



## 242 The Tempest Of The Mind

Eve 1

My hand was twitching as I paced, the replacement phone that Hades made available for me weighing a ton.

My mind was a jumble of thoughts, fears, possibilities, and probable aftermath. The night before, when I had decided to look for evidence, I did not realize just how far I was from any resources that could help manage the narrative and get the truth out before I found a bullet in my skull.

My mind was replaying every interaction since I was brought here, looking for a probable source of help and information that could help put the story together—without me seeming like I was trying to transfer the blame to the sister of one of the victims.

I had almost gnawed off my entire bottom lip from contemplating. Who could help me? Who would have been privy enough to the events of that day that could help me out with just enough



incentive or doubt in order to tip the scales in my favor?

Certainly not Felicia, the only other person that knew of the treachery. I could face her head-on with my own set of accusations, but if she twisted it on me, I was pretty much a corpse, and there would be no justice despite my demise.

There would be no justice—not for Hades, or Danielle.

Or Elliot. The child she claimed was hers, yet the truth would most definitely be something different. 2

Felicia had woven herself into the aftermath like a grieving statue—silent, composed, unshakable. And no one questioned her. No one ever questioned her. The perfect victim's sister. The perfect survivor.

I wasn't sure if I wanted to scream or rip something apart.

I stopped pacing, pressing my fingers to my temples. My skin felt too tight, my breath too shallow. I had a truth so heavy it threatened to



crush me, but no way to carry it without proof. Not after what happened five years ago. Not after I was branded a monster before I even knew I had claws.

I looked down at the phone again, thumb hovering over the call button. I could tell Hades everything right now. I could spit it all out, consequences be damned. He deserved to know the truth. I deserved a chance to say it.

But I knew what would happen without evidence. My voice would vanish beneath the weight of Felicia's tears and the shadow of my own past. History would repeat itself.

It would be my 18th birthday again.

The accusations leveled against me, my words drowned by my family's hatred.

"Not again," I whispered to the empty room.

A soft knock at the door made my heart skip a beat.

I turned, body rigid, until the door creaked open and Amelia stepped inside.

Calm. Kind. Unassuming.



Everything I had come to rely on.

She offered a small smile, her eyes flickering over me with practiced concern. "You're up early," she said gently, stepping in and letting the door close behind her. "Or... haven't slept?"

I couldn't speak. My mouth was dry. My thoughts louder than my voice.

She walked closer, the scent of vanilla and coffee clinging to her. "You look like your mind's been at war with itself."

My laugh was brittle. "It's a massacre, really."

She tilted her head. "Want to talk about it?"

No.

Yes.

Gods, yes.

I stared at her, trying to gauge—was she safe? Could she be trusted? Or would I get her killed just by speaking the truth?

But I had to try something.

"Is that why you are here?" I tried to tease. "You



don't ever tire of listening to my worries?"

"It's my life, dear. And I thought by now I would be a friend to you." She stepped in and took a seat.

I was a bundle of nerves and anxiety, so sitting in one place felt like a punishment.

But Lia encouraged me, with a tap where I normally used to sit. "Come—you look ready to explode." On her lip was an easy smile. Though I did not see the strain in her physically, I could sense it in her aura.

It made the hairs on my arms rise. Still, I conceded. "Alright," I accepted, sitting down.

"Anything the matter, dear? Another reaction to finding your wolf? Or is it something else bothering you?"

I found myself swallowing. "Just some anxiety," I lied, even though I craved unloading all that was wreaking havoc inside me. Relaying the dilemma that wanted to rip me apart felt like the only thing that could stop me from tapping my feet on the ground. I was basically vibrating where I sat.



The silence did not make it any better, and I knew that she just didn't want to prod me too much—but for whatever reason, it felt as though she was watching me, analyzing and dissecting me.

I was being paranoid.

She was a freaking therapist. That was one of the things they did.

I almost jumped when a cool hand covered mine. My eyes darted up to meet her cool hazel eyes.

"You seem stressed," she murmured, her voice low as if trying so hard not to startle me. "I'll use the bathroom while you collect yourself. Hopefully we will be able to get to the bottom of things. Just calm down." She told me, getting up, her movements fluid as she entered the bathroom.

The door closed behind her, and I let out the breath I hadn't released before, from the weight of my panic.

This was hard. Hiding things from people I trusted—or at least from those that I should trust.



I took a breath, the lump in my throat turning painful, spreading to my spine and ribs so fast I had to double over.

It was the onset of a panic attack, but I shoved the reaction down to a place where the sun didn't shine. I needed composure to think.

I needed advice on what to do without letting the person know the full extent of the issue.

Air slowly filled my lungs. I needed someone perceptive and intelligent to help me navigate this because all I wanted was to call Hades and tell him.

"Ask a hypothetical question if you don't want her to know. Let her give you some insight." Rhea finally spoke, her voice echoing in my mind. She had let me ponder, watching me from where she normally stayed in my psyche.

"Don't you want me to tell Hades now?" I asked.

"I would prefer it. And yes, our situation is complex. With the unpredictability and volatility of people, we might not get the needed reaction. The last time, we were not in sync, which was only to our detriment. I will not push you to do



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what you don't believe is right or wise. I cannot control you, but I will support you in any decision you take. You are not the girl you were before. Remember that. You already have what you need. Just open your eyes and ears." <sup>2</sup>

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