



## 270 Locked In

Eve <sup>1</sup>

They were coming.

I could hear the thunder of boots behind me—  
fast, relentless, trained.

Gamma units.

> "They're deploying tactical," Rhea warned,  
sharp and cold. "They'll shoot to injure. Or  
worse."

No shit.

I turned a hard corner, paws skidding against  
polished marble. Blood trailed behind me—thick,  
hot, mine. My shoulder screamed with every  
movement. My side was on fire. But adrenaline  
had taken the wheel. Not logic. Not pain.

Just survival.

The next hall exploded in gunfire.

Crack—crack—crack.

I dove behind a pillar, bark and plaster shattering



around me as bullets ripped the air. Some of them weren't using rounds—they were using shock darts, designed to paralyze Lycans mid-shift.

One grazed my leg and it went numb for a breath before I shook it off.

> "Left!" Rhea shouted. "They're trying to flank—go, now!"

I leapt from cover, claws digging into the ground as I bolted toward the adjacent corridor. A Gamma lunged from behind a column, already mid-shift, eyes glowing gold.

I didn't wait.

I dropped low, raked his thigh with my claws, and used his own weight to throw him into the wall behind me.

Two more closed in.

My vision blurred.

My muscles trembled.

But I was faster.

Not stronger—but desperate. 2



They'd underestimated what desperation looked like.

> "Third stairwell," Rhea snapped. "It'll lead to the west wing balconies. You only need five more floors. Five. That's survivable."

I skidded into the stairwell and bounded down three steps before the impact of a tackle hit me from above. A soldier had jumped the landing. We tumbled.

My shoulder slammed into the railing.

My arm went completely dead.

He roared and aimed his weapon—

And I bit him.

Snarled through bloodied teeth and sank them into the soft space between collar and shoulder.

He screamed.

I kicked him off, breath ragged.

My limbs were failing.

I had to move.



I clutched the railing with my good hand, vaulting down another two flights, vision swimming, lungs heaving like I was drowning in them.

Behind me, they regrouped.

They were calling out my position.

Coordinating.

Hunting.

> "Just get to the floor with the window," Rhea urged. "One more flight. Just one. You jump, we shift. We land. We run."

I hit the last landing.

Alarms screamed in my ears, every light now flashing red across the corridor.

The hallway beyond the stairwell was clear—for now.

I burst through the door and limped toward the glass at the end of the hallway.

It was reinforced. Meant to withstand attacks.

But even glass had a weakness.



I dropped to all fours, claws dragging across the floor.

Gathered every drop of strength I had left.

> "Now," Rhea whispered.

I sprinted.

Then suddenly a horrible white searing hot pain exploded in the thigh of my hind leg. I let out a howl that revibrated in my own skull.

The pain was a torrent that pulled me under its tide as I could no longer move.

Rhea began to crawl towards the window in a last ditch effort before we could recaptured only for a chilling voice to stop me dead in my tracks.

"Move inch and your head goes next,"

The fur along my neck raised as his voice registered, his footsteps on the marble threatening to cause my hearts expulsion from my chest.

I twisted my head and immediately pain lanced through my entire body. All of the shots that I had been inflicted were suddenly registering



anew in a way that brought back the weakness and gnawing hunger that ripped at me.

The pain was staggering.

White-hot and suffocating, it rooted itself in my thigh like a burning spike of molten metal, fusing bone to agony. My body collapsed. Rhea's strength ebbed under the weight of it—crippled. Struggling.

We weren't healing.

Not fast enough.

"What the fuck was that?" Rhea hissed, barely able to hold her form. "That's not normal—Evie, that's—"

"Move an inch," a cold voice echoed, "and your head goes next."

My entire body seized.

That voice.

I knew it.

Every bone in me remembered.

The footsteps were measured. Predatory.



Echoing through the hall like a noose tightening around my throat.

I turned my head, slowly, painfully—and instantly regretted it.

Pain bloomed all over again, sharper, deeper, like it was trying to tear me from the inside out. My blood felt thick. Heavy.

My vision cleared—just enough.

And there he was.

Montegues.

Danielle's father.

A wraith of grief in the body of a soldier. His eyes were carved from stone, but there was no warmth in that gaze—only obsession. Hatred that had simmered too long. And on his shoulder —

Some kind of weapon.

Massive.

Like a miniaturized bazooka built for precision and brutality. Still humming.



