

215 Fractured Truths

Hades 1

"The audio went off again," I whispered as I stroked her back. Her heart continued its erratic beating as I spoke softly to her, trying to calm her after we watched their plane take off. We watched their aircraft exit the Obsidian Pack airspace, and that was when I finally heard her take a breath of relief. But she still looked like she had lost some color.

"When it comes to technology, Silverpine has always been forward. Especially in espionage," she murmured. "They must have tampered with the audio," she continued, snuggling closer.

"What happened?" I asked. "After the audio went out?"

I felt her tense up, muscles bunching. For a long moment, she was as quiet as death.

"They said... James said that... you don't love me," she muttered.

The way she paused made me wait for more. Was that all they had said—the part they made sure we wouldn't hear?



But when she snuggled even closer, as though she wanted to melt into me, I wavered from my questions. "I do love you. You know that, don't you?"

She pulled away so that she could tilt her head back and look into my eyes. She didn't say anything; all she did was stare, her eyes searching for something unknown. Her eyes were slightly narrowed, her pupils dilated as if to take in every detail. As if to make sure she found what she was looking for.

"Red," I breathed. "I love you," I reiterated.

She swallowed, her throat working, her fear palpable. Not doubt—fear.

What was she afraid of? Did it have something to do with the audio going off?

I pinched her chin between my fingers, shaking her face gently. I really wished that I had Kael's ability to pull out a joke from my ass, but I had come to terms with the fact that I was not that talented.

"I miss the way you were before," I told her, almost solemnly, but still managing to keep my voice light.

She blinked. "What?"

"When you despised my existence." I smiled down at her, my gaze tracing every inch of her ethereal face. "When you would kick me in the balls and make me wear sickeningly adorable pastel and sequin unicorn onesies. When you would call me by the cringiest names just to attack my enormous ego."

"So you acknowledge that you have an ego the size of..."

"Your ass?" I grabbed a handful and squeezed gently. "Yes, I do." 2

She laughed out loud, and my chest constricted. Fuck, I missed that sound.

"But you always knew how to humble me. I hated it, but goddess..." I let out a sigh. "I wouldn't have it any other way. Nothing could trump you, my wife, making a fool out of me and showing me my place."

The edges of her lips tilted up. "No one else could do it. The Hand of Death? Who would dare?"

"But you," I murmured as softly as I could. Jules' death had eaten up that part of her.



She let out another laugh, muffled by my chest, and I felt her whole body shake with it. It wasn't the bitter, hollow laughter I'd heard too many times in the past weeks—it was real. Light. Like the weight on her shoulders had lifted, if only for a second.

"Admit it, Hades," she murmured, her voice laced with the playful mischief I had been craving. "You liked the unicorn onesie."

I groaned. "Red—"

"I bet you still have it," she cut in, grinning up at me. "Tucked away somewhere in your mighty Hand of Death wardrobe, next to all your intimidating black clothes and guns. Maybe you even put it on when you miss me—"

"You think I miss you enough to willingly wear that abomination?"

Her grin widened. "I know you do."

I let out a long-suffering sigh and flopped onto my back, dragging her with me so she sprawled across my chest. "Fine. You got me, Red. Every night, when you're not around, I slip into the onesie, light some scented candles, and cry into a bowl of ice cream while writing poetry about



my undying love for you." 1

She snorted. "Is the ice cream at least chocolate?"

"Triple chocolate fudge," I deadpanned. 1

Her laugh came out full and rich, and I felt something in my chest tighten. This. This was what I had missed. The part of her that didn't just fight through the darkness but danced through it, mocking it all the while.

I rubbed her back in slow, soothing strokes, letting her laughter fade into soft, sleepy breaths. "Rest, Red," I murmured, pressing a kiss to her forehead.

"You always say that," she mumbled into my chest.

"Because you never listen."

She let out a huff of breath that was meant to be annoyed but was already too drowsy to hold any real bite. A few minutes later, her breathing evened out, her body going limp against mine. I held her a moment longer, indulging in the warmth of her.

Then my phone buzzed.



I sighed, carefully shifting her off me before grabbing the device from the nightstand. My jaw clenched the second I read the text.

"I have her here. At your office. Come quick before she gouges out my eyes." 3

It was from Kael.

Suppressing a curse, I ran a hand over my face, glancing back at Eve. She was still asleep, peaceful in a way I hadn't seen in weeks. I didn't want to wake her. Didn't want to drag her into one more thing tonight.

So, with one last look at my sleeping wife, I grabbed a shirt, threw it on, and slipped out of the room.

One more thing. Just one more goddamn thing before this godforsaken day was over.

Hades - Office Scene

I stepped into my office, just as Kael was about to shift. Of course, she was irritating enough to rile up the easygoing guy in my inner circle. There was nothing that Felicia was not capable of.

"Kael..." I murmured.



Kael turned to me, and we communicated wordlessly. He walked out without saying a thing.

For the first few seconds, all we did was glare.

"This disrespect is unfathomable, especially from some beta. You couldn't get me yourself? Am I so low that the King could not come himself, that I instead have to be summoned?" she drawled.

"Low is too tame a word for what you are," I finished smoothly, shutting the door behind me. "But you already knew that, didn't you, Felicia?"

Her lips curled, a lazy smirk stretching across her face, the toe of her stiletto clicking against the floor, giving away just how uneasy she was.

"Oh, so we're doing this today? Insulting me before even offering me a drink? I thought you were raised with better manners, Hades."

I stepped around my desk, leaning against it as I crossed my arms. "You don't deserve my manners."

Her green eyes gleamed with amusement.

"Touché." She was trying to make up for embarrassing herself the last time with this feigned nonchalance. "So why am I here? Let me



guess, you got tired of that little—"

I cut her off with a look dry enough to set a forest on fire. "Complete that sentence at your own detriment."

Her mouth snapped closed.

"I am here concerning the Valmonts, Felicia."

She had no reaction.

"I was informed by the Alpha himself that you did a favor for them."

No reaction.

"Not just one, but two favors."

Only then did her neutral expression shift, her already pale skin turning ghostly.

"He said what?" She rose from her seat. I watched her nonchalance melt into a puddle beneath her feet.

My eyes narrowed. "I know about the first shitty thing you pulled. But tell me—what the hell was the second?" 2

