

29 Behind The Mask

Eve~ 1

We sat as we had the previous day. Silence engulfed the room again as she assessed me.

"She was here, wasn't she?" she murmured when the quiet became unbearable.

"Who?"

"Her Highness, Felicia."

I nodded. "How did you know?"

She smiled sheepishly. "Her suffocating perfume is hard to miss."

I smiled a bit at that. "Almost passed out," I joked in return.

She laughed. "Don't let her intimidate you."

"Am I that easy to read?"

"No, dear. I know her Highness; she can be a bit... well, much."

"Yeah, she is." It was hard to believe they were of the same kind. Both Lycans but so different.

"Don't let her get to you," she advised gently.

I nodded, appreciating her kindness.

"So, let's continue from where we stopped yesterday"

"Of course," I replied, sitting up straighter. "I am ready."

"What's your biggest fear?" she asked, her tone thoughtful.

"Cages," I said too fast, immediately realizing my mistake. I was supposed to be Ellen. Why would Ellen fear cages?

I felt my heart race, the silence that followed heavy with suspicion. Her eyes lingered on me, analyzing the quickness of my response. I held my breath, forcing myself to stay composed.

"I'm sorry," I quickly added, attempting to recover. "That came out wrong. I meant..." I paused, scrambling for something that would fit Ellen's persona. "I fear losing control," I said, forcing a laugh. "The idea of being trapped in a situation where I can't make decisions for myself. It makes me feel caged."

I expected her eyes to narrow or something, but her expression remained open. "My fear is failing when I need so much to succeed," she supplied after me.

"Was it a patient?" I asked.

She did not look all too surprised that I had asked. "You knew I was a therapist?"

I shrugged. "It's obvious. Who comes to see a stranger just to talk about her feelings right after

a suicide attempt and a panic attack?"

She blinked, probably surprised at how direct I was. "You are right," she finally spoke. "And yes, it was a patient of mine who I failed."

"I am sorry," I offered, "But let's go to what you really want to know. You have questions, and I have answers." With the way things were going, I was getting too comfortable with her, and sooner or later I would let something slip. I had to make sure she knew only what I wanted her to know. I had to take the initiative.

"Okay then," she cleared her throat. "When did your panic attacks start?"

"Not too long ago. It was after I found out that I would marry the Lycan King."

She looked convinced. "How often are they?"

"Not too often. Once every two weeks, maybe?"

"Alright. What triggers them?"

I swallowed as the half-lie slipped past my lips.

"Close proximity with the King."

"Alright," she nodded. Her movements were calm, methodical, and I could feel her analyzing every word I said, every nuance of my body language.

"Has it always been this way?" she asked, her voice gentle but probing.

I shook my head, careful not to reveal too much. "It started recently, after... everything." The truth lingered on the edge of my mind, but I couldn't afford to let it slip. I was supposed to be Ellen, not Eve.

"Everything?" she asked, raising an eyebrow, curiosity piqued.

"The marriage license signing, the pressure... it's been overwhelming." It was a vague answer, but I hoped it was enough to steer the conversation away from the truth.

"I see," she mused, tapping her pen against the page. "And how do you feel about the King himself?"

I hesitated, choosing my words carefully. "He's... difficult." That much was true, though probably not in the way she imagined. "It's not easy to be around someone so... imposing."

Her gaze softened, as though she was sympathizing with me. "You know, it's okay to feel that way. Relationships, especially under these circumstances, can be very complex."

I nodded, though her words felt hollow to me. My relationship with Hades was far more complicated than she could ever guess.

"Have you spoken to anyone about how you feel?" she pressed.

"No," I answered, perhaps too quickly. "I don't think they would understand."

"I know this is difficult for you, but I want you to remember that you don't have to face this alone. There are people who care, even if it doesn't feel that way right now."

I met her eyes, wondering if she could really see through the layers I had so carefully constructed. Her kindness was disarming, and for a moment, I felt the urge to tell her everything—to unload the burden of my lies. But I couldn't. I had to protect Silverpine pack. I had to protect myself.

"Thank you," I whispered, my voice barely audible.

She smiled warmly. "We'll take this one step at a time."

She adjusted her posture, leaning in slightly, her gaze softening with concern. "Ellen, I know this is difficult to talk about, but I think it's important. You mentioned something about a panic attack and... a suicide attempt."

I froze, feeling the weight of her words settle in the room. It was as though the air itself had become heavy. I swallowed hard, knowing this was the moment she had been trying to get to since we started.

"Yes," I said, my voice tight, unsure how to navigate this without revealing too much. "It happened... when I felt like everything was closing in on me. Like I had no way out." It was both a lie and the truth.

Her brow furrowed, her eyes full of concern. "What pushed you to that point? Was it the marriage? Or something else?"

I needed to be careful now. My response had to align with Ellen's experiences, not my own. "It was... everything. The pressure to be someone I'm not, to live up to everyone's expectations. It felt like I was suffocating." I paused, trying to sound genuine. "And being near him, it only made it worse."

She was silent for a moment, absorbing my words. Then she spoke softly, "I understand how overwhelming that can feel, but I need you to know that there are always ways to cope. Have you thought about what might help you avoid getting to that place again?"

I blinked, caught off guard by the question. "I'm... not sure."

"That's okay," she reassured me. "We'll work through it. But remember, Ellen, no matter how impossible it seems, there is always another way. You've been through a lot, but you're still here, and that means something."

Her words struck a chord deep within me, echoing the same sentiments I had buried long ago. The truth was, I didn't want to die. I wanted to escape—escape the betrayal, the lies, the pain, the cage I'd been forced into, where death felt like a far better alternative. But I couldn't tell her that.

I forced a small smile. "I know. I'm trying."

She reached across the bed and gently placed her hand over mine. "You don't have to face this alone. There's strength in reaching out for help when you need it."

I looked down at our hands, her touch warm and comforting. I wondered, not for the first time, if maybe—just maybe—this would have been easier if I could be open to her, but I banished the thought immediately.

"Now, we come to the end of today's session," she said as she rose.

I got up too and accompanied her to the door. But she suddenly turned around. "And I got you something."

"Something?"

She retrieved a pad and a pencil. She handed them to me.

I blinked, not even able to remember the last time I had touched a sketching pad or a pencil



"Thought you might want these," she said before opening the door to leave.

"Lia," I called after her just before she closed the door.

"Yes?"

A lump formed in my throat, but I swallowed it down. "Tell him I said thank you."

Her eyes widened. "For what?"

"For sending you over."

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