



177 Awaken Her Wolf, Hades

Hades 1

Amelia's face was etched with distress, her usual calm long forgotten as I replayed the footage of Ellen's episode. When we finished, quiet blanketed us like a heavy shroud.

I heard her swallow, her composed countenance replaced by obvious distress. "She is fractured," her voice was quiet, laced with dread. "If she continues to spiral..." Her eyes met mine, intense and boring into me. "She might never recover."

My pulse skipped, the Flux whirling inside me like a storm barely contained beneath my skin. Amelia's prognosis settled like iron in my chest, heavier than the shadows that clung to me.

I clenched my jaw, my fingers tightening into fists as I stared at the screen—at Ellen, curled into herself, trembling in my arms, haunted by demons only she could see.

Fractured.

My mind rejected the word. She wasn't broken. She wasn't some fragile thing waiting to be lost to the abyss. 1

But the way she looked at me—like she was already slipping through my fingers—

My pulse pounded, the Flux surging in response to my turmoil, writhing like a caged beast.

"She's strong," I forced out, but even I could hear the unsteadiness in my voice. "She's not going to lose herself." Ellen had always been defiant. She would not allow this.

Amelia exhaled sharply, rubbing a hand over her temple. "Strength has nothing to do with it, Hades. Trauma doesn't care how strong you are." She motioned to the screen. "This isn't just nightmares. This is the mind unraveling, the self dissolving. The hallucinations—this is her slipping further into the fracture. If something doesn't change, she won't come back from it."

I forced my breath to steady, but the Flux pulsed, restless. Desperate.

"She's fighting," I said, and I hated the way my voice almost sounded like I was trying to convince myself.

Amelia's gaze softened, but the weight of her words didn't lessen. "And how much longer do you think she can keep fighting before there's nothing left of her?"



Silence stretched, thick and suffocating.

I didn't have an answer.

I looked down at my hands, flexing my fingers as if trying to find something solid to hold onto. The Flux churned, an echo of my own helplessness.

Amelia sighed, her voice gentler this time. "She needs more than just you holding her together, Hades."

My jaw locked. "I won't let her break."

"She's already breaking."

The words sliced through me.

Amelia shook her head, tired. "You can't fight this for her. You can be her anchor, but if she doesn't find a way to pull herself out..." She trailed off, her meaning clear.

I pushed off the desk, turning away before she could see the storm in my expression. "Then I'll find a way," I muttered, more to myself than to her. "I don't care what it takes."

Amelia sighed again, watching me like I was another puzzle she couldn't solve.

"Hades," she murmured, a warning, maybe even a



plea. "It's the hollowing. Our wolves do not only heal our physical body by taking the brunt of harm inflicted, but they also share in the wounds of the mind. I am sure you know this very well. The fact that she has been hollowed further makes this more dire. There is absolutely nothing for her to fall back on, nothing where there should be something. She is lacking, and it will be her undoing," there was a quiver in her voice, her lips trembled. "Without her wolf... all the things she has survived in the past will come back to haunt her mind." 1

I slammed my fist on the table, making Amelia yelp. "There must be something we can do. I have resources, Amelia. I can save her, just tell me what to do," then I remembered. "You said she can take drugs for this."

"Yes, she can," Amelia said carefully, in a way that made my stomach tighten. "But it will come at a cost. I told you before. It could completely sever the little connection to her wolf."

My heart lurched, but the Flux twisted. "It does not matter. They will have to be administered. She needs it..."

"We need her wolf, Hades. This pack needs her wolf," she countered. "I might not know all about



your plan, but I know if we are to unlock what is needed from the blessed twin, we need her wolf. This pack needs her wolf."

"What about her!" I screamed, my tone acidic. "My wife is dying in front of me, and you're talking about what the pack needs?" My voice was raw, my throat burning with the force of my fury. The Flux churned inside me, clawing at my ribs like a caged beast, wild and erratic. 2

Amelia flinched but held her ground. "And if you sever the last thread connecting her to what she is, you won't just lose her wolf, Hades. You will lose her. You might have her back temporarily, but what if something like this happens again? What if she faces yet another harrowing challenge that she cannot surmount? She is surrounded by predators, enemies, for goodness' sake! Will you continue to pump an already unstable werewolf with drugs until she is nothing but a shell? You will lose her whether you like it or not!"

I knew that.

I fucking knew that.

But watching Ellen unravel before my eyes— watching the grief swallow her piece by piece,

watching the ghosts of her past consume her—
was a fate worse than death.

She was slipping.

I could feel it in every shuddering breath she
took, in the way she clung to me like I was the
last thing tethering her to reality.

I was.

I was the last thing holding her together.

