

## 337 Flicker Of Light In The Darkness

Eve 1

>"How can you cry?" the man snarled, stepping closer, every word a thunderclap. "They removed your tear ducts in the lab. I ordered it myself."

My breath caught.

What?

But Hades didn't answer. He stood frozen, eyes wide, still locked on me—but something else was clawing its way behind them. I saw it. The rupture. The obedience.

The conditioning.

> "Even with your blue eyes dimmed to grey," his father spat, his voice rising, venom in every syllable, "even with your smile filed down, your dimples corrected—you're still weak."

A tremble passed through Hades' frame.

> "A disappointment," the man went on. "A



fucking stain. Failing again. Failing me."

His voice cracked like a whip.

> "You were born for greatness, and you chose her. Again and again and again. You chose her!"

With each word, Hades' talons dug deeper.

Tore further.

Heat surged through his hand, pulsing from the Flux as if his father's voice was summoning it back—no, shoving it back in. My body arched as fire licked through my veins. The warmth I had felt moments before was gone.

Replaced with pain.

Raw, splitting, complete.

The Marker within me screamed.

All the progress we'd made—it dissipated.

> "Stop..." I gasped, trying to keep my grip on him, fingers locking behind his neck. "Please..."

But he was slipping.

Becoming something else.



Someone else.

The Flux roared back to life, pouring into him like oil into flame. His veins blackened again, crawling up his throat. His mouth opened in a snarl.

And I felt it—

He wanted to kill me.

And he would.

But I didn't let go.

I held on, even as his claws seared and shredded, even as every nerve screamed to flee.

Because I remembered.

I remembered everything.

His arrival at the Lunar Heights that day—unannounced, magnetic, already dangerous. The way he looked at me like I was meant.

That first poisoned kiss—half-truth, half-test, all heat. The way he smirked against my lips like he already knew he'd ruin me.

Our dance—slow, languid, forbidden—on the



dance floor when it felt like no one was looking,  
his hand possessive at my waist.

The first time I felt my heart in his arms. The way  
he stilled, nostrils flaring, reverence and desire  
fighting in his eyes. And how he didn't take  
advantage. Not then. He held me. He chose me.

His kisses. His teasing. That damned, perfect  
smile—dimples and all. 1

He had been everything.

And now—

Now he was this.

A weapon. A curse. A shadow.

> "But he's still mine," I whispered.

I couldn't breathe anymore. My lungs were filling  
with blood. My soul was bleeding at the edges.

But I chose.

I chose him.

And this time, not to save him.

But to die with him.





If that's what it took.

> "I choose you, Hades," I said, not caring if my voice cracked. "I choose death with you over life without you."

His eyes twitched.

The claws trembled again.

> "I love you," I said. "I love you. Even now. Even like this. I love you."

He choked.

For a heartbeat—no longer.

His claws stopped digging.

But his father's voice thundered again.

> "Finish it! Kill her! Or you'll never leave this place!"

And the walls answered. The Marker screamed. The Flux surged.

But so did something else—

A sound.

Small. Clear.



A whisper.

> "Daddy?" 1

It came from the door.

And Hades—Lucien—heard it.

His eyes widened. The world around us cracked.

> "Daddy?"

The word shattered something.

It echoed—small, clear, impossible. A sound that shouldn't have existed in this place, in this moment.

But it did.

And Hades heard it.

His body jolted like he'd been struck by lightning. The claws embedded in my side froze—then twitched, uncertain.

I turned, blood smearing down my cheek, barely daring to hope—

And saw him.

Elliot.



Standing in the fractured doorway, hair  
disheveled, feet bare, oversized shirt flapping in  
the ghostwind. His lips were parted—not in  
silence, not in fear.

In speech.

> "Daddy," he said again.

And this time—

It wasn't a whisper.

It was a voice.

His voice.

My heart stopped. My breath caught. My entire  
body went numb.

He was speaking.

My baby was speaking.

> "Elliot?" I choked, tears stinging anew. "No, no,  
what are you doing here, you shouldn't—"

But I couldn't move.

I couldn't get to him.

And Hades—



Hades just stared.

Like he didn't understand what he was seeing.  
Like Elliot was a mirage, or a memory, or a part  
of the test.

His claws slipped from my side, finally retreating  
—but not in mercy. In confusion. His head turned  
toward the boy, shoulders heaving.

> "That voice," he murmured. "That... voice..."

Something fought inside him. A war behind his  
eyes.

But it wasn't over.

> "Kill him," a voice rasped.

I froze.

That wasn't Lucas.

It wasn't even a man.

It was Vassir.

And the mask was gone.

The figure posing as Hades' father shifted—his  
edges warping, shadow peeling like rotted skin.





The real Lucas had never been here.

Vassir had hijacked the memory.

> "You hesitate for this runt?" the creature barked. "He's the final piece. The final tether. If you want to be free, you must sever everything. Even this."

Hades trembled.

> "Kill him, Lucien!" Vassir shrieked, the walls splitting open with black vines of corruption. "End it!"

And Hades moved.

He ripped his hand from me—flesh tearing, blood spurting—and lunged forward with inhuman speed, claws outstretched toward the boy.

> "NO!" I screamed, dragging myself up on shaking arms. "HADES, STOP—!"

I stumbled forward, but I was too slow. My legs buckled. My body was broken.

And Hades' claws were inches away from Elliot's face.



But then—

They stopped.

Mid-air.

Like something caught them.

Held them still.

And I saw it.

The red in Elliot's eyes.

The black tendrils on his skin.

Not fear.

Flux.

Mirroring his father.

The same corruption.

The same power.

But... unbent.

Elliot stared into Hades' eyes.

And whispered—

> "No more."



His voice shook the air like prophecy.

And the room stilled.

Completely.

Hades' arms dropped.

His mouth opened. Not in rage.

In awe.

He stared at the boy.

At his son.

And he whispered—

> "Elliot...? Your name is Elliot."

Like he was remembering.

Like he was waking up.

And behind us, the Marker flared again—brighter than before.

It was so close.

I could smell it.


Elliot held out his hand. "Come, I know a way out of here. You will be safe."



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+5

The flux pulse under his skin but did not affect him in the way it affected Hades. He seemed so in control of the insidious force that living in his veins.

Hades looks down at his hand, and I hold my breath. The second drew on into an eternity before Hades took it. 

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