



## 269 Recapture

Eve <sup>1</sup>

The chain snapped forward, catching one of the guards at the knees with a sickening thud. He grunted as he hit the ground, cursing loud, but before I could finish the motion, the second one lunged toward me.

"Move—"

> "Now, Evie!" Rhea's voice cracked like a whip in my head, lending a burst of clarity to the haze.

I pivoted, just enough to avoid the full brunt of the impact, but not enough to stop the swing of his baton from catching my ribs. Pain lanced through my side, white-hot and immediate. I gasped and stumbled back.

No room to think.

No time to scream.

The third—someone in the back—shouted, "She's up! Take her down!"

Gunfire.



The first shot rang out, and instinct flared—Rhea pushing reflexes faster than my failing muscles. I dodged the first.

Not the second.

It tore through my shoulder—clean, burning, deep. The impact spun me half around, and I collapsed against the bed with a grunt, my fingers scrabbling for purchase on anything—anything at all.

Blood soaked through the shift I wore. My left arm went half-numb.

But I heard it.

The jingle.

Keys.

The fallen guard had them. His belt. They clinked with every movement, and he was still stunned.

I lunged—half-crawling, half-falling—ignoring the agony flaring across my torso. I slammed my elbow into his neck, enough to roll him, and snatched the ring of keys from his hip with a wild, shaking hand.



> "Yes—yes, you have them! Do it!" Rhea cried.

I didn't hesitate. I crawled backward, chain clinking, dragging across the blood-slick floor as the reinforcements poured in through the door.

I jammed the key into the shackle's lock.

Clicked.

One off.

The second took longer—my hands were slick, trembling—but I managed.

Click.

The chains fell.

Someone yelled, "Get her! Don't let her—!"

Too late.

I kicked off the floor with what was left of my strength and hurled myself forward, right into them. I didn't fight to overpower—I fought to get through. I barreled into one chest, used his weight and momentum to vault upward.

> "I'm here," Rhea said, a snarl curling under her words. "Let me in."



I didn't speak.

I didn't have to.

The shift hit mid-air.

Bone cracked, skin stretched, vision blurred as fur exploded across my limbs and power surged into my legs. It wasn't a full shift—just enough. Just enough to carry me forward.

Their surprise was my window.

They hadn't expected me to shift. Not in this state.

I slammed into the two at the door, claws slicing out instinctively. One flew sideways into the wall with a yelp, the other stumbled back just long enough for me to clear the threshold.

The hallway lights hit me like a thousand knives to the skull.

I roared, staggering—blinded by the artificial glare. My vision danced with dots, disoriented. But I kept moving. I couldn't stop now.

> "Main hall—get to the end, right, elevator stairwell—RUN."





I didn't argue. I bolted down the corridor, blood trailing behind me, heart punching in my chest.

Behind me, alarms started to blare.

Steel doors began to lock.

But I was already past them.

Already loose.

Already free.

And for the first time in what felt like forever—

I wasn't just surviving.

I was fighting back. 1

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Hades

I watched them step out of Vehicle, Elliot on her hip, in grasp was a little bah with superheroes on it. 2

"I didn't even know when you left the tower. Why was I not informed." I stepped closer, my arms folded, assessing them.

Felicia chuckled, ordering her butler to pull in

her luggage. "Didn't want to disturb you and when did you start caring so much?"

I didn't answer that question.

"We just needed to get some more of our belongings because we are not sure how much longer we will living here." 1

"Why didn't you send your workers, if would have been less of an hassle?" I didn't bother hiding the suspicion from my voice. 1

Only then did she meet my eye. "It's my belongings, Hades. I know what exactly I want here with me as this goes on."

I made a non-committal sound as my gaze strayed to Elliot was we made our way up to the tower to their quater floor.

The boy seemed unharmed, his little fingers clasped around the bag.

I narrowed my eyes when I noticed that his chuckled were white. He was gripping on the bag like his life depended on it. 2

I flashed him an easy, coaxing smile. "Hello there,"



His eyes found mine, the depth in the way he stared at me was palpable. We were at their door when I spoke to him again.

"What do we have there?" I asked.

His hand only gripped on tighter. He didn't want me to know. What would a child be hiding?

I found myself pouting, feigning hurt. "You won't show me?"

The alarm sliced through the air like a blade.

Shrill. Urgent. Unforgiving.

Felicia flinched. Elliot dropped his toy bag and it hit the floor with clang but it did not fully register. His small body tensing like a live wire, eyes darting.

He knew what it meant.

I turned sharply toward the nearest comms panel embedded in the hallway wall and slammed my hand against it. "Gamma Unit—report."

Static. Then:

"Alpha, breach in the holding sector. Cell 9."



Cell 9.

Her.

My heart didn't skip.

It dropped.

"How?" My voice was already ice, my pulse speeding as the weight of the situation sank in.

"She was sedated. She was locked down."

"She overpowered the retrieval team—used the bed to get to the door, sir. One shot fired, injury sustained, but she's mobile. She's—shifted."

I turned to Felicia. Her smile had vanished, the color bleeding from her face.

Elliot's toy bag lay forgotten at his feet.

He was still staring at me.

"Lock the floor," I snapped. "Secure the holding sector. Do not engage unless absolutely necessary. She is not to leave this Tower."

"Understood—doors are cycling now. Reinforcements en route to main hall—"

I didn't wait.





I was already moving.

My body shifted into command mode with practiced ease—muscles primed, rage building behind my ribs like pressure in a sealed vault. But this shift left a bit different but i did not let it stop me. I hit the elevator override, punched in my access code, and bypassed the security lockouts that had already started to slow the system. 1

The doors slid open.

The scent hit me instantly—metal, blood, wolf.

Eve.

> "She's loose," the flux purred, almost giddy. "She's running. And she didn't tell us goodbye."

I ignored it.

There was no time for mind games.

No time for anything except action.

I was halfway down the corridor when my earpiece crackled again.

"We've got eyes on her—Sector 2 cameras show movement. She's fast. Headed toward the lift



shafts—might try the manual stairs.”

Of course she would.

The lifts were watched. Trapped.

The stairs... not yet.

I cut a sharp turn toward the secondary junctions that led to the emergency stairwell, my boots thudding hard against polished stone. As I ran, I accessed the tower’s schematics in my HUD—mapping out every route she could take.

She wouldn’t get far.

Not in her condition.

Not in my Tower.

> “But you waited too long, didn’t you?” the flux hissed. “You should’ve trusted her. Should’ve asked. Should’ve looked her in the eyes and seen the truth. Now you’re chasing her like prey.” 2

“She made this choice,” I growled aloud.

But the words tasted hollow.

Because deep down—I didn’t know if I believed that anymore.

Not entirely.

And that made the rage worse.

Much worse.

I reached for my comm. "Deploy interceptor teams to Stairwell 3B. Keep her contained. No bullets to the head. I want her conscious."

> "To talk to her?"

> "No."

> "To punish her?" It said with delight.

I didn't answer.

And if she thought she could outrun what was coming—

She was wrong.

Dead wrong. 5