



282 Family Is Family

Hades 1

The silence stretched so long it felt like the walls were closing in.

Felicia stared at us.

At the tablet.

At the truth.

And for a breath—just a single breath—her face crumpled in horror.

Then—

It hardened.

"I saved myself," she said sharply, her voice cracking through the room like a whip. "What was I supposed to do? Let her kill me? Let her kill all of us?" 4

She slammed her palm against the glass, making Lucinda flinch.

"You think I wanted this?" she snarled. "I had to survive! I had to!"



Her eyes darted desperately between her parents, landing harder on Montegue, then Lucinda—pleading, demanding.

"I'm your daughter," she spat. "Your only daughter now. Would you really throw me away for a corpse? For someone who's been rotting in a capsule all this time?" 2

Montegue's jaw tightened, but he said nothing.

Lucinda sobbed harder, her body folding in on itself like a dying thing.

Felicia didn't stop.

She pressed harder against the glass, breathing faster now, frantic.

"You're going to let some twisted sense of justice destroy your family?" she hissed. "You're going to let me rot in here, while the beast that murdered two royals walks free because she cried about being forced to kill?"

Her mouth twisted into something sharp, something ugly.

"She still killed them," Felicia said viciously. "She still tore them apart. Injection or not. Mind



control or not." 1

She slammed her hand against the glass again.

"That bitch still ripped people apart while you're standing here mourning her like a saint!"

Kael stepped closer to Montegue, steadying him when his knees buckled slightly.

But Felicia wasn't looking anymore.

She only saw herself now.

Saw her world slipping through her fingers.

"You owe me!" she shouted, voice rising. "I did what I had to do! I survived! I kept the family together! I kept Elliot safe when no one else could!"

Her mouth trembled—but not with sorrow.

With rage.

"Danielle would have forgiven me," she said, almost sweetly. Almost laughing. "She always did, didn't she? I slept with her fiancé and she forgave me. So what if—" she hiccuped, breathless, "—so what if I got angry? So what if I snapped? I raised her son!" 6



She spread her hands as if waiting for applause.

"I gave up everything to raise him. I sacrificed years of my life for him. For you. For all of you."

The words curdled into something poisonous.

"So what if I killed her? She would have forgiven me anyway." 2

Lucinda's hands fell limp at her sides.

She simply stared at Felicia—her mouth working soundlessly, her body rocking slightly where she knelt.

Montegue looked older than I had ever seen him.

So much older.

"I am your daughter," Felicia said again, more viciously now. "Not her."

She slammed her palm against the glass once more, harder this time, rattling the frame.

"You want to throw me away?" she spat. "You want to toss away the only child you have left because of some stupid, outdated morality?"

She panted, chest heaving.



"I made a mistake," she said savagely. "Fine. I made a mistake. But family forgives. Danielle would have. So should you." 1

She smiled then—a sharp, broken thing, too many teeth and no warmth.

"We can still plan her anniversary," she said, voice trembling on the edge of hysteria. "We can still pick the flowers. Orchids and asters. Remember, Mother? Orchids and asters. Just like she wanted. It'll be beautiful. We'll make it perfect for her."

Lucinda moaned low in her throat and turned into Montegue's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Montegue just stood there.

Frozen.

Ruined.

He didn't speak.

Didn't move.

And Felicia—

Felicia just kept smiling.



Believing—desperately, violently—that if she smiled enough, if she pretended hard enough, the world would stitch itself back into the fantasy she wanted.

But it wouldn't.

It couldn't.

Because we had all seen it now.

We had all seen her tear her sister apart like an animal.

And no number of orchids or asters would ever hide the blood on her hands.

The silence after Felicia's desperate smile fractured was heavier than any scream.

Lucinda lifted her head, her voice cracking through the heavy air.

"How could you do something like this?" she whispered. "How, Felicia?"

For a moment, a flash of something crossed Felicia's face.

Not guilt.



Not regret.

Contempt.

She laughed—a hollow, broken sound.

"How?" she echoed, her lip curling. "I learned it from you."

Lucinda flinched.

Felicia pressed closer to the glass, voice sharpening into a serrated hiss. "I got her fiancé, didn't I? Just like you taught me that if you wanted something, you took it." Her mouth twisted. "Only difference is, she still won. She still ended up happy while I—"

She barked another laugh, harsh and joyless.

"Three miscarriages, Mother. Three," she sneered. "Because the man I 'stole'—the man you and Father encouraged me to pursue—was a monster." 5

Felicia's eyes glinted with something wild, something furious.

"While she," she spat, "was playing house with a man who would have rather eaten silver than



raise a hand against her."

Lucinda choked on a sob, but Felicia steamrolled on, her words gathering venom.

"I gave Danielle everything she had!" she snapped. "I gave her a caring husband—my husband—after I found out what he was, the infection that raced through his veins. I gave her my ex-fiancé—you remember, Hades? You were mine first." I stiffened, the disgust rolling off me thick as smoke. 3

Felicia didn't notice.

She couldn't.

She was too busy spiraling into her own madness.

"I gave her a child when I couldn't even keep mine alive," she snarled. "I handed her a fucking fairy tale. And what did I get?"

She slammed her palm flat against the glass, voice rising into a shriek.

"I got beaten," she hissed. "I got locked up while I bled out, so nobody would know that His Royal Majesty was a sadistic bastard." 2



Lucinda shook her head mutely, tears slipping down her cheeks.

Felicia leaned closer, her breath fogging the glass.

"I got pregnant again," she whispered. "It was a girl. And he beat me for it. For killing his son." 1

Montegue's hand clenched around Lucinda's trembling arm.

But Felicia smiled again—a horrible, twisted parody of the child they once knew.

"And Danielle?" she mocked. "She would have a son. She had peace. She had everything I bled for. And she still had the audacity to look at me with pity and say she forgave me." 1

Her smile fractured, wild.

"Forgave me. For what? For surviving?"

She let out a wet laugh, almost giddy.

"I should have been the one to live happy. I earned it. She stole it from me. She stole it all." 10

Lucinda finally covered her mouth with her hands, the sobs tearing free.



But Felicia pressed her forehead against the glass, her voice dropping into a low, seething whisper.

"So what if I killed her?" she murmured. "Family forgives. Family always forgives."

She smiled again.

A delusion.

A madness.

"Right, Mother?" she coaxed sweetly. "We'll still plan her anniversary. Orchids and asters. Danielle always loved orchards. You remember, don't you?"

Lucinda collapsed fully against Montegue's side, broken.

Montegue straightened.

For the first time, his voice cut across the room—sharp, clear, final.

"Felicia Veronique Montegue," he said.

She flinched at the full use of her name.

"You are no longer our daughter."



Felicia's mouth opened.

Closed.

"No," she whispered, the first crack of real fear flashing through her eyes. "No, no, you can't—"

Montegue didn't waver.

"Your fate," he said coldly, "belongs fully to the mercy of Alpha Hades Stavros and his mate, Eve Valmont." 1

Felicia's face drained of color.

"No," she rasped. "No!"

But Montegue didn't look back.

He simply tightened his grip around Lucinda's shoulders and guided her away.

Step by step.

Away from the daughter who was already dead to them.

Felicia slammed her fists against the glass as they retreated.

Screaming.

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Begging.

Cursing.

But no one turned back.

Not even once.

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