like ice water.

I could scream. Hades was just outside the door. But my throat closed, horror flooding my veins.

The air felt heavier, pressing down on me as I clutched the lock with white-knuckled fingers. The stall door seemed thinner now, barely a barrier at all. My breath slowed, shallow and uneven, each inhale scraping against my throat like sandpaper.

I stared at the space beneath the door.

The boots were gone.

I blinked. Once. Twice.



Nothing.

No footsteps. No shift in the air. Just... gone.

I swallowed hard, my hand trembling as it hovered over the lock.

Was it safe?

The silence was thick, but that feeling—that prickling sense of being watched—hadn't left.

I exhaled slowly, fingers trembling as I slid the lock back.

The click of the latch felt deafening in the quiet.

I pushed the door open just an inch, peeking out.

Empty.

I stepped out cautiously, every muscle in my body tense. My eyes swept the restroom, expecting to see him lurking somewhere, but all I found was my reflection in the mirror—pale, shaken, and unsteady.

I moved to the sink again, gripping the edge to stop the trembling in my hands.

You're imagining things.

The thought wasn't reassuring.

I glanced up, watching the mirror as if it might



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betray me.

But nothing moved.

And then I saw it—just at the base of the faucet.
Something small and dark wedged into the
crevice where metal met marble.

I frowned, leaning closer.

That wasn't there before.

My fingers hesitated for half a second before I
tugged it free.

It was a small, black memory chip.

I turned it over in my palm, cold and unfamiliar.

I could feel my pulse in my fingertips as I stared
at it.

What is this doing here?

First James. Then the knocking. Now this.

My grip tightened around the chip as my eyes
darted toward the far corners of the restroom,
searching for anything out of place.

Nothing.

I didn't know whether to feel relieved or more
afraid.

I swallowed down the thick knot in my throat



and slipped the chip into the band of my stocking, securing it beneath the fabric.

Get out.

I didn't linger.

The moment I stepped into the hallway, the tension in my chest loosened, but only slightly. 2

Hades was right where I'd left him, leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. His silver eyes flicked to me immediately, narrowing the second he saw my face.

"You're pale," he said, pushing off the wall and closing the distance between us in two long strides. "What happened?"

I opened my mouth, but the words stuck.

His gaze flicked over my shoulder toward the restroom, his jaw tightening.

"What happened, Red?" His voice dipped lower, quieter, but laced with something dangerous.

I forced a small laugh, the sound brittle even to my own ears. "I hope you didn't hear anything..."

He arched a brow. "Hear you using the restroom?" His tone was flat, but there was a sharp edge beneath it. "I'm your husband. And

the restrooms here are soundproof."

I clenched my hands into fists at my sides, suddenly hyper-aware of the small chip hidden in my stocking.

"I thought I heard someone," I admitted, softening my voice. "But when I looked, no one was there."

Hades' eyes darkened, his fingers brushing lightly against my wrist. "That's enough for tonight. We are going home." He eyed me warily. 4

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