And I was losing her.

My mind was in knots at the thought alone.

What would I be without you, Red? 3

I had forgotten the last time her voice didn't
haunt me, the last time her face didn't flash in my
mind. The last time her phantom touches didn't
linger on my skin.

I had been tethered to her long before I read
those results.

I raked a hand through my hair, pacing like a
caged animal, my chest heaving. "You expect me
to just stand by and do nothing?"

Amelia shook her head, exhaustion clear in her
eyes. "No. I expect you to make a choice."



I bared my teeth at her, my wolf snarling beneath my skin. "Choice? What fucking choice? Either I pump her full of drugs and watch the last remnants of both her wolf and her wither away, or I stand by while the hollowing and grief tear her apart from the inside out?"

"Or," Amelia said softly, carefully, like she was stepping across a battlefield, "you give her what she needs to fight."

I stilled.

Amelia took a breath. "Right now, she's fighting out of instinct. Out of survival. But survival isn't enough. She needs something to hold onto, Hades. Something stronger than the fear, stronger than what she has now."

My hands clenched into fists. "She has me."

Amelia's expression softened, but there was something sharp in her gaze. "Then show her that."

I swallowed hard, my train of thoughts ramming into each other, my mind a gruesome cacophony. "How?"

She hesitated, then exhaled, as if coming to a decision. "The bond, Hades."



A cold, sharp silence filled the room.

I stiffened. "What bond?" I never forgot, I could never forget but it suddenly felt better to be oblivious.

"You know what bond." Her gaze was steady, unwavering. "The one you've been resisting. The one she needs." Suddenly what I regretted the most was letting her know. 2

I felt the Flux surge, coiling inside me with something close to rage and anticipation. 1

Amelia took a step forward. "The mate bond was never meant to be left incomplete. If you claim her—truly claim her—you can draw hers out. All you need to do is knot."

My breath caught in my throat.

Anchor.

It would anchor her by luring out her wolf with mine. That was always the plan, but it felt so damn wrong. It felt like a sin. 1

The Flux inside me surged at the idea, desperate, aching. But the other part of me—the man—warred against it.

Because taking that final step meant more than just binding our souls.



It meant surrender.

It meant giving her everything. Every piece of me.

And most dauntingly, taking every part of her.

Parts I would never worthy of. 2

"You said it yourself," Amelia pressed, her voice urgent now. "She's slipping through your fingers. The pack needs her wolf, yes, but you need her. If you give her drugs, there is no coming back."

"No." The word tore from my throat like a growl, raw and violent. My stomach churned, the Flux twisting inside me, snarling in protest.

Amelia's brows furrowed, but I didn't give her a chance to speak before I slammed my fist onto the desk, my vision darkening at the edges. "No."

I turned away from her, chest heaving, hands shaking with the force of my own restraint.

Knot her? Force the bond when she was already hanging by a damn thread?

It felt wrong.

It felt like a violation.

She was weak, fragile in a way Ellen had never been before. She had always been fierce, her

spirit unyielding even when the world tried to crush her. And now...

Now she was drowning.

And I was supposed to claim her? To take that final step while she was at her lowest, her body battered, her mind fractured? 3

My stomach twisted violently, nausea clawing at my insides.

Amelia didn't understand. She didn't see the way Ellen trembled beneath my hands, how she clung to me in her weakest moments, how she whispered things in the dead of night that made my goddamn heart break.

She thought this was a solution.

But to me, it felt like *theft*. 1

I raked both hands through my hair, pacing like a caged animal, my mind in knots. "She's not ready for this," I ground out, my voice hoarse. "She's barely there, Amelia. I won't—" My throat bobbed, the words catching. "I won't take something from her when she's not in the right state of mind to give it."

Amelia sighed, but I could hear the edge of frustration creeping into her voice. "Hades,



listen to me. This isn't about dominance, or control, or some archaic power play. This is about saving her."

I snapped my head up, my teeth bared. "And you think forcing the bond will save her?"

"She's dying," Amelia snapped back, fire flashing in her gaze. "And you're sitting here hesitating because of your damn morals?" 1

I took a step toward her before I could stop myself, the Flux coiling inside me like a snake ready to strike. Amelia didn't flinch.

"She is my wife," I said, my voice dark, low, a warning. "Not some experiment. Not some fucking vessel for the pack to use. Do you understand that?" 1

What was I saying? Why was I lying to myself?

Amelia inhaled sharply, but she held my gaze, shock etched on her face, realization dawning.

"You love her, Hades," she whispered. 1

Her face fell, pity seeping into her voice.

And I hated it. It hit me like a well aimed blow to the stomach, knocking the wind out of me.

Because she was right. 5