



293 Her Entrance

Eve ¹

Hades

"You have a son," Silas said almost breathlessly.
"Danielle's child is Elliot."

He stared at me across the round table as though waiting for a punchline.

"Felicia was the facilitator," Gallinti finally found his voice since I dropped the bombshell. "She is a traitor."

He tried to keep his voice level, but from the slight increase in pitch, it was obvious the revelation had dropped like a bomb.

"All of it is true," I replied without much feeling. My mind had wandered elsewhere like it always did these days.

Eve.

Everything always returned to her.

Her torture in her eyes when I injected her. Her



stare before she disappeared. Her silence in the wake of my truth. The letter with a single word—Goodbye. That damn word rang louder in my skull than war drums ever had.

"And where is the boy now?" Silas asked, leaning forward slowly.

His tone was cautious. Too cautious. As if he already feared the answer.

"Safe," I said. "I made sure of it." I couldn't even look at my own son. I couldn't dare not when my my lashing out had become more unpredictable. Without Eve, the flux had found its voice again and it's presence was lava in my searing through my insides.

"With all due respect," Silas started. "Shouldn't you have sensed it. I know my own child before I even see him."

"I didn't know," I snapped, sharper than I meant to. The room stilled. My hands curled into fists against the table. "I didn't know because she made sure I wouldn't." Passing the blame like a fucking coward again, unable to bare the brunt of it. I had no fucking excuse.



> "You just keep losing, don't you?"

The Flux's voice slithered through my skull like acid through silk—elegant, cruel, and utterly inescapable.

"Your mate. Your son. Your grip on power. The very leash you wrapped around your own emotions... snapped like the brittle thread it always was."

I clenched my teeth, blood throbbing behind my eyes.

"She ran from you, Hades. Just like everyone else. Even the boy flinched. You saw it—felt it."

My hands trembled beneath the table.

"You could have been a god," it hissed, almost gleeful now. "But you chose to love. And now look at you—just a broken beast choking on the ruins of his own empire."

A white-hot pulse of rage surged through my spine, and for one terrifying second, I wanted to destroy the entire chamber.

The council. The walls. Myself.



"Enough!"

My chair scraped violently as I stood, the legs screeching against the polished floor. Shadows reeled.

Then—

"She had her bases all covered," Montegue said.

The calm in his voice hit like a slap.

"She knew the risk of a royal paternity test. Bone marrow transplants—four of them. Each one weakening the trace markers just enough to skew the results."

I froze.

Montegue's eyes were steady on mine, unreadable as ever. "They altered the marrow signature each time. A living camouflage. No one would've caught it unless they knew exactly what to look for."

Montegue's fingers steepled on the polished table, his expression carved from the same stone as his reputation—measured, clinical, too old for surprises.



"This is why you never sensed it," he said, his voice a low current beneath the tension. "The transplants. They distorted the lineage trace in Elliot's blood. Each graft recalibrated his markers—especially the lunar-specific imprints we rely on for paternal alignment."

He leaned back slightly, eyes not accusing—but not kind, either.

"You weren't incompetent, Hades. You were outmaneuvered. Intentionally."

My jaw locked.

That word.

Intentionally.

A child born of blood and fate, stolen from me while I slept in the illusion that he was someone else's burden.

"He was your son the moment he took his first breath," Montegue continued. "And from that same moment, he was placed under layers of false truths and fabricated loyalties. All designed to keep you blind."

I didn't know what stung worse—the idea that I'd



failed to recognize my own blood, or the knowledge that everyone else in that room now saw me as the king who'd needed a traitor to confess him he had a child.

>"What a failure you are. I could change that."

"You're telling me this to spare me the humiliation," I said, voice brittle.

Montegue's gaze didn't waver. "I'm telling you this to make sure you don't fall to it. I've already lost a daughter to ambition and one the first one's ambitions. I don't intend to lose a king to guilt." 2

His words were to appease the men we surrounded ourselves with at the meeting, not me. Because that didn't justify even a little of what I had done.

I ran my hand through my hair, searing hot pain blossoming through my skull as I made contact with the growing horn. I grimaced from the pain, whispering her name as a flash red locks crashed through my thoughts. A dull ache unfurled between my ribs.

>"Elysia." The name echoed instead of the name



of woman that I loved. 1

What was that?

"I guess I see why she needed to clear her head. I can attest," Silas interrupted my thoughts. "This Tower can be suffocating, much less for a werewolf. But besides that, when will the extractions begin. The harvesting was to have started days ago if not for the unsettling revelations that the goddess graced us with. Still, the serum..." 2

My breath stalled as his words sunk in like anvil in quick sand, dissolving the rest of his rant.

Silence wrapped around me like a fuse seconds before detonation.

Montegue and Kael both stiffened as Silas kept speaking, but I didn't hear a word of it.

The Flux laughed low in the back of my mind, like a serpent coiled around a throne it knew I'd never reclaim.

I reached up, fingers brushing the horn sprouting from my scalp. Still small. Still subtle. But growing.



The pain flared like a branding iron.

>"She left you and still you bleed for her. How divine. How... pathetic."

