

## 205 Emerald Green

Hades 1

"Felicia and Danielle rode with my brother and father while I handled security protocols, ensuring no one was following. Once they were deep in the woods, following the coordinates, I thought they were safe. I thought I had done my job."

My voice cracked on the last word.

Eve moved closer, rubbing slow, grounding circles into my back. "It was your job," she whispered. "You couldn't have known."

"But—"

"Shh..." She cut me off gently, her voice steady. "Tell me what happened, love."

My chest tightened, but I forced the words out. "Felicia and Danielle were a priority. They were both heavily pregnant—blessings to the pack."

She nodded, never stopping the soothing motion of her hand against my back.

"Then the sound of a helicopter... and that piercing howl."



A chill ran through me, my own words wrapping around my throat like a noose. "It wasn't them. It was something else entirely. I knew. I just... knew."

The darkness was thick, the terrain unforgiving. I could hear the trees collapsing, their trunks snapping under the force of something massive.

"It was plowing through the forest, felling trees with its body. Then came the screams. The fighting. The smell of blood. I knew it would be a massacre."

I swallowed hard, my stomach churning. "The smell of gasoline. Fire. Smoke. It was everywhere."

Eve's hands never stopped moving, keeping me tethered to the present as the past clawed at my mind.

"I ran," I murmured, my voice hoarse. "As fast as I could. But the woods were thick, the terrain a labyrinth. By the time I reached the clearing, the flames were already rising."

The fire raged, swallowing everything in its path. Smoke billowed into the night sky, thick and suffocating, clogging my lungs with every



breath. The stench of burning metal, scorched leather, and blood hung in the air.

"I ran," I repeated, my voice hollow. "But by the time I got there... it was too late."

The convoy was gone—the armored SUVs nothing but twisted, blackened skeletons. The reinforced steel had been shredded like paper, torn apart by something stronger than bullets or explosives.

And the bodies—gods, the bodies.

Eve's fingers pressed slightly harder into my back, but she remained silent. She knew I needed to let this out.

"Leon was ripped to shreds—nothing but ribbons of flesh."

I hesitated, my lips curling bitterly. "And I felt nothing. Not guilt. Not grief. Just... nothing."

Eve didn't flinch, didn't judge. She simply waited.

"Felicia looked dead," I forced out. I shook my head, my throat thick. "She was drenched."

Eve inhaled sharply. "And Danielle?"

I swallowed hard, the memory slicing through me. "She was still alive. Barely. But unless a Delta





materialized from thin air, she wouldn't survive."

I closed my eyes for a moment, but it didn't help. The image was burned into my memory.

Danielle lay on the ground, pinned beneath my father's lifeless body. Lucas has fallen, my father had bloody gouges in his back, I could see where his spine was ripped out.

Blood pooled beneath Daniellle staining the cracked asphalt in glistening patches.

When I pulled my father off her, her eyes opened.

And she smiled.

"She was relieved," I whispered. "That I was alive."

Eve's grip tightened on me, her fingers curling slightly.

"She tried to speak, but she was choking on her own blood. I pressed down on her wounds, tried to stop the bleeding, but she—" My throat closed.

"She just looked at me, Eve. And then she whispered, 'Our baby.'"

Eve inhaled sharply, her body tensing.



I nodded, my jaw clenching. "Her stomach was torn. Our baby was gone. She was dying."

The whir of helicopter blades sliced through the roaring flames, but I barely noticed. My whole world had narrowed to the woman bleeding out beneath me.

Then—I saw it.

A shadow against the burning wreckage.

Not inside the helicopter.

Hanging from it.                    00 00                    0

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I stiffened, my voice turning sharp. "That thing... it wasn't human. It wasn't Lycan either."

Eve's breath hitched. "You saw it?"

I nodded, my fists clenching. "It was massive. At least three times the size of a Lycan, but not just in bulk. The way it moved, the way it latched onto the helicopter like it was weightless—it wasn't just a beast. It was something else entirely."

She swallowed. "You're sure?"

I met her gaze. "I saw its eyes, Eve." My voice was raw. "They were burning. Like embers in the

darkest night. And it was looking straight at me."

The helicopter veered away, disappearing into the night sky.

Then—a scream.

A sharp, shrill wail. Not from pain. Not from the dying.

A baby.

Eve stiffened, her breath catching. "A baby?"

I nodded, my throat tight. "It was coming from Felicia."

She blinked, confusion flashing across her face. "But you said—"

"I thought she was dead," I muttered, jaw clenching. "She wasn't moving. Her body was twisted, broken. But then I saw it—her arms. The way she was curled inward, shielding something beneath her."

Eve's fingers pressed harder into my skin. "She was protecting her child."

I exhaled sharply. "She must have known she wasn't going to make it. But even as she died, she covered him with her own body."





The sirens came next.

Floodlights.

Paramedics.

Soldiers.

Deltas.

Too late to stop the carnage. But just in time to pick up the pieces.

The newborn was still alive.

I dropped to my knees beside Felicia, my hands slick with her blood as I carefully, hesitantly, pried her arms apart.

And there he was.

Tiny. Barely breathing. But alive.

Eve let out a soft breath, her fingers pressing into my back. "A miracle."

"A blessing," I murmured, though the word felt bitter.

Maybe it was grief talking. Or something darker.

Because in that moment—I had wanted him to be mine.

Just for a second.



If he had been, if Danielle had survived long enough to bring our child into the world, I would have had something left of her.

But fate wasn't that merciful.

"Felicia and Danielle looked alike," I murmured. "Enough that, in those first few seconds, with the smoke and blood clouding everything, I let myself believe—"

I swallowed hard. "Then Elliot opened his eyes."

Emerald green.

Felicia's eyes. Not Danielle's.

Not mine.

Eve exhaled, her voice softer. "But you still wanted to hope."

Silence.

Then I admitted, "Yes."

And before I could process any of it, a Delta shouted.

"She's got a pulse!"