



## 343 Bound By Him and Her

Montegue's face was drawn down in solemnity as we stood face to face, my arms crossed as spoke. His actions so close to the Rite had been like a rug under my feet, the fall of which would have hurt even more if I had not been so preoccupied with Hades and his survival while still trying to comprehend the fact that Elliot also had the flux in his too. 1

It was not about Elliot not being there to reach Hades when the time was going but more so being blind sides. Not finding Elliot in the room, afraid I would never see him again.

"To be honest, I was overwhelmed with the state of things, and it seemed like with every second that passed, there was another revelation that turned all of our careful planning on its head. I'm old enough to know when I'm being outpaced... but not foolish enough to pretend I'm unaffected." Montegue said, his words were rushed but coherent, understandable. Because I had felt the same.

"I wanted to take Elliot, my grandson, far far



away from it all. This convoluted mess of truths, lies, conspiracy and tragedies. He does not deserve that life. And to be once again used as a pawn and made to save someone in a world he should know nothing about at such a young age. I could not sit and watch as he was further traumatised. I failed once before and I could not do it again." His syllables grew shaky, words losing their coherence as emotion took him over. "I could not fail Dani again. I blamed Hades for years but I had seen the similarities in their gestures, that twinkling brightness in those eyes, I knew them so well. They were Dani staring back at me. I was stupid enough to let pride, ego and some unjustified sense of ...justice blind me to what mattered most."

Montegue's voice broke.

It wasn't loud. It didn't need to be. The weight behind it settled between us like the remnants of a storm—wet, heavy, and impossible to ignore.

I uncrossed my arms.

Not because I wasn't angry anymore. I still was. He had moved without warning. He had risked fracturing an already threadbare alliance when



we were hanging by the thinnest, most frayed cord.

But he was also... human. And broken in ways I hadn't seen before.

"I didn't know what to do," he continued, more quietly now. "I kept seeing Danielle. Not just in Elliot. But in you. The way you looked when he ran into your arms from the room he locked himself in. The way you fought to save Hades, even when we weren't sure there was anything left to save. That's what she would've done too."

His eyes lifted to mine.

There was grief there. Raw and naked.

"I panicked," he confessed. "I made a decision out of fear, and I can't take that back. But I swear on everything I have left... I didn't do it to betray you. I did it because I love him. And I've lost too much to gamble with what I have left."

I exhaled slowly, pressing my palm to my chest.

The pain wasn't just from his words. It was from mine. The ones I'd swallowed instead of screamed. The ones I'd buried beneath duty and





discipline and war plans and Rites and chains forged from divine blood.

"I understand," I said, my voice tight. "But why did you break out Felicia too. Why did you aid her escape?"

His jaw tightened, but a conflicted expression passed over his weathered, grief stricken face, gaunt worry, aged from stress and fear of the unknown, haunted eyes seated deep in sunken sockets. "I needed her to tell us who the Delta was. The one that took my grandson's voice. The one that handicapped him.

"I didn't know whether to feel hatred or grief when I saw her again," he rasped. "She was still my daughter... and yet not. And when she asked me to let her into her old room, I thought it was sentiment. A farewell, maybe. But it wasn't."

He dragged a hand over his mouth.

"She gave us a name in exchange. The Delta who poisoned Elliot. The one who stole his voice, masked it as medical intervention. It was—" He exhaled roughly. "—Mrs. Miller."

My blood ran cold.



Mrs. Miller.

The caretaker who paraded as gentle and dutiful.  
The same woman Hades had nearly killed  
months ago for framing me.

"That woman..." I said, voice tight with disbelief.

A heavy silence fell.

"And Elliot?" I asked, my voice softer now. "What  
happened when he got his voice back?"

Montegue looked away, like the memory hurt.

"He didn't scream. He didn't cry. He just said one  
thing."

My chest seized.

"What did he say?"

Montegue looked at me, eyes glassy. "Daddy's in  
there. I heard him." His voice cracked. "And then  
he said, 'I'm not afraid. I want to help him.'"

My knees nearly buckled.

"He didn't hesitate," Montegue said, voice  
trembling. "He walked straight to the chamber.  
No tears. No questions. He said... 'I know how to



reach him.' Like it was the simplest thing in the world."

It wasn't.

It was everything.

Elliot hadn't just survived. He had chosen—to save Hades, to stand in the fire for the man who had failed him, and forgive in the way only a child could.

"I let him go," Montegue whispered. "Because he asked me to."

I covered my mouth, emotion choking me.

"And that," he finished, "is why I moved the way I did.

Montegue's voice thinned to a whisper. "My life has fallen apart, Eve."

He looked so tired—like grief had hollowed him out from the inside, scraped marrow from bone and left only the shell of a man who'd once stood tall in palaces, in war councils, in judgment.

"I spent so many years digging through ashes," he said hoarsely. "Hunting Danielle's killer.





Pointing fingers. Holding funerals without closure. All while the truth was under my roof—bleeding from the same vein as her. My own blood..."

His throat worked. "I didn't bury my daughter. Not really. I buried a ghost. And I—" He shook his head, voice catching. "I let my grandson be harmed. Silenced. Used. And I—gods, I didn't stop it. I didn't even see it. What kind of man does that make me?"

His hand trembled at his side, clenched into a loose fist like he didn't trust himself to let go.

He looked like he might fall apart all over again.

So I stepped forward.

"Monte," I said softly.

He froze.

No one had called him that in a long time—

He blinked as I reached for him, my arms sliding around his frame. At first, he stood still as stone—breath caught, body locked in that suspended moment between instinct and disbelief.



And then he exhaled.

And leaned into me.

It wasn't much. A subtle bow of the head. A hesitant lift of his arm around my shoulder. But it was enough. Enough to say I needed this too.

"You're a good father," I whispered against his chest. "Danielle was lucky to have had a man like you."

He let out a shaky breath, and I felt his grip tighten just slightly. Not with dominance. But with gratitude. Vulnerability.

And somewhere deep in my mind, I remembered my own father.

The tyrant.

The man who used fear as discipline and cruelty as guidance. Who twisted the meaning of family until it felt more like a noose than a name.

There was no warmth there. No arms that held or words that soothed. Only law. Only punishment.

So this—this moment with Montague—was





something I never thought I'd have. A moment with a man who grieved like a father should. Who loved like one.

I pulled back just enough to meet his eyes.

"Elliot is my son," I said gently. "And he's your grandson. That makes us something too. Family, whether we like it or not."

"You remind me of her," he said, voice low. "Not in memories—I know you never met her—but in spirit. In the way you protect what you love. In how you hold your ground even when the world's falling apart."

I swallowed hard.

There was a strange ache in hearing that. Not guilt, not even grief—just the sense of being measured against someone I would never meet, but whose absence shaped everything I now held dear.

"I used to wonder what kind of woman Danielle must have been," I murmured. "To love Hades the way she did. To birth a son like Elliot... knowing she'd never get to raise him."



Montegue's breath caught.

"She died hours after he was born," I continued, my voice quieter now. "Not from childbirth. Not from any natural cause. She was murdered. Before she even got to hold him properly. Before she got to name him."

Montegue's breath trembled, his hands curling. "I know," he whispered, voice thick. "I know she never got the chance."

For a moment, we both stood there, suspended in grief not entirely our own—but bound to us nonetheless.

"I used to talk to her," he continued, eyes distant. "In my dreams. In the quiet. Always asking if I'd done right by her... if I'd kept her son safe. And every time, she stayed silent."

I blinked against the sting in my eyes. "Maybe she wasn't silent," I said. "Maybe she was waiting. For this." 1