

## 211 Scarlet

Eve 1

I watched on, trying to stay grounded, but visions played before my eyes with each new horror that I witnessed. Each was sharp and too fast to make sense of what it meant.

Until suddenly, the bullets began to work.

It finally affected it.

I blinked, stunned. What had changed?

"The bullets did," Rhea muttered in my head.

I took a closer look and noticed the change in the shape from the previous rounds. They had been using platinum bullets before, knowing it was useless to a Lycan, but now they were using silver.

The realization sank in, heavy as lead.

They had drawn out the massacre.

They had let people die on purpose.

Before I could even fully stomach what they had done, Rhea spoke.

"It is to send a message."



"To instill fear in the civilians," I added.

"Exactly," Rhea affirmed. "They are trying to suppress them to their will."

"Silverpine is in danger." The lead in my stomach grew heavier. "The civilians are in danger."

Rhea glared at my parents, her abhorrence making my skin tingle. "They tried to use this to stamp out opposition. There is so much more at play."

"What do you think their agenda is?"

"That is something you must find out, dear. Whatever insidious plans they have will only serve to create more victims, like you,"

"Like the civilians at the execution." The scale of this was far more than I thought. This only served to stoke the flames of determination.

What was the end goal?

"The Prophecy is a lie," the words slithered into my mind, a fragment of one of my nightmares.

"The Prophecy is a lie," this time, it rang sharper.

I was seeing the puzzle pieces more clearly now, but the picture was still very unclear.

But it was a matter of time.



"If they can plot and execute the deaths of civilians out in the open..."

"What more could they be doing behind closed doors?"

"Torturing their daughter, that has been established," Rhea said dryly.

"And Ellen? What could be her role in this?"

"That is yet to be known," Rhea mused. "You will find out."

I watched as my sister walked forward and landed the finishing shots on the beast. Strangely, her eyes were vacant, like she was barely there. Then came her speech, which was cut off before I could finish.

I could feel the blood coming from my nose—the terror and guilt were going to trigger the visions again.

This was the last place I could bleed. It would just be another point made that I was indeed unstable.

I forced my expression into something cool, almost bored, as I turned my gaze to my father. "You always did love theatrics," I said smoothly,



tilting my head just so. "But let's be honest, all you have just done is use fifteen minutes for absolutely nothing."

Silence pressed heavy against the room.

I took a deep breath in the guise of frustration but only to pull the blood to the back of my throat, trying to fight away the visions.

I watched my father's jaw clench, his eyes flashing the amber of his wolf. The glare he threw my way spoke of retribution and suffering. The threads of his tolerance for my defiance were pulled taut enough to snap.

Then he relaxed.

"This is what we fight for, for Silverpine. You yourself vanquished a Lycan for your people. Now, you want to sit in a Lycan court, even be their queen, or even attempt to be their queen. Where did my daughter go?" His eyes were downcast.

My head was buzzing, fire burning in my chest, hot enough to scald my own racing heart. Despite my internal turmoil, my eyes and ears remained sharp as I took in what I could only describe as blasphemy.

He was truly playing this card?

How stupid, docile, and unintelligible had I been in the past that he believed this would work?

I had been the obedient daughter, the willing sacrifice, the fall guy, then a curse, a lab rat, and a bargaining chip.

All my fucking life.

First, he had tried to use whatever guilt he believed I would feel after watching the fiasco of an execution. Watching innocent people die, while my name was plastered as the evil, the ruin, the murderer.      □ □ □ □

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But when he saw that was futile, he pulled the most pathetic and insulting card.

It would have worked on Eve Valmont, but she already died, and had been laid to rest beneath all the scars and tears.

In her place was Eve Stavros. 3

As much as I wanted to scream and tell him to shove his words up his ass, I simply laughed, letting my cackling bounce off the walls of the room.

My father's shoulders bunched, his eyes darkening.

James cut in. "He is not even here. You can stop feigning this nonchalance. This is further proof you are unwell, as was reported to us. You need to come home to recuperate. This is not home."

His voice lowered. "He is not home."

"And you all are?" I glanced back and looked my mother in the eye. "And you all are?" I repeated.

My father's head snapped toward my mother, and I watched her get up.

For the first time since this meeting started, she spoke.

"Everything we did, we did for you. There were no wrong choices made, so many things were at stake. You know that."

"I am utterly clueless, actually," I shut her down, letting my anger simmer. The faster I got this over with, the better.

I gritted my teeth, my eyes finding my father's once again.

"Ten minutes, your Majesty," I reminded him.

His eyes widened at the use of his official title.



But I leaned back in my seat, crossing one leg over the other, and let my lips curl into a smirk, even as the weight of dread pressed into my gut like a stone.

My father's stare burned into me, cold and calculating, searching—always searching—for something.

A crack, a weakness, a sign that his little girl was still buried in here somewhere, drowning beneath the weight of her carefully crafted mask.

But she was dead.

And I had just hammered the final nail into her coffin.

Like I should have done a long time ago.

I let the silence stretch, drinking in the tightness in his jaw, the way his fingers curled into the armrest of his chair before he forced them to relax.

My mother's eyes flickered—barely-there movements. Her lips parted like she wanted to speak but thought better of it. She was at odds with what to do.



James shifted in his seat, a hand running through his hair, his knee bouncing once before he stilled it.

They were cracking.

The veneer of control they had fought so hard to maintain was beginning to splinter at the edges. The false civility would melt.

I chuckled, light, airy, despite the way my stomach twisted in anticipation. "So maybe we should have a staring competition until the rest of the ten minutes are spent, shall we?"

Rhea hummed in approval, curling in my mind like a coiled serpent, ready to strike.

"That's my girl, but be careful, Evie. They are dangerous when cornered."

I didn't need the reminder.

I watched them, waiting, observing every shift in their expressions, every flicker of frustration they tried to suppress. My mother sat rigid, her lips pressed into a thin line, eyes darting between us like she was recalculating something in real time.

And then there was James.



His expression was unreadable at first, but then, something shifted. His lips parted as though he were about to say something else, but instead, his shoulders dropped, the tension in his face smoothing into something softer.

Something almost... familiar.

Then, he spoke.

"Scarlet."

The world froze.

My breath caught in my throat. The air felt thick, suffocating.

That name—that name—belonged to a different time.

I fought the instinct to react, to stiffen, to let him see that he had reached into something buried deep. Instead, I exhaled slowly through my nose.

"The cockroach..." Rhea growled in my mind.

James leaned forward, his voice low.

"Deep down, I could never fully let you go." 4

