



260 "I will Help"

Eve ¹

"And when the ashes settle," he finished, voice a whisper laced with rot, "you'll be beheaded. Just like the cursed ones before you. Just like your ancestors did to mine."

Something inside me cracked wide open.

It wasn't a sob. It wasn't a scream.

It was silence.

He looked at me like he was studying the remains of a monument he used to worship.

And somewhere beneath the rot, I swore I saw it again.

That flicker.

That ache.

But it was already too late.

The flux had wrapped around him completely, warping the grief into something colder. Something divine and monstrous.



"You once called us a match made in hell," he said softly. "A tyrant and a wicked princess. I guess you were right."

He turned away.

And the room, the world, began to shrink.

I couldn't let him go. Not like this. Not with those words. Not with that plan.

"Wait!" I cried, my voice cracking.

He paused—but didn't turn.

My breath hitched. My chest caved.

"I know what I am," I whispered, the words tumbling out like blood. "I know what I did... what I took from you."

His shoulders stiffened.

"A family. A wife..."

He turned slightly, just enough for me to see the muscle in his jaw twitch.

"And my child," he said—so low, so sharp, it felt like a blade dragging through bone.



I flinched.

My eyes burned, my breath caught in my throat, but I forced myself to speak.

"Elliot is yours," I said softly, every word slicing through my chest like glass. Unless... unless Danielle wasn't faithful. But I dared not say that, speaking ill of an innocent woman I murdered. 1

He didn't move.

He didn't breathe.

I didn't dare say more.

My voice trembled, but I forced it out.

"I'm guilty," I said, shaking now. "I should be condemned."

He stayed silent.

"Killed," I continued. "Along with the ones who sent me. Your family will be exterminated like the vermin that they are, no need to worry." 1

I swallowed hard, pain churning in my stomach.

"I would want nothing more," I spat, my voice cracked and hoarse. A flash of fury lit my gaze—

hot, red, aimed at the ones who'd thrown me to the wolves. "But..."

The anger faded as fast as it came. All that was left was desperation.

"...please. The civilians of Silverpine... they don't deserve to die for the sins of their leaders."

His head tilted slightly.

"You have no say in that."

I pushed forward against the restraints, the metal biting into my skin.

"I don't care what you do to me," I gasped. "If what you need is inside me—take it. Use it. I'll be your lab rat. I'll bleed for you. Again and again. Just... leave them out of this."

He turned fully now, staring at me like I was some relic he hadn't decided whether to keep or crush.

"I won't fight," I continued, voice shaking. "I won't scream. I won't run. I'll submit to every extraction, every test, every experiment. You don't have to chain me—I'll walk in on my own."



I was trembling.

Not from fear.

But from the weight of it all.

The shame. The guilt. The horror of knowing I'd been the spark in a war I never meant to start. 1

My throat convulsed, the taste of old memories—of cold metal tables, of scalpels and needles—rising up to choke me.

But I didn't stop.

"I surrender myself," I whispered.

He blinked. Just once.

A flicker of something—surprise, pain, memory—crossed his face.

Then it vanished.

His expression closed like a fist.

But I wasn't done.

My voice rose, broken and fraying.

"Please!" I shouted. "Please save Silverpine too. Don't destroy those people. Don't—don't kill the



ones who were just trying to live. Remember the girl who made you laugh. Remember the nights we lay together, when you said the war stopped when I touched you."

My tears were flowing freely now, hot and helpless.

"Remember her. Even if you hate her now. Even if she's the reason you lost everything. Let her do one last good thing."

Silence.

The kind that bruised the walls.

He stared at me, frozen. Unmoving.

And in his stillness—I saw it.

A war.

A flicker of doubt. A memory he hadn't buried deep enough.

But then...

It died.

He looked away.



Composed himself.

When he spoke, his voice was carved from steel.

"Your extraction cycle will begin within the week. The schedule will be delivered to you shortly."

The words landed like hammer strikes.

Final.

Cold.

Unforgiving.

He turned.

And this time, he left.

No more glances.

No more cracks.

No more chances.

The door hissed shut behind him.

And I broke.

Not loudly.

Not violently.



But completely.

Because in that moment, I realized—

Even offering myself as nothing...

...wasn't enough to save anyone at all.

The door sealed behind him with a hiss.

And then—there was nothing.

No footsteps.

No breath.

No sound but the faint hum of the lights above.

My chest was rising too fast.

Too sharp.

Too shallow.

Air wouldn't go in.

Wouldn't stay in.

My pulse roared in my ears, frantic, like a bird
slamming itself into a cage wall.

My limbs were shaking. My wrists were still
locked to the chair, but my body convulsed as if



trying to escape itself.

I couldn't breathe.

I couldn't think.

The pressure crushed me like the room was
collapsing inward, pressing against my ribs, my
throat, my skull.

The walls were too white.

Too bright.

Everything spun.

And then—

Darkness.

—

I came to with a violent jerk, my throat dry, lips
cracked.

My breath was slow now. My pulse no longer
galloping. But everything hurt. My wrists. My
ribs. My soul.

And then—

A voice. Soft. Sweetly cruel.



"Look who finally decided to wake up."

I blinked blearily, vision swimming before the world came into sharp focus.

Green eyes.

Sharp smile.

Felicia. 2

"You," I rasped. I meant to growl, to lunge, to scream—but it came out a groan, hoarse and broken.

My eyes adjusted—and then I saw him.

Small.

Still.

Watching.

Elliot.

He stood at Felicia's side, half-hidden in her hold, his thumb tucked into his mouth. Wide, round eyes locked on mine like I was a ghost he'd only heard stories about.

"Don't look so surprised," Felicia said smoothly.



"He insisted. And I figured..." Her smile curled like spoiled silk.

"Why not let him say goodbye to the thorn in our side?"

My fingers twitched. I wanted to reach for him. Not to take him—just to hold him. Just to say sorry.

But I was still bound. Still strapped to the chair like a monster in chains.

Felicia turned toward the door, cradling Elliot with a mother's grace that made bile rise in my throat.

She made it halfway before pausing.

I watched her shift his weight, repositioning him over her shoulder.

And then—

He signed.

Three slow motions.

Awkward. Tiny hands. But deliberate.

"I will help."



My breath caught.

My lips parted, but no sound came.

He stared at me. Just a little longer.

And then he was gone.

Carried off by the woman who orchestrated everything.

I stared at the door for a long moment.

Long enough for the silence to wrap around me again.

And then—

I smiled.

Not from hope.

There was none left in me.

But from resignation.

Because at least one person in the world didn't look at me with hatred.

And even if he was just a child—

He believed I was worth saving.



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+5

"Goodbye, little wolf," I whispered.

"Thank you for thinking I mattered." 5

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