

32 The Big Bad Lycan King

Hades~ 1

"Let me get this straight," Kael said, pointing at me with a smirk. "The Lycan King, the man who can kill with just a look, tried to make a joke?"

I shot him a glare, my patience fraying at the edges. He was skating on dangerous ground, but Kael rarely had the sense to stop himself. The room felt smaller, the tension between us thick in the air. But Kael, as usual, seemed oblivious, still grinning like he was amused by his own audacity.

"Kael," I growled, my tone holding a warning. "You're testing me."

He tilted his head, raising an eyebrow. "Come on, Hades. You joking? That's like a wolf trying to wear sheep's clothing. It just doesn't suit you."

I could feel my jaw tightening. I took a step forward, closing the gap between us. Kael's smirk faltered for a brief moment, but he held his ground, like always. He had his uses, but his mouth ran faster than his survival instincts sometimes.

"You think because I'm the Lycan King, I don't understand humor?" I said, my voice low, the words simmering with annoyance. "That I'm incapable of anything but violence and orders?"

Kael gave a small shrug, but the amusement faded from his face. "It's not that, Hades. You're just... intense. All the time. It's hard to imagine you trying to lighten a mood when you're always carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders."

I narrowed my eyes, ready to shut him up, but he continued, his voice softening. "Look, I'm not trying to piss you off. But the thing with the princess... she's not like the rest of us. She's fragile in some ways, you know? All that power, but inside, she's still a werewolf in a pack of Lycans. She needs to feel safe around you, not like you're just the king who could snap her in two."

His words made me pause. I wasn't sure whether I was more irritated or... thoughtful. I wasn't used to anyone telling me how I should be, least of all Kael. But what he was saying about the princess gnawed at something inside me.

"I am already aware she is afraid of me," I said

quietly, more to myself than to him.

Kael exhaled, scratching the back of his head. "Not exactly afraid, cautious. But she's on edge around you, like she doesn't know what to expect. You make her nervous, and not in a good way."

I clenched my fists, a deep frown creasing my brow. The last thing I needed was for the princess to feel unsafe around me. At least after considering what Amelia had said. But what did Kael expect me to do? I wasn't the type to smile big toothy grins and crack jokes. That wasn't who I was.

"I don't know how to be any different," I muttered, frustration seeping into my tone. I could believe that I had to change because of Darius' daughter.

Kael looked at me for a moment, his usual cockiness replaced with something almost resembling sympathy. "You don't have to be a different person, Hades. Just... softer. Let her see that you care, that you're not just this unbreakable wall. She already knows you're strong and as intimidating as the devil. Now show her you can be gentle when it matters."

I stared at him, his words stubbornly sinking into me. I wasn't used to thinking about how others saw me. I led through strength, through fear and respect. But for Ellen, it seemed like it would be too much of just not enough.

Kael gave me a small smile, more sincere than I'd ever seen from him. "Trust me. She doesn't need you to be a comedian. Just... let her know you're there for her." He said, his voice suddenly turning hard. "I know who she is, but you have to bury the disdain so this will not be a waste. You have sacrificed too much to lose out because you cannot stand her."

I sighed, rubbing a hand across my face. This was unfamiliar territory for me, but if it meant Ellen wouldn't attempt to take her life or end up severely depressed because of the role I had for her, then I'd try. I wasn't sure I could ever be what Kael was suggesting, but maybe I could meet her halfway.

"Fine," I said at last, my voice gruff. "But if you ever mention this conversation again, I'll make sure you regret it."

Kael grinned, the cockiness slipping back into place. "Wouldn't dream of it, Your Majesty."

I gave him one last glare before turning toward the door, the weight of Kael's advice lingering with me. I didn't know how to be softer. But for Ellen, I would have to learn.

I turned back around, gritting my teeth and clenching my fists until my nails penetrated the skin of my palm. "Tell me," I murmured. "How do I do it?"

Kael's eyes widened before a slow, mischievous smile that I wanted to kick off made its way to his lips. "My king wants tips!" he gasped.

"Don't push it," I warned.

Kael raised his hands in mock surrender, though the smirk never left his face. "Alright, alright. I'll behave. Let's start simple—just talk to her. You don't have to say much, but enough so she doesn't feel like she's walking on eggshells around you. Maybe... ask her how she's doing, if she needs anything. Show her you're paying attention to her, not just giving orders."

I exhaled sharply, the idea of small talk foreign to me. I'd spent centuries commanding armies, leading wars, not engaging in idle conversation.

"What else?" I asked, forcing myself to listen.

Kael rubbed his chin as though thinking hard. "Well, you could stop looming over her all the time. You know, maybe try standing at a normal distance instead of looking like you're about to swallow her whole."

I shot him a withering look. "Looming?"

"Yeah, man," Kael chuckled. "You have this habit of, uh, towering over people. It's great for intimidation, but not so much for... comfort."

"I am not towering," I growled, though a part of me knew he was right. I had spent a lifetime using my presence as a weapon.

"Sure, sure," Kael said, waving it off. "Also, maybe... less growling. At least around her. Women like Ellen don't respond well to constant growling, believe it or not."

I let out a frustrated sigh, my fists still clenched. This was more than just a change in behavior—it felt like changing my entire way of being. But Kael's words, irritating as they were, carried truth. Ellen wasn't like the others who followed me. She was fragile in ways that my usual strength would only crush.

"Anything else, expert?" I asked dryly.

Kael grinned again, clearly enjoying this. "You're doing great so far, boss. Just don't forget to be patient. She's not going to warm up to you overnight. You've got to show her you're someone she can rely on, not just the big bad Lycan King."

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