



172 Don't Leave Me

Hades 1

"You've said enough," I said, my voice cold and final. "This is the last time we have this conversation, Cain. The next time I see you, it won't be words we exchange. It'll be blood."

He smiled, a dark, twisted thing that sent a chill down my spine. "Oh, brother, I wouldn't have it any other way. But just remember—when the truth comes out, and she looks at you with the same fear she once reserved for the monsters outside, it won't be me you'll hate. It'll be yourself."

The screen went black, his words lingering in the air like a toxic cloud. I stood there, my chest heaving, my mind racing. He was wrong. He had to be wrong. But his parting words echoed in my mind, a cruel whisper of doubt that refused to be silenced.

Ellen's scream tore through the air like a heated blade, slicing through the oppressive silence of the room. The raw anguish in her voice sent a chill racing down my spine, freezing me in place for the briefest of moments before my body



moved on instinct. I sprinted toward her like a madman, my heart thundering in my chest as her cries echoed again, each one sharper and more desperate than the last.

I found her thrashing on the bed, her body stiff and trembling as if she were caught in an invisible grip, fighting against unseen chains that bound her. Her face was pale, her lips trembling, and tears streaked down her cheeks, shimmering in the dim light like shattered glass. 1

"Please, please," she begged, her voice hoarse and raw, the words spilling out in gasps. "I'm begging you to forgive me. I should have saved you. I'm sorry—I'm so sorry for being weak. I should have tried harder. I should have stopped it. Please..."

Her body shook violently, but she remained rigid, trapped in some twisted nightmare that held her captive. Her hands clawed at the sheets, her nails dragging down the fabric as if she were trying to grasp onto something—anything—to pull herself out of the dark. The sight of her like this, so vulnerable, so broken, was like a knife twisting in my chest.

I dropped to my knees beside her, my hands hovering over her trembling form, unsure of



where to start. "Ellen," I called softly, my voice a low rasp that cracked under the weight of her pain. "Ellen, wake up. It's just a dream. You're safe."

But she didn't hear me. Her lips quivered, and another heart-wrenching sob escaped her, her face contorted in anguish. "I should have saved you," she whispered again, her voice cracking, barely audible over the sound of my racing heart. "Please, forgive me. Don't leave me. I'm begging you. I can't do this alone."

Her words shattered me.

"Ellen!" My voice was louder now, commanding yet laced with desperation. I gripped her shoulders gently but firmly, my hands shaking as I tried to anchor her back to reality. "Ellen, wake up. Please, come back to me." 2

Her head jerked to the side, and she let out another strangled sob, her breaths coming in shallow, rapid gasps. Her lashes fluttered, and for a moment, I thought she was coming to—but then her body tensed again, and her trembling intensified.

I leaned closer, pressing my forehead against hers, my voice soft but insistent. "I'm here, Ellen."



I'm not going anywhere. Please, wake up."

Her breathing hitched, and finally, her eyes flew open. They were wild, unfocused, darting around the room as if she didn't recognize where she was. Tears streamed down her face, and she gasped for air, her chest heaving with the effort.

"It's okay," I murmured, pulling her into my arms without hesitation. Her body was limp against mine at first, but then her fingers clutched at my shirt, gripping it with a desperation that mirrored the ache in my chest.

"Hades..." Her voice was a broken whisper, and then she dissolved into sobs, burying her face against my chest. "You left me. Don't leave me, please. I'm begging you. I can't be alone. I can't—"

Her words dissolved into incoherent cries, and I held her tighter, my hand smoothing over her hair in a soothing rhythm. "I'm here," I said, my voice thick with emotion I couldn't suppress. "I'm here, Ellen. I'm not going anywhere."

Her fingers curled tighter into my shirt, as if she were afraid I would disappear if she let go. "I thought... I thought you left me," she choked out,



her sobs wracking her body. "I couldn't stop it. I tried, but I couldn't stop it, and I thought... I thought you were gone. Please don't go. I can't—"

"Shh," I whispered, pressing a kiss to her temple, my lips lingering there for a moment longer than I intended. "I'm not leaving. I swear it. You're safe now." 1

Her sobs gradually subsided into quiet, hiccuping breaths, but she didn't loosen her grip on me. I stayed there, cradling her against me, feeling the weight of her anguish seep into my own soul. She clung to me as if I were her lifeline, and for the first time in a long time, I felt utterly powerless.

"Don't leave me," she murmured again, her voice barely audible. "I can't be alone."

"You're not alone," I said firmly, my hand cupping the back of her head as I held her close. "You'll never be alone, Ellen. Not as long as I'm here."

She nodded weakly against my chest, her breathing finally evening out, though her tears still dampened my shirt. I stayed with her, my arms wrapped around her like a shield, knowing full well that I wasn't her savior.

I was her storm, her tormentor, the one who



would bring her to her knees. But for tonight, I let myself be her shelter, if only for a fleeting moment.

For moment, I thought back to Cain, his words washing over me like cold water.

She will not fear me when she finds out, she will despise me. 1

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