



354 Rewritten

Hades 1

The council dispersed with the silence of men sent to war. No shouting. No arguments. Just silent nods, grim eyes, and the shuffle of boots heading off to carry out their roles. Silas went to stabilize Gamma lines. Gallinti left to contact regional elders.

Cain would do his own thing, like he always did.

Kael fell into step beside me. Eve walked just behind us, unusually quiet. I felt her silence like a weight pressing against my back, more unsettling than if she'd screamed.

The air outside the chamber felt no lighter. We walked the halls of the Tower like ghosts, the murmurs of aides and soldiers brushing past us, none brave enough to meet my gaze.

I glanced behind me. "Eve."

She blinked up, startled, like I'd broken some trance. "What?"



"What are you thinking?"

She didn't answer right away. Her brows drew together, lips parted just slightly, like she wasn't sure if the words would make sense if she said them aloud. Finally, she shook her head. "This isn't the finale," she murmured. "It's act one. I can feel it."

Kael grunted. "That's exactly what I'm afraid of."

We turned the corridor into the communication wing.

"Where's Morrison now?" I asked.

Kael tapped his earpiece. "Hiding behind a wall of proxies. No one's picking up direct lines. Subordinates, aides, interns—they've all gone dark."

"Try again," I said. "Tell them it's from the Alpha himself."

He hesitated, but made the call.

Less than a minute later, he lifted his eyes.

"Someone answered."

"Who?"



He winced. "His wife."

The words sat wrong in my mouth before I even said them. I didn't like using her. But this was war. And she was a door.

"Put her through," I ordered.

The holoscreen flared to life. A woman blinked into view. Blonde hair in a soft braid. Worn eyes, swollen from tears. Dressed in civilian gray. She looked like she hadn't slept in days. She looked nothing like the wife of a governor.

She straightened when she saw me, hands folding tightly in front of her.

"Your Majesty."

"Lady Morrison," I said, voice even. Calm. But the undercurrent was as clear as crystal. I meant business. "You know why I'm calling."

"I... I'm not sure," she said quietly.

I leaned forward just slightly, not in menace—but in presence. "Let me rephrase. You do know something. And I believe you want to protect your children. So speak clearly, and truthfully, and you won't have to see me again."



She flinched—but not from the words. From the weight beneath them.

"I don't know anything," she said quickly, voice trembling. "He came home a week ago. Out of nowhere. He was just... back. And he was—different."

I tilted my head. "Define different."

She looked down. "Before... before, he was barely there. Couldn't speak. Couldn't eat on his own. He screamed at night—talked to ghosts. He kept saying a god was coming. That he saw it in his sleep."

"And now?"

"Now..." She swallowed hard. "He walks with purpose. Speaks like a prophet. He even smiles, sometimes. It's like something... rewired him."

Eve flinched but I didn't know why.

I let silence hang for a moment.

"No delta in your region is capable of that kind of healing," I said flatly.

She nodded slowly. "We tried everyone. No one



could reach him."

"But someone did."

Tears welled in her eyes.

"I didn't see who. I was visiting the day it happened. The day..." she hesitated like she dreaded the words she wanted to speak. "The day the petson came. He wouldn't let me in the room that day. Said it had to be done alone. He screamed for hours, and then... he stopped. When he came out, he looked me in the eye. Told me everything was going to change."

She pressed her hands together, voice cracking. "I thought it was a miracle. But now he's talking about gods and lies and vengeance, and I don't know what to do. He wasn't like this. He was... he was cruel, yes. Before. Controlling. Sharp-tongued. But he wasn't..." She looked around like she feared her own walls. "He wasn't righteous. Not like this."

A pause. Then a breathless whisper. "He almost not even there anymore. Like he is a whole new person."

Kael shot me a look, and I saw it mirrored in



Eve's face.

The god who may have survived after all.

The woman on screen sobbed suddenly, clutching her hands. "Please, don't hurt my children for this. I didn't know. I swear, I didn't know he was going to—"

"It's not your fault," Eve cut in gently, stepping forward. "How could you have known?"

Her voice was like balm to fire. Calm. Warm. Soft.

Despite the heightened stakes of the situation, longing rose like tsunami.

The woman gasped softly. As if no one had spoken to her like that in weeks.

Eve leaned close to the screen, softening her gaze. "You said you didn't see the visitor. But did you hear anything? Footsteps? An accent? A name?"

The woman wiped her cheeks. Thought. Then nodded—but slowly, uncertainly.

"I... I did hear something," she said, brow



furrowed as though reaching into fog.

"Footsteps. Slow. Measured. Like someone who wasn't in a hurry but knew they belonged."

"Did they speak?" Eve asked gently.

"I think so." Her gaze unfocused. "But I don't remember the words. Just the... the rhythm of it. Like a chant. But when I try to recall it, it slips through me. Like water through cracks."

My jaw tightened.

"Try harder," I said—not unkindly, but not softly either.

She looked up at me. "I want to. I do. But..."

She closed her eyes. Pressed fingers to her temple.

"I saw him. I know I did. I saw his face," she whispered, voice breaking. "But my mind... it's blank. Like someone took an eraser to the memory. I remember the door opening, light flooding in, and then—"

She shook her head violently.

"And then I was home. Just home. My husband



was already there, seated at the dining table. Like nothing had happened. Like I'd never left. I was holding a glass of water. My hands were shaking. And I didn't know why."

A cold ache bloomed behind my sternum.

Eve stepped back slightly, hand lifting to her chest.

Kael swore under his breath.

I didn't move.

Couldn't.

The woman's eyes locked with mine again. "It still makes my skin crawl," she whispered. "Whatever... whoever he was... he looked into my eyes, and it felt like something crawled in."

The holoscreen flickered slightly, but it was enough to send a jolt through the base of my spine. I couldn't breathe for a moment. Not because I didn't understand what she was describing—but because I did.

I knew that feeling.

Of being hollowed out while still standing.



Of being rewritten from the inside.

It reminded me of Vassir.

My gaze flickered to Eve. She looked lost, her skin ashen, her breathes coming in short gasps.

My voice came out rougher than intended. "You don't remember what happened after he looked at you?"

Her face twisted in something close to panic. "Nothing. Not a second. Like I was... gone."

Silence followed her confession like fog creeping under a locked door.

Kael's brow furrowed. "That's not amnesia. That's erasure."

Cain's voice, quiet but sharp, broke in from behind. "A clean cut. No blood, no mess—just gone."

I didn't respond.

I couldn't.

Because in the pit of my gut, I already knew what Eve was about to do. She stepped forward, her voice low and careful, like she was treading a



wire.

"Lady Morrison," she said, "what is your firstborn's third name?"

The woman blinked. "What?"

"His third name," Eve repeated. "Not the one you call him by. The name you whispered when you first held him. The one only you know."

Lady Morrison frowned, her lips moving silently for a moment.

Then she smiled faintly. "Isaac."

"And?"

The smile froze. Her eyes twitched, as if they didn't know where to focus.

"I... I don't know," she said slowly, voice thinning. "It was something with an 'R'... maybe... Reuel