



160 Fire Alarm

Hades 1

Jules lay panting on the ground, her hand around her neck trying to soothe her bruised throat. She hacked cough after cough but her gaze never strayed from mine. Tears welled in her eyes, the wildness that mirrored my rage gleaming in them. She looked broken.

Slowly, unnervingly, that feral rage dulled, receding behind a curtain of cold calculation. Her expression smoothed into something unreadable, a blank canvas void of fury or pain.

And then, finally she moved.

Deliberate and slow, Jules pushed herself up from the ground, the tremble in her limbs barely noticeable. Her movements were steady now, precise, as though every action had been rehearsed a thousand times in her mind.

Kael's hand still hovered near his gun filled with silver bullets, his body taut with coiled energy, ready to strike if she made a single wrong move. His sharp gaze pinned her, yet Jules didn't flinch.

Instead, she turned toward him.



And bowed.

Low. Deep.

It was no mockery. No sarcastic show of deference.

It was genuine.

The air tightened further, suffocating the room with its weight.

"I..." Jules' voice was hoarse, the remnants of her scream and strangled cries scraping against her words. She kept her head bowed low, her posture unnervingly submissive. "I was wrong." 2

Kael didn't respond, his body still a wire stretched to the brink.

Jules slowly straightened, her eyes flickering briefly toward me—but gone was the fire. In its place was something colder. More detached.

"I misread the situation," she said quietly, her words carefully chosen. "My outburst was... unacceptable."

I didn't speak.

Didn't move.

I only watched.



Her gaze returned to Kael, softer now. "I apologize, Beta. For the accusation. For the disrespect." 1

Kael's jaw tightened, his silence far louder than anything she could have said.

Then, Jules turned back to me. Her eyes met mine, steady but not challenging. Something flickered deep within them—a flicker of something that could have been regret or something far darker, better hidden.

"And to you, my King." Her voice was softer now, with a strange, chilling calm. "Forgive me for doubting your judgment."

The room felt colder. Heavy. The walls seemed to close in, trapping the tension between us.

I said nothing. The corruption beneath my skin still seethed, but it simmered now, waiting.

Jules straightened fully, her chin tilting just slightly upward. Not in defiance, but finality.

"I will leave," she said simply, her tone quiet but resolute. "And I will not return." 3

Her words hung in the air, settling like dust.

Kael remained still, waiting for my command.



But I didn't give one.

Because in that moment, Jules wasn't a threat. 1

Not in the way she had been before.

No.

Her surrender was too calculated, too precise.

But I let her go.

"Then go," I said, the words low, edged with steel. "Before I change my mind." 2

For the first time, Jules hesitated—but only for a breath.

Then, without another word, she turned and moved toward the door, her steps slow, as if waiting for something.

The door creaked open, spilling a sliver of cold air into the suffocating room and unexpectedly another person pushed the door the outside.

The air in the room turned razor-sharp the moment Ellen stepped through the door. 2

Her presence cut through the suffocating tension like a blade, but instead of easing it, it twisted tighter.

Kael stiffened, his eyes flicking to me briefly,

then back to Jules. His hand inched away from his gun, but his stance remained taut, as if ready to spring at the slightest sign of danger.

Jules, mid-step toward the door, froze in place. 1

Ellen's brows drew together in confusion as her eyes shifted between us, lingering on Jules' bruised throat. 1

"Good afternoon..." Her voice faltered, trailing off as the weight of the room pressed against her.

Her gaze sharpened. "Jules?" Concern laced her tone, but there was something else there too—wariness. "What happened to your neck?"

Jules didn't move.

For a heartbeat, the room was utterly still.

Then Jules blinked, a subtle shift washing over her face as she smoothed the tension in her features.

"Oh, this?" Jules' voice came out softer, surprisingly steady. Her fingers lightly brushed the darkening bruises at her throat, wincing just enough to sell the lie. "I was attacked."

Ellen's eyes widened, alarm flashing across her face. "Attacked? By who?"



Jules hesitated, only for a second.

Then she let out a breathy, bitter laugh. "One of the guards. Got a little too bold, thought he could push his luck." She shook her head, offering a tight, brittle smile. "But it's handled now."