"Hurts, doesn't it?" he asked softly, tilting his head. His voice was calm. Too calm.

Deadly calm.

"Right through the muscle. You're lucky it missed the bone—though I guess luck's relative now, isn't it?"

My breathing rasped through clenched teeth. I couldn't move my leg. Could barely feel it.

He took a step forward.

"Special round," he said, stroking the weapon lovingly. "Custom. Platinum core. Silver-etched tip. Pressurized venom shell." He smiled, cold and brittle. "Designed it the day we found out what you were. What kind of filthy, blended abomination lived inside our walls. Just in case."

My heart thudded against my ribs.

He'd prepared for this. He'd known.

He was waiting for a day like today.

Waiting to hunt me.

"You killed my daughter," Montegue said, voice cracking mid-sentence. "My Dani. You slit her



open and left her to die on dirt soaked in blood.  
And they still dared to say you were a victim."

I flinched.

>"Evie," Rhea warned.

But it was too late.

Guilt slid down my throat like glass. I felt it lodge deep. I'd tried not to think of Danielle. Of the way she'd looked. The way she screamed for mercy for her child."

"I'm sorry," I whispered.

It came out strangled. Not because of the pain.

Because it was true.

"I never meant for her to die. I swear on—on everything. I didn't want—"

"LIAR!" he screamed.

The composure snapped. His face contorted, not with rage—with devastation. Madness born of heartbreak. Of guilt he couldn't scrub from his soul, so he poured it into me.

"You touched her! You were in our home! You



marked my grandson! You murdered Dan!"

"I didn't—I!" My voice cracked. "I didn't know how stop! I tried to stop it—I tried—"

"You are a beast," he spat. "Don't you dare say her name."

He raised the launcher.

I saw the charge build.

The barrel glowed faintly violet.

And for a moment—just a second—I felt it.

The weight of everything.

The chains.

The blood.

The silence.

And all the death.

Danielle.

The massacre.

The child I couldn't save. Elliot.

Felicia.



All of it.

Hades. Grey eyes filled with hate and love.

>"Rhea—"

>"I can't shield you from this one," she said, voice tight with sorrow. "Brace, Evie. Goodbye again, Elysia." 3

The world slowed.

The barrel locked on my skull.

I saw Montague's finger tighten on the trigger.

And then—

He fired.

And everything went white.

Eve

The blast should've ended me.

I heard it—no, felt it. The bone-deep vibration, the howl of air splitting apart as the projectile screamed through space. There was a scream—I think it was mine—but I couldn't be sure. Everything turned white, then red, then nothing

at all.

But I didn't die.

I didn't even fall.

Instead, the world stuttered—halted mid-breath.

And something slammed into me.

Not the round.

Something else.

A body.

A shield.

The force hurled me back against the wall, and I crumpled, gasping. I tasted blood. My head rang with a sharp, high-pitched noise, deafening and endless, like glass grinding into bone. And then—

Silence.

I opened my eyes.

And stopped breathing.

He stood between me and Montegue, smoke rising from his back.



A massive hole torn through his chest.

His torso—missing. Charred, raw, a crater of ruptured flesh and shattered ribs where his heart should have been.

But it was him.

One black horn curled like scorched stone from his head, his wings unfurled—fleshy and red like flayed muscle, pulsing with life. His skin was grey, almost translucent, laced with thick, writhing black veins that pulsed with something darker than blood.

Those veins.

I knew those veins.

They belonged to the monster from the garden. 2

To Hades.

I watched as he staggered once—his frame convulsing—but he did not fall. Didn't speak. Just stood there. As if daring the next shot to come.

I tried to speak. To move.

Nothing came.



My breath caught.

And then, his body began to stitch itself back together.

The black mass—tar-like and alive—oozed from the wound. It crawled like a living shadow, tendrils reaching inward, knitting together muscle, sinew, organs. I saw bone regrow, marrow glowing faintly like embers from within. The hollow crater slowly, impossibly, filled.

And the air held its breath.

Montegues backed away—slowly, gun trembling in his hands, his hatred now tangled in fear.

I couldn't take my eyes off Hades.

I reached toward him.

"No..." I croaked, voice breaking. "No, no, no!"

He'd jumped in front of me.

For me.

Even now.

Even after everything.



He turned.

His form still monstrous, barely stitched together—but his eyes, beneath the crimson haze—were his.