Silas kept going, oblivious. "—with the sample harvested and matured, we'll finally be able to accelerate mass production of the serum. It's only a matter of how quickly we can replicate the —" 1

"My wife," I said, rising from my seat, voice low.

It wasn't a shout.

It didn't need to be.

It sliced through the room like a blade dipped in ice.

Silas's mouth froze mid-word.

"My wife," I repeated, slower now, each syllable like thunder rolling over still water, "will not be gutted like a pig." 3

The silence that followed was apocalyptic.

Montegue looked at me sharply.

Kael didn't breathe.



Even the Flux fell quiet.

Just then—

The door opened. 1

A hiss of hydraulics, a shaft of afternoon light
bleeding across the floor.

Boots.

A shadow.

A scent I'd spent a hundred nights chasing
through dreams and madness.

Eve stepped in, posture poised, gaze sharp as
ever—though not on me. 2

Not even once.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," she said smoothly.

Like she hadn't vanished.

Like she hadn't left me howling in her absence.

Like she didn't still own every part of me I hadn't
already torn to pieces.

And I—I didn't move.



Didn't breathe.

Because her presence was the first real thing I'd felt in days.

Weeks.

Lifetimes.

She didn't look at me.

Not once.

Not even a flicker of acknowledgment.

But I stared—gods, I stared—because the woman standing in that doorway was both her and not her. 1

Eve.

And yet—

She was different now.

Stronger, somehow. Firmer. The kind of presence that didn't fill a room so much as command it. She didn't need a throne or a title. Her spine did all the talking. Her silence shouted over everyone else's noise. 1



She took in the council with cool detachment, like she was here to observe, not perform.

Gone were the beige dresses.

Gone was the perpetual hunch in her shoulders, the subtle tilt of someone trying to take up less space. The girl who'd stood in this very tower with bruised wrists and eyes full of defiance wrapped in fear—that girl was dead. 1

This woman?

This woman could burn empires. 3

She'd hacked off her hair. The long, crimson waves that used to spill like wildfire down her back were gone, replaced with blunt, uneven strands that barely grazed her shoulders. A soldier's cut. A survivor's choice. 2

She was thinner.

Gaunter.

There were shadows beneath her cheekbones that hadn't been there before, like grief had carved her out and left only the essentials behind—bone, fire, and a will sharpened to a blade.



Her eyes—those eyes I'd memorized in a thousand shades of pain and fury—were still that same striking glaziers but only sharp enough to cut.

But they didn't soften when they looked around.

Not even when they landed on me. 1

The simple white T-shirt she wore looked like something she'd borrowed off a laundry line. Jeans, scuffed at the knees, worn soft with travel. No jewelry. No insignia. No mark of station or bloodline.

She looked ordinary.

And that made it worse.

Because the more normal she looked, the more inhuman the damage I'd done felt. I had altered her with my distrust and actions to the point where if I didn't recognise her aura to its entrancing miniscule detail, I would have believed it was someone else.

The silence dragged.

Not a soul moved.



Not even the Flux breathed.

She took one more step inside and lifted her chin, voice cool, firm, cutting through the air like a blade through silk.

"Operation Eclipse will continue," Her voice carried, seemingly to bounce off the walls and echo in my skull.

Silas stood, glaring but still shocked at the intrusion. "What..."

"You want my blood, my marrow, the very essence of my being in order to survive what is coming," she shut him down.

Silas's mouth hung open, a sputter of disbelief rising in his throat—but Eve didn't so much as glance in his direction.

She walked forward slowly, not rushing, not hesitant. Like she owned the floor already. Like she'd weighed every word she was about to say and decided none of them needed sugar.

"You want me to be the spine of your war, the vein of your survival, and the price of your future."

She stopped at the edge of the circle, just outside the perimeter of the table, her hands by her sides—relaxed. But there was nothing soft in her stance. She looked like a woman who had walked through fire and decided to carry it with her.

"Fine," she said simply.

Silas blinked.

"But if you want access to what's in me—" she tapped her chest once, not dramatically, just enough, "—then I want a seat at the table." 1

A beat of silence.

"I'm not here as a prisoner. Not a subject. And definitely not a lab rat. A donor that gets something in return."

Her eyes landed briefly on Montague, then flicked away. 1

"I want a voice. One that doesn't come with leashes or disclaimers. You get my compliance—if I get your council. 1

Not a demand.



A transaction.

Offered like a dagger, clean and fair, laid out on velvet.

Montegue's brow lifted slightly—interest, maybe even approval. Kael looked stunned. Silas? Still choking on his own outrage, but too floored to interrupt.

I couldn't take my eyes off her.

Because I knew this wasn't just strategy.

This was her line in the sand.

Her reclaiming control.

Her voice was cool—cooler than I'd ever heard it. Not cold in malice, but cold in resolve. She wasn't angry. She wasn't here to be vindicated. She was here to make decisions. To shape the future she had once been denied.

And gods help me... she was magnificent.

Silas sputtered. "You can't be serious."

"She's out of line," Gallinti added quickly, his voice rising like he thought volume would make him correct. "You can't just walk in here, make



demands—"

"She didn't ask," Montegue interrupted coolly.

"She offered terms."

That silenced the room again.