Ellen's eyes narrowed. "Let me see."

Jules tensed.

Ellen took a step forward, her eyes locked on the bruises. "Let me see it, Jules."

Jules' hand instinctively shot up to cover her throat better, but the damage was already visible. Her skin was mottled, angry and purple, a cruel imprint of force. 1

"I'm fine," Jules said quickly, her voice brittle but controlled. "It's nothing."

Ellen didn't look convinced. Her gaze darted to Kael, then to me. Suspicion flared in her eyes.

"Who did this?" she demanded, her voice sharper now. "Tell me the truth."

Jules faltered.

I stepped forward, voice as smooth and cold as steel. "It's been dealt with, Ellen. There's no need

for concern."

But Ellen didn't back down. She stared at me, searching my face for cracks in the explanation.

Her eyes flicked to Kael again, silently questioning.

Kael, without missing a beat, gave a curt nod. "The guard responsible has been removed. It won't happen again."

The lie slid effortlessly from his lips, smooth as glass.

But Ellen's suspicion didn't waned. "Removed? As in punished or—"

"Removed," I said flatly, cutting her off.

Jules seized the moment, forcing a tight smile. "Really, Ellen. It's nothing. I was careless. Got caught off guard." 1

But the tremor in her voice betrayed her.

Ellen's eyes lingered on Jules for a moment longer, doubt shadowing her features.

Then, slowly, she exhaled. "If you say so."

But the unease in her voice was clear.

"Good." My tone was final, brooking no



argument. "Kael, escort Jules out. Make sure she's seen by the deltas."

Kael moved without hesitation, closing the distance between himself and Jules. His grip on her arm was firm but not rough as he guided her to the door.

"Jules will no longer be working as your maid," I announced quickly. I knew that Ellen would be hurt if Jules just disappeared and simply never came back not to speak it worried because of what she had seen today. Her suspicion would only increase. 1

She froze, quickly turning to Jules. "Why?"

Kael and Jules halted.

I gestured for Jules to speak, my eyes narrowing with promise of punishment if she managed for fuck up.

Jules stiffened, her back to Ellen, but I saw the way her shoulders squared—an instinctive reaction to the pressure closing in.

Kael's grip on her arm tightened ever so slightly, a silent warning.

Slowly, Jules turned back to face Ellen. Her expression was carefully composed, softer now,

yet shadowed with something distant.

She gave a shallow, almost apologetic smile. "It was my decision."

Ellen's brows knit in confusion. "Your decision?"

Jules nodded slowly. "I requested to be reassigned."

Ellen's eyes flicked between us, uncertainty tightening her features. "Why?"

There was a brief pause, heavy and dangerous.

Jules' eyes darted to me for the briefest second, and I tilted my head—silent but commanding. Choose wisely.

Jules took a breath. "I realized I needed a change. Things have been... tense lately, and I thought it was best for everyone if I stepped back."

Ellen's frown deepened. "That doesn't sound like you."

Jules forced a hollow laugh, the sound brittle. "Maybe it's time I thought about myself for once." Her fingers grazed her bruised throat, a fleeting, calculated motion. "Clearly, I'm not as careful as I used to be."

Ellen's face softened just a fraction at that, her

suspicion giving way to concern. "But Jules, if someone hurt you—"

"It's over, Ellen," Jules interrupted gently, her voice steady but distant. "I need space. That's all."

Kael moved as if to guide her away again, but Ellen's voice stopped them.

"Where will you go?"

Jules hesitated for the briefest of moments. "I'll be stationed elsewhere," she lied smoothly. "Far from here. Somewhere quiet."

A subtle, satisfied glint flickered in her eyes. A move well played.

Ellen opened her mouth to protest, but I cut in smoothly.

"It's been arranged. Effective immediately."

My voice left no room for argument.

Ellen's mouth pressed into a thin line. Her eyes lingered on Jules, conflicted, but she didn't fight it.

Jules dipped her head, a polite but distant farewell. "Take care of yourself, Ellen."

She walked towards Jules and pulled her in her arms. "Take care, Jules. I am going to miss you."