Silver.

Storm-grey.

And when he looked at me, I didn't see the man who imprisoned me.

I saw the one who knew me.

Who loved me—so violently, so ruinously, he would rather die than let me fall.

"Why..." I whispered, tears springing to my eyes, "why would you—"

Before I could finish, the horn cracked and shattered away, disintegrating into ash.

The wings folded inward, melting into his skin.

And the black mass sank below the surface, sealing itself shut until all that was left—

Was Hades.



Blood-soaked.

Burning.

Breathing.

Alive.

> "He's not supposed to be alive," Rhea  
whispered, awe and terror tangled in her voice.  
"Not after a hit like that. That wasn't just Lycan  
healing. That was..."

She trailed off.

And I didn't answer.

Because I was still reaching for him.

And the only thing I could think—

Was that I loved him.

Even as he destroyed me.

Even as he saved me.

"Don't touch me," he growled.

"Don't you fucking dare."

I froze mid-reach, hand suspended in air



between us.

His voice wasn't just cold—it was dead. Stripped of warmth, layered in something hollow and vast, like the space between stars.

His eyes never touched mine.

Not once.

Instead, he turned—slow, methodical—and faced Montegue.

Every soldier in the hall went still.

No one moved.

Not when Hades stepped forward.

Not when he crossed the marble floor without a word.

Not when Montegue raised the launcher again in shaking hands and Hades—without even flinching—grabbed it and crushed it like brittle glass.

The sound echoed.

Then he grabbed him.



By the throat.

Lifted him clean off the ground.

Gasps rang out. I heard one of the Gamma captains mutter a curse. Another raised a weapon, but Hades didn't look at any of them.

Only Montegue.

The older man clawed at Hades' wrist, kicking against his grip. Face purpling. He couldn't breathe.

"You made me a liar," Hades said quietly—almost conversationally.

"I told her she would pay."

He tilted his head slowly.

"I vowed it. To Danielle. To the gods. To myself. And yet you..."

His grip tightened.

"...you dared undermine me in my own home. Touch my prisoner."

The rage that laced his words wasn't loud—it was precise. Each syllable honed like a blade. He



wasn't shouting. That made it worse.

He was commanding judgment.

"Who gave you permission?" he whispered, venom curling under every word. "Who allowed you to hunt what's mine?"

Montegues' mouth opened. Nothing came out. Just spit and wheezing.

Hades' expression didn't change as he let go.

Montegues crumpled like a broken scarecrow.

And then—

He turned to me.

No warmth.

No remorse.

Just... mission.

He strode across the hall, the crowd parting like shadows around a wildfire. My breath hitched as he reached me. I didn't get the chance to flinch.

He scooped me up in one swift, inhuman motion—blood-soaked arm curling around my back, the

other beneath my knees.

I thrashed. Weakly. Pointlessly.

"Let me go—"

"You don't get to make demands," he said, voice flat. "Not anymore."

He began walking, boots heavy against the marble. "The White Room has waited long enough."

"Hades—!"

"You've not known pain till today, mutt."

> "Evie—" Rhea's voice broke. "He's... he's not in control anymore. It's...him. I can see the thirst in his eyes."

I knew that.

I felt it.

I felt it in the way his hands trembled—like holding me burned.

In the way he wouldn't meet my eyes—like looking at me hurt worse than anything else could.



He was gone.

Or maybe the part that loved me had simply drowned beneath the part that remembered. 1

He crossed into the elevator sector, doors sliding open—

"Hades!" a voice screamed.

We both turned.

Felicia.

She ran down the corridor barefoot, her robe half undone, eyes wild. Her voice cracked like a whip of panic.

"Something's wrong."

Hades narrowed his eyes. "This is not the time—"

"It's Elliot."

Silence.

Everyone stopped.

Even Hades.

Even me.



The name hit him like a gunshot to the chest.

Felicia stumbled to a halt, panting. Her hands trembled as she clutched the doorframe. "He's locked in. I can't open the door. Think people are inside, they locked the door. It happened out of nowhere." 1

My heart twisted.

Not because of her panic.

Because of the way Hades froze.

Like his body had shut down entirely, processing the words as if they were a different language.

He set me down roughly, like I weighed nothing.

Didn't look at me.

Didn't speak.

Just turned.

And ran.

The Gammas grabbed me, the heavy clamps latching my hand behind me.