

216 The Truth Between Us

Hades 1

Felicia didn't speak right away. Her lips parted, but no words came out, her throat working like she was trying to swallow something down. That wasn't a good sign.

I stood slowly, the chair groaning beneath me as I leaned forward, hands braced against my desk.

"Felicia." My voice was low, even. A warning wrapped in a whisper. "You have exactly five seconds before I start assuming the worst." My jaw clenched, onyx claws revealing themselves. "And trust me, I mean the absolute worst."

Her tongue darted out to wet her lips, a nervous tick she rarely showed.

"I—" She stopped, curling her fingers into fists. "Mutts are so fucking ungrateful. I inform him that his own daughter is losing her mind, and then he pulls this shit?" She gasped incredulously, laughter—mirthless and hollow—bubbling out of her, only pouring gasoline on the flames of irritation that had already been lit in my chest.

"Ah," I drawled, my patience evaporating. "So it's bad."

She scoffed, but it was weak.

"Oh, now you believe a werewolf? Are you that easy to fool? Don't you see why he would spit out that rubbish—" 1

I moved.

At the speed of darkness, I was in front of her before she could react, my hand slamming into the wall beside her head. The force cracked the plaster, a web of fractures spreading outward like veins of rage. 2

Felicia inhaled sharply, her body going rigid. For all her bravado, for all her sharp words and sharpened claws, she knew.

I leaned in, lowering my voice to something dark and low.

"I know my enemies, Felicia. I know their lies, their tells. They deceive, they manipulate—but judging by your reaction, I know. And so do you."

Her lips parted, but no sound came out.

"Don't take me for a fool just because I haven't killed you yet," I murmured, tilting my head.



"Because you are not the first bastard to try and cross me. And unlike them, you have the unfortunate privilege of standing this close to my claws."

A shadow of a shiver ran through her, but she masked it well.

"Hades," she started, voice softer now, more measured, as if trying to rein me back.

I bared my teeth in something that wasn't quite a smile.

"Save it."

Felicia exhaled through her nose, frustration slipping through the cracks in her usual smooth veneer.

"But you did something," I countered.

Her jaw tightened.

"I gave them misinformation."

I held her gaze for a long, stretching silence. The shadows in the room pulsed, responding to the storm raging inside me.

Felicia wet her lips again, her voice a whisper now.



"He tricked you. He wants to divide this family. Divide and conquer—the oldest trick in the book. You can't seriously believe that..."

I wanted to laugh in her face, but the last thing I felt was mirth.

"You quite literally informed them about my wife —"

"Their fucking daughter," she countered.

"You are the most insufferable creature I've ever had the displeasure of knowing," I snarled, my claws curling as I fought the urge to put them through the wall beside her head.

Felicia huffed out a dry laugh, tilting her head like she was amused. But I saw the tension in her shoulders, the way her throat bobbed as she swallowed whatever sharp remark she had brewing.

I leaned in closer, until there was barely a breath between us, my voice dropping to something lethal.

"I know you, Felicia. I know you better than you'd like to admit. And I know for a fact that you didn't do this out of the kindness of your nonexistent heart."



Her smirk faltered just slightly, the flicker of something else—something dangerously close to unease—crossing her features before she masked it.

"You don't trust me," she murmured, feigning a pout.

I scoffed.

"Trust? If I ever wake up one day and find myself trusting you, I'll take it as a sign that I need to put a bullet in my own skull." 1

She rolled her eyes. That feigned nonchalance had returned.

"Dramatic." She felt cornered, that fucking feigned nonchalance had returned.

"Honest," I corrected.

Felicia sighed, running a hand through her hair as if I was exhausting her, but I saw the gears turning in her head. She was calculating.

"You're right," she admitted finally, her voice quieter now.

"I didn't do it out of kindness. I did it because..."

"You wanted a reason to take her away from me," I snarled.



"So tell me what the hell the second favor was."

"It's nothing. He lied."

"Don't try me," I ground out through clenched teeth. My claws grazed her skin, blood seeping in the wake of their edges.

Felicia hissed, her body jerking as a thin line of crimson welled against her pale skin. But she didn't scream. She didn't recoil in fear like most would. Instead, she went still—too still.

I knew this game.

Her mind was working, trying to find an escape, trying to twist this into her advantage. But I wasn't here to play.

I pressed in closer, my voice a razor against the air.

"I said, tell me what the hell the second favor was."

She exhaled sharply, her chest rising and falling in a controlled breath.

"It was nothing," she said again, but weaker this time.

I let my claws press just a fraction deeper.



"Lie to me one more time, Felicia. I dare you."

A muscle in her jaw twitched.

Then, finally, she snapped.

"Then hurt me!" she yelled in my face.

"Rip me to shreds like you have done so many others, and I hope you get the closure you need, knowing you killed me off the words of a deceiver."

My claws halted, just shy of breaking deeper into her skin.

Felicia panted, her chest rising and falling like she had just sprinted a mile, her eyes wild with something I couldn't quite name.

Defiance. Desperation. Resignation.

"Go on, Hades," she spat. "You want to believe him so badly? Then do it. Finish it. Put an end to whatever little tolerance you have left for me, and let's see if you can sleep at night knowing you played right into his hands."

My grip tightened.

I could hear my own heartbeat, a slow, steady drum of rage, of caution, of something dangerously close to hesitation.



Felicia wasn't bluffing.

She had played her games, spun her lies, twisted truths, but now—now, she was standing on the edge of something real. Daring me to take the final step.

And it infuriated me.

I let out a slow, measured breath.

"You think I won't?"

Her lips curled, bitter amusement in her gaze.

"You can't," she whispered, "because a part of you still sees Danielle in me."

I felt ice fill my veins, my blood slowing to a crawl.

"You have not even buried her, yet you are threatening to kill her only sister because some mutt whispered the right poison in your ear."

The words struck like a hammer to my ribs, rattling something I had buried deep.

My grip slackened, my claws retreating before I could stop them.

Felicia saw it.

Of course, she did.

And she seized it like the opportunist she was.

"You think I don't know?" she continued, voice softer now, but not out of kindness—out of precision.

"You think I don't see the way you flinch whenever her name is spoken aloud? That is why you cannot face her preserved corpse. You can't even grieve her properly, Hades. Because the second you do, the second you bury her—she's really gone. And you can't handle that."

My teeth clenched so hard my jaw ached.

Felicia let out a breathy, humorless chuckle.

"That's why you hate me. Because every time you look at me, I remind you that she's dead, and you can't bring her back. But guess what? That's not my fault. It never was. It was yours."

I froze.

"Tell me," she snickered, "now that that girl is not here, tell me the truth—who would you choose?"