

## 217 The Ghosts We Choose

**Hades** 1

The question slammed into me like a wrecking ball.

"Who would you choose?" 1

I didn't move. Couldn't breathe.

The air between us was razor-thin, thick with the weight of every single thing I had never said aloud. My claws were still at her throat, but I wasn't seeing Felicia anymore.

I was seeing Danielle.

I was seeing the blood on my hands, the body I hadn't buried, the ghost that had lingered inside me for five fucking years—wrapped around my ribcage like a noose, tightening every time I tried to breathe.

Felicia's lips curled, a mockery of a smile, daring me to answer.

"You can't, can you?" she murmured, voice softer now. Almost mocking, almost pitying.

My chest burned.



My shadows coiled tighter, writhing against my skin as if they, too, could feel the noose drawing closer.

"Say it, Hades."

The words weren't real, but they might as well have been.

Danielle's voice, a whisper in the back of my mind.

I had never said it. Never let myself say it.

But Felicia?

Felicia was forcing me to.

I hated her for it.

I hated that she knew exactly where to twist the knife.

I hated that she was right.

"You think you know me so well," I muttered, my voice hoarse, my grip tightening just enough to make her breath hitch. "You think you have me all figured out, don't you?"

Felicia's throat bobbed, but she didn't look away.

1

She didn't back down.

Not now.

Not when she had backed me into a corner I had spent years avoiding.

"I don't have to know you," she murmured. "I just have to know her. No woman on earth could love you the way she did. You felt the same."

A sharp, cold pain lanced through my chest.

I didn't answer.

Because there was no answer.

Because the second I spoke it aloud, it would become real.

Danielle or Eve.

One ghost, one future.

One I had lost, one I could still lose.

Felicia's lips parted, as if she were about to say something else—about to push further, twist harder—

—until my claws slammed into the wall beside her instead.

A sharp crack splintered through the air as wood shattered beneath my strength.



Felicia flinched.

For the first time.

She flinched.

A slow breath rattled through me, shaking from the force of what I hadn't done—of what I had barely stopped myself from doing.

My hands trembled.

My fucking hands were trembling.

I had been seconds away from ripping her apart.

Not because she had lied.

But because she had spoken the truth.

I stepped back, teeth clenched so tightly my jaw ached.

Felicia swallowed hard, her pulse pounding visibly in her throat.

But she smiled.

Because she knew.

She had won.

"You can't say it," she whispered. "Because you already know the answer. And that answer?"

She tilted her head, voice like silk-draped





poison.

"It terrifies you."

The darkness in me snapped.

Before I could think, before I could stop myself, I grabbed her by the throat and threw her across the room.

She crashed into my desk, gasping as she caught herself, hands gripping the edge as she coughed and spat blood onto the floor.

But she laughed.

A quiet, breathless, bitter sound.

"Hit a nerve, did I?" she rasped, wiping her lip with the back of her hand. "You can only throw me around because you know it would hurt."

I watched as the gash on her arm stitched itself back together.

I should have felt triumph. Power.

But all I felt was rage.

Rage that she had cracked me open.

Rage that she had found the wound I refused to acknowledge.



Rage that I had let her do it.

Felicia stood slowly, her body tense, but victorious.

"You don't have to answer, Hades," she murmured. "You already did."

The room felt too small.

Too tight.

Too damn suffocating.

"You don't even love that girl," she continued, voice quiet but laced with venom. "You're just trying to fill the void."

"I love her!"

The words tore out of me before I could stop them.

They rang through the room, raw and undeniable, laced with a fury I hadn't even realized had been boiling beneath the surface.

Felicia stilled.

Her smirk wavered.

I took a step forward, my chest rising and falling in sharp, ragged breaths, my hands still trembling from the weight of what I had just



admitted.

"I love her," I repeated, my voice lower now, but no less dangerous. "You are going to leave this tower, and the Goddess knows that if you so much as breathe near her again, I will end you, Felicia." 1

I meant it. Every word. 1

Felicia had spent years playing her games, manipulating every situation to her advantage. But this time? This time, she had lost.

Her smirk faltered further, something unreadable flickering in her expression—like she hadn't expected me to admit it so easily. Like she had been expecting me to hesitate.

But I didn't.

I stepped closer, watching the way her pulse jumped in her throat, the way her body tensed even as she tried to hold onto that infuriating mask of indifference.

"You wanted to hear it?" I continued, voice a quiet, deadly thing. "Fine. I love her. I love her in a way that is not about replacing the past. I love her because she is everything I never let myself have. And you?" I leaned in, my shadows coiling



like living things around me. "You tried to take that from me."

Felicia didn't move, but I saw her lips press together, just slightly.

She felt it. The shift.

The weight of my rage turning into something else.

Something final.

"I should kill you," I murmured, my voice smooth, cold. "I should end this pathetic excuse for a conversation with your blood on my hands."

Felicia inhaled, shallow but controlled.

"And yet..." I let the words linger, tilting my head. "I won't."

Her brows twitched, barely perceptible.

I let a smirk—a real one—tug at the corner of my lips.

"Because despite all your bullshit, despite every venomous word you spit at me, I know one thing."

Felicia stiffened.

"You fear me," I whispered, letting the truth





settle between us. "You fear what happens when I decide you are not worth keeping alive anymore. And right now? You are dangling over that line."

The silence stretched, thick with something that was no longer in her control.

For the first time, Felicia was not winning.

For the first time, she had gone too far.

"You're going to leave this tower," I repeated, my voice unyielding. "And you are going to stay the fuck away from her. If I so much as sense you scheming—if I so much as catch your scent within a mile of her—I will not hesitate next time."

Felicia exhaled slowly, rolling her shoulders like she was shedding the tension.

"You..."

"Hades..."

Eve's voice floated through the door, light and singsong. She walked in, a skip in her step, a child on her hip.

"Elliot is—"

She froze when her eyes found ours, her words

dying on her lips.

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