

238 Immunity

Hades 1

Kael let out a slow breath, his fingers flexing by his side. "So they're made to burn fast and bright. Weapons with a fuse."

"Exactly," Mara confirmed. "They were created for a purpose. And whoever made them knew they wouldn't last long. Which means..."

"They're disposable," I said grimly. "Like bait. Or a warning." That was all they were. But what would Silverpine—or whoever was responsible—want with Elliot? What was the goal? None of the forensics revealed that. We were only left with more questions. 1

Felicia's mouth tightened. "Or a test run."

The implications hit like a sledgehammer, but I kept my breathing even and my expression bordering on detached.

If these were prototypes... then someone was refining the process.



Was this weaponry from Silverpine? An army of hybrid anomalies that could be used and easily discarded? Or was there a bigger story beneath all of this?

I tried not to think too much about any involvement that—

No, I told myself.

Eve was experimented upon. Parts of her must have been extracted before she came here. That would explain why they wanted her to return to Silverpine so desperately—but it still did not explain why it had to be Elliot.

"The donor is the controller," Montague added darkly, eyes flicking toward me with a sharpness that made my shoulders tense. 1

I turned to Mara, forcing the words out. "Can we trace the donor? Can you isolate the source?"

She gave a slow nod. "We're working on it. With enough time, we may be able to match the specific strain—if we have access to enough pure samples."

Silence pulsed in the sterile air again.



I could feel the weight of it pressing into my bones.

If the ferals were engineered using a sample from her...

No, it was not possible.

She was with me the whole time.

She couldn't control them—she was eating with me...

No. No. No. It was all a coincidence.

I tried to keep my heart rate stable, or it would rip out of my ribs.

"Is that all?" Montague asked rather eagerly. "Are you saying the attack is definitively from Silverpine?"

"It could be implied but not definitively proven. It seems they were forced. There were ligature marks on their wrists and ankles," Mara said, flipping her tablet for us to see.

Images of mangled limbs and raw, bruised flesh filled the screen, each more damning than the last. The restraints were crude—iron shackles



that had left rusted imprints on bone-deep wounds. One had a brand scorched into his shoulder, a crude sigil that none of us immediately recognized.

It looked like an M with an arrow running vertically through it, and the arrow itself was crossed through by another.

A strange symbol, but for some reason, the Flux seemed to recoil at the sight. My hand twitched as it threatened to take over.

I didn't recognize it—but it seemed like the Flux did.

Mara tapped the screen. "This symbol... does not match any known organizations or rebel groups, past or present, as per our investigation."

Kael's jaw clenched. "So it could be Silverpine... or one of their offshoots. Or even Obsidian."

"It could be a deliberate plant," Felicia murmured, "designed to mislead us. It's most likely from Silverpine." She glanced at me.

My fingers itched with unease. My thoughts kept circling back to Eve.



"Is that all?" I asked finally, bracing for something more.

A strange expression passed over Mara's face before she replied. "Yes. Nothing more yet."

The same with the bombs—nothing could be uncovered from forensics. It was no coincidence that all the incidents were somehow connected. Especially considering that Elliot was a victim in two out of the three occurrences.

Why Elliot? 2

And just how deep was the plot?

Who the hell was the mastermind?

I nodded toward Mara, still left with a plethora of questions, but something in her eyes told me there was more that she wanted only me to hear.

"All right then," Montegue finally spoke, his voice plain but his gaze knowing. He glanced at his watch. "It is late, and I am not quite the man I used to be, so I will be taking my leave." His tone was casual, but his eyes told a completely different story.

"Of course," I replied, echoing his level cadence,



my eyes narrowing.

He turned to Mara. "Is there a blood sample of the Princess of Ellen available here?" he asked.

Mara glanced at me before answering. "No. We are not in possession of her blood sample."

He sighed before his gaze flicked between Felicia and me. "It's not fated for tonight then. Tomorrow is another day." He proceeded toward the exit, Felicia following him, but I could feel her sensing me as she walked.

The memory card in my pocket weighed as heavy as lead.

What proof did Felicia even have that it had been in Eve's possession and this wasn't just a ploy to implicate her and use the coincidences to further exacerbate the affair?

But as though she read my mind, she twirled on her heel just before she could step out after Montegue. "I would strongly advise that the memory card be given to Mara for DNA testing, so we know who handled it."

A muscle in my jaw ticked before I calmed



myself. "I appreciate the reminder, Felicia."

She smiled faintly before walking out, leaving me and Kael.

By the way Mara immediately picked up her tablet and began to click away, it was clear—there was more.

"There is more, isn't there?"

"Yes, Your Majesty." The screen now displayed a cell. "I'm sure you recall the effects that electromagnetic energy from the Bloodmoon has on normal cells, as my colleague previously demonstrated?"

Forgetting the Lunar Cataclysm was impossible—but what the hell did it have to do with this?

"How could I forget?"

She nodded. "Well, I want to show you how the ferals' cells reacted to it."

I watched the screen, breath held as I waited and waited and... waited.

Confusion took over before realization dawned—slow and painful.



"They would have been immune to the Bloodmoon."

"Like Ellen Valmont," Mara confirmed. "But the presence of Fenrir's marker is inconclusive because the cells were set to self-destruct eventually, so they wouldn't be able to hold the mutations for long. The deterioration was encoded into them. Designed obsolescence—but on a biological level."

Kael exhaled slowly. "They were made to burn out, literally. Disposable, as you said. But also... experimental. Someone is trying to perfect whatever this is." 3

Mara nodded gravely. "And they're getting closer."

I leaned forward, jaw tight. "So they're testing for stability. They're iterating."

"Exactly," Mara said. "And if they ever succeed in stabilizing the mutation..."

She didn't finish the sentence. She didn't have to.

Kael muttered under his breath, "They'll be an unstoppable army."



I rubbed my temples, the migraine building behind my eyes. "And you're saying this immunity—this trait—it's something they extracted from Ellen?"

"We believe so. The similarities in the cell reaction to the Bloodmoon are there. But without a fresh sample from living ferals, we can't prove it definitively. And even then..." she trailed off. "It might not be from Ellen. It might be a sample from another person who is immune as well."

"So there's a possibility it's from another person?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes. It is still a possibility that there are more individuals who are immune to the Red Moon's effect."

Ellen.

It had to be Ellen.

Sword or shield, the prophecy had said.

Then again, that would mean she had Lycan DNA as well.

I ran my hand through my hair, hissing out a



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breath.

What the hell was going on?

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