The embrace was long and I could see Ellen tremble as if she wanted to cry. "Thank you for everything." 1

Jules stiffened and from where I stood, I could see tears glisten in her eyes from sorrow or was it guilt. She definitely required a re evaluation. 3

Ellen pulled back from the embrace, her hands lingering on Jules' shoulders as if reluctant to let go. Her eyes shimmered with unshed tears, and she gave Jules a small, watery smile.

"Wait," Ellen whispered, her voice tight with emotion. "I... I want to give you something before you go." 1

Jules stiffened in Kael's grip, but her face remained composed. Her eyes flicked toward me for the briefest second.

I didn't answer immediately. The room seemed to shrink again, the walls pressing inward, the air coiling with suspicion and unspoken tension.

This was dangerous.

Too dangerous.

Ellen didn't understand the game being played here, the delicate balance I was barely maintaining. Jules was a thread fraying at the

edge of control, and any indulgence could unravel everything.

I opened my mouth to refuse.

But then I saw it—the faint quiver of Ellen's lower lip, the glistening in her eyes, and the way her shoulders hunched in quiet sorrow.

Damn it.

The corruption simmered beneath my skin, urging me to allow. For her. To satisfy her.

Her pain.

And it twisted something deep in my chest.

I ground my teeth, forcing the words out. "Fine."

Ellen's head snapped up, surprise flashing in her eyes.

"Be quick," I added, the words sharp, bitter. "Kael will take her to the Deltas after."

Kael's grip didn't loosen, but his expression remained carefully neutral.

Jules, for her part, remained unnervingly still. No smugness. No defiance. Just... stillness.

"Thank you," Ellen murmured, her voice soft but sincere.



"You will give her later for now she will need to be looked at by the deltas."

She nodded.

Jules and Kael finally walked out the door leaving me and Ellen.

Ellen blinked her tears away and retrieved something from her pocket. It was the phone that I had gotten for her. "I wanted to say thank you."

The small device in her hand caught my eye.

The phone I had given her.

It shouldn't have meant anything. A trivial gift, a necessary convenience. And yet, the sight of it in her hands—her holding onto it like it was something more—unsettled me.

Mine.

The word cut through my thoughts, deep and absolute. A possessive growl rumbling beneath my skin, unbidden and unwelcome.

Mate. Mine.

The bond throbbed faintly, just beneath the surface. Silent, but present. Always there. Clawing at the edges of my control.



I kept my expression neutral, my stance still and composed, but the beast inside me paced, restless and watchful.

Ellen blinked back the tears in her eyes and smiled—small, fragile, genuine.

"I wanted to say thank you," she murmured, holding the phone a little tighter.

Her voice was soft, but it threaded through me like a wire pulled taut.

I didn't move.

Didn't speak.

The words you're welcome sat like a stone in my throat. Pointless. Useless.

Because none of this should matter.

But it did.

Gods, it did.

Her scent curled in the air, sweet and maddening. The bond pulsed again, harder now, like a second heartbeat beneath my own.

Mine.

And yet I said nothing.

Ellen shifted slightly, breaking eye contact.



"I should go," she said quietly, her voice distant. "I need to find Jules' gift before she leaves."

Her words sank like lead in my chest.

Gift. For Jules.

Even now, after what she had seen, she still cared. Still clung to sentiment. To loyalty.

I hated it.

And I hated how it stirred something else in me.

Something worse than rage. 2

I gave a slow, deliberate nod and grin. "You are welcome,"

My voice was cool. Controlled.

But my hands curled into fists behind my back.

Ellen turned, her steps light but hesitant, as though some part of her wanted to say more. Wanted to stay.

But she didn't.

She walked away.

And I let her.

I watched until the door clicked softly behind her.



Then the silence pressed in again.
My jaw clenched, the corrosion of the bond
simmering under my skin. Tight, suffocating.
Mate.
I exhaled slowly, forcing it back.
Not now.
Not yet.
But the beast inside me smiled.
I lit a cigarette and look down at the report just
as the shrill, deafening sound of alarms tore
through the silent stillness of my office.

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