



263 Tell Me The Truth

Eve **1**

My head lolled as my thoughts spun in slow, nauseating circles. The darkness around me felt familiar—like my old prison—but heavier. Tighter. Sleep came in fits, broken by cold sweats and Rhea's restless muttering in the background of my mind.

She was back... but quiet. Exhausted. Distant.

And then the footsteps came.

Slow. Heavy. Purposeful.

My spine straightened against the wall before I could stop myself. The chains around my wrists clinked as I sat up on the bed. Light flooded the cell as the door groaned open, sharp and sudden, making my eyes water.

By the time I blinked away the sting, he was already in front of me.

Hades.

Or... what was left of him.



He stood with his hands clasped behind his back, posture rigid, too perfect. His skin was paler than I remembered, like moonlight carved into stone. His face looked untouched by time—smooth and sharp—but harder somehow. Harsher. As if every softness in him had been whittled away.

I couldn't imagine his dimples showing anymore, even if he smiled.

And his eyes... gods, his eyes.

They were grey still, but tinged now with something darker. A red halo around the iris that turned them into something unnatural. Something wrong.

He said nothing for a while.

Just stared at me.

"What do you want?" I asked finally, my voice rough from disuse.

His expression didn't change. "The password."

I blinked. "What?"

"The passphrase. Seven words," he said flatly.



"The encrypted file on the memory card. I need it."

I blinked again, confusion flooding me. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

He didn't react at first. Just stared harder, as though he could pull the truth out of my skin with his eyes alone.

Then he took a step forward.

And I recoiled.

The smell hit me before the sound of his boots did—something sickly, almost sweet. Like rot. Like death.

Rhea stirred with a sharp hiss. "Don't let him touch us."

"I don't know it," I said quietly.

He tilted his head, just slightly. "Try again."

"I'm not lying," I said, brow furrowing. "I never even knew what was inside that card."

There was a beat of silence.

Then a bitter laugh escaped me before I could



stop it. I shook my head.

"Of course," I muttered. "You think I'm lying because it would hurt your pride more to believe I simply didn't know. That I never even mattered enough to be given the truth."

His jaw tensed.

My voice grew quieter, but sharper. "Men always think they're smarter than they are. That every move a woman makes is part of some master plan they just haven't figured out yet." 1

He flinched—barely—but I caught it.

And then he stepped closer again.

The chains around my wrists rattled as I instinctively pulled back.

The scent of death clung to him like a second skin now, and beneath it... something else. Something older.

"I want the truth," he said, the words soft but thrumming with rage. 3

I met his eyes, even as my heart pounded. "Then look somewhere else. Because whatever it is



you're trying to find in me—it's not there. Not anymore."

His lips parted as if to speak—then closed again.

He stared a moment longer... and then turned away, silent.

But the air between us stayed heavy.

Thick with things we weren't saying.

Things we'd never say.

> He doesn't want the truth, Rhea growled. He wants you to be guilty. That's the only version of this that justifies what he's becoming. 1

I bit my tongue.

And watched the man I loved become a stranger again.

"I am a fucking liar, Hades!" I spat, managing not to let my lips quiver—refusing to let him see how the fragments of the heart he shattered dug into me. "Yet you want me to speak some bizarre truth to you? Tell you some code?" I actually laughed—because if I didn't, I would sob instead. This was what we had become. Months of



progress, understanding, and love turned to filth. "The Beast of the Night has no password to give you, Hades. How can you expect anything from the woman that made you a broken widower?"

His eyes flared—red swallowing grey like ink dropped in water. The faint lines of black began to rise along his neck, spreading like frost beneath glass.

Veins.

Thick, corrupted veins pulsing just beneath the surface of his skin.

And then—growing slow, agonizing, deliberate—a sharp protrusion pushed up beneath his hairline. It wasn't just bone. It was wrong. Too sharp. Too black. A horn, forming like it had always been waiting.

My breath caught in my throat.

"Rhea," I whispered.

The corruption, she said. It's more now. It has more influence. What has he done? Her horror leaked into my mind. 2



His body twitched, muscles flexing like he was holding something in—a snarl, a scream, or worse. The flux was leaking through him now, no longer content to hide in shadows.

"I gave you everything," he growled, voice distorted at the edges. Deeper. Unnatural. "My name. My home. What was left of my heart."

"You gave me a cage!" I screamed back. "You made me believe I was finally safe, only to tear it all away the moment it suited your purpose. You seduced me into giving you what you needed—and then called it necessity. Don't talk to me about what you gave. I am a monster—most definitely—there is no other word for what I am. A murderer. A bitch. A mutt." I smirked, my jaw aching from grinding my teeth. "We are both beasts, born out of our fathers' machinations. We are one and the same."

His hands flexed at his sides.

And when he looked at me again, there was no Hades in his eyes.

Only Lucien. 3

And something worse behind him.



"I hate you," he hissed, more to himself than to me. As if he was trying to drill that fact in—

A tremor rolled through the floor as power surged around him—dark, volatile energy that made the chains on my wrists rattle. Rhea whimpered in the back of my mind, but I held his gaze.

Even though he was terrifying now.

Even though everything in me screamed to run.

"You want to hear something true?" I said, voice trembling but steady. "I did love you. With everything I had. Even when you looked at me like I was the monster. Even when you used me. Even when you let me believe I could have a future."

His breath hitched.

But then he smiled.

It was cold. Hollow. Almost pitying.

"You still do," he said, the grey of his eyes peeking through, the vulnerability making me stop. ¹



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