



320 We Are The Same

Eve ¹

Bile rose in my throat. I took a step closer, my fists clenched so tight my nails bit into my palms. A flash of red tinged my vision.

This bloody bitch...

"Don't call him that," I drawled, each word low and razored.

Her green eyes flickered—and for a heartbeat, there was fear. Real, flickering fear behind that infuriating calm.

Then she smiled. Slow. Crooked. Like decay curling at the edges of something once beautiful.

"You scared me," she murmured, glancing down at herself with mock awe.

"How low the mighty have fallen," she whispered, mostly to herself. "I've been chipped down to this... this pathetic shell of a woman who should have had it all."

Her eyes lifted to mine again.



"I like the new haircut, by the way," she said, dry amusement in her tone. "Really brings out your cheekbones."

She tilted her head, examining me like she was cataloging a scar.

"Who knew they were that sharp? Guess it was just one of those things you hid."

Her gaze drifted upward, tracing invisible lines across the cell ceiling.

"You and me—we're the same. But unlike you, I showed my claws. A little fang, now and then. You? You hid it all. Even from yourself."

She laughed under her breath, the sound cracked and too dry.

I ground my jaw, teeth clashing hard enough to ache. "Elliot—"

She raised a cuffed hand, stopping me with the laziest gesture I'd ever seen. Her gaze dropped again, sharp and hollow.

"Don't talk to me about Danielle's child." Her voice was brittle glass. "Let's talk about me for once."



She leaned forward, eyes glassy with something too fractured to be rage.

"Did you know when I told them what he did to me... they ignored it?" Her voice cracked, barely audible. "Who does that?"

Then her focus slipped again, like she couldn't hold on to a single thought long enough.

"You granted Rook mercy," she murmured.

"Despite what he did to you. You could at least hear me out."

Mixed feelings surged up, thick and boiling beneath my ribs. I said nothing, only glared.

Her eyes met mine again, rheumy and filled with dread that mirrored mine. "My little songbird's story can wait, don't you think?"

Again, I said nothing, holding that stare that had once filled me with fear.

"Perfect!" she chirped like a happy bird. "Father played chess and won, but we—his daughters—lost. Especially me."

My eyes twitched as she continued without a shred of shame.



"Danielle waltzed through life. Her marriage was a fantasy I could only dream about."

A whimsical expression leaked into her features.

"That man would've burned down the world for her. She just wouldn't let him.

Green eyes like emeralds that always seemed to gleam. Hair like chestnut. A cheeky smile at anyone she might beam. Father even had a little rhyme for her."

She touched her hair, twirling a strand absentmindedly.

"But we had the same hair, the same eyes... but I..." Her lips trembled. "I never got a rhythm. Not from Father," she added, her expression turning bitter, her voice acidic.

"Certainly not from Leon. Never from him. I saved him from a life with my bore of a sister, and then he repaid me with nothing but pain." She spat the words—each syllable seemed to burn its way down her throat.

"I tried everything to please him, but he was insatiable. He craved my agony. Craved my utter



ruin like a sadist. The first day he raised his hand to me, I knew... I knew... I just fucking knew that hell had just begun. There was no limit to his cruelty. There was nothing that could stop him. No one who could stop him from destroying me." Her eyes glazed over, but her tears refused to fall.

"I might be a psychopath, but I met my match in him. In the worst way possible. I drove myself to cutting... and then he found out." Her throat bobbed as she swallowed. "I knew I had conjured the devil. He locked me up like some common animal and starved me. He said I was just seeking attention and ruining his reputation. I was pregnant then." 1

Felicia's voice broke on the last word, but still no tears fell. Her throat trembled. Her mouth twitched.

"I lost him," she whispered again. "And guess who he blamed."

She leaned her head back against the stone wall, the manacles groaning faintly with the shift.

"He said I did it on purpose. Said I wanted to ruin his legacy. Called me a parasite. Said I had no



womb—just a pit."

I stayed silent, but my lungs burned.

She dragged in a rattled breath.

"I got pregnant two more times after that," she went on, hollow. "I thought if I kept them, maybe... maybe he'd forgive me. That he'd stop."

Her lips curled, but the smile didn't reach her eyes.

"But they died too. Both of them. And every time, I got hell for it. He said my body was a grave. That I was cursed."

She chuckled, dry and deranged. "He even made me bury one. With my hands."

My spine stiffened. I felt sick.

Felicia's eyes met mine again, and for a split second, I saw something almost childlike beneath the wreckage. Something reaching.

"I didn't start out like this, you know."

I clenched my jaw, the taste of iron rising behind my teeth.



"You steal a rattlesnake," I said coldly, "and think it won't bite you?"

The silence that followed was sharp.

Then—

Felicia laughed.

Not a fake laugh. Not manic.

A genuine, cracked-open laugh that sounded too human for everything she'd just said.

She laughed so hard she wheezed, tipping her head back, unbothered by the shackles or the stone or the venom in my voice.

"Oh gods," she gasped. "That was good. That was really good."

I stared at her, fury bubbling like a volcano under my skin.

She caught her breath, wiping a tear from the corner of her eye with the edge of her cuff.

"You see?" she said, smiling at me like we were just two women catching up after years apart.

"You've got bite after all. Told you we were alike."



"I'm nothing like you," I snapped.

But even as the words left me, I wasn't sure if they were entirely true.

Because I had seen what monsters could make of women.

And I was starting to understand that Felicia wasn't born a serpent.

She'd been made one.

And now she was poison, through and through.

Felicia's laughter faded like smoke—lingering, acrid.

"We are alike," she said softly, that brittle smile still stretched across her lips. "You stole the husband of an unburied woman and expected not to get burned."

It wasn't the same.

But I didn't say that.

Because even if it wasn't the same, it still burned.

She watched my silence like a hawk. Like it was a



victory.

"So," she went on, tilting her head, "when I got pregnant the fourth time, I thought maybe the curse had passed. Maybe the gods were tired of punishing me."

Her gaze dimmed.

"And then I found the room."

I didn't move.

Felicia didn't look at me as she said it.

"He had photographs. Of her. Danielle. In a room behind a false wall in the study. Like an altar. Candles. Journals. Clippings. Her perfume bottles." Her laugh turned glass-sharp. "He was obsessed."

She lifted her eyes again, and this time, it was venom.

"He had left her for me. Me. And still—he worshiped the ghost of her like I was nothing but her shadow. He wanted everything Hades had, you know. The power. The name. But most of all... he wanted Danielle."



My lips parted, but no words came.

"Oh, you're stunned?" Felicia sneered. "Imagine how I felt. Knowing my sister could steal something without even trying. Without even knowing. That all I had to offer—my body, my blood, my soul—was nothing compared to her breath in a room."

Her voice cracked.

"He swore me to silence. But he stopped hiding it. He stopped pretending. When he made hate to me, he would moan her name. In public, he was polite to me, but to her—gods, he treated her like royalty. Like a relic. Better than Hades did, even. Said she was graceful. Said she was bright. That she could charm without trying."

I was frozen. Breathing felt like swallowing needles.

"He said she didn't wear too much makeup. Didn't dye her hair. Said she didn't need to. She was pure." Felicia's mouth twisted into a snarl. "Said she had tamed the beast that Hades was. Turned him into a puppy of a husband. That she was a lovely enigma."



Her voice trembled.

"Then she got pregnant. And another round of hell began."

I already knew where this was going.

"My daughter," she whispered. "The baby girl who had survived everything... she couldn't survive that. Not his jealousy. Not his wrath. I lost her."

Felicia closed her eyes.

"When his father found him—hurting me—he made him stop. But only because he didn't want the scandal. He made me keep quiet.

"You think you're the first woman he's hurt? You're just the first to complain. Next time, bleed quietly. You're carrying the future of this house, not your own." He had said.

But why would I be surprised? All I had to remember was what he did to Hades.

"I couldn't even tell him I'd lost the baby. Again."

Her eyes opened. Calm. Still.

"I wanted to save myself."



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Then she looked at me. And for the first time, I saw her with terrifying clarity.

"If he could plot to kill his own brother to get his ex fiance," she said, "who was I?"

I said it before I even thought it.

"So you took the first shot."

Her smile returned—slow, savage.

"Exactly."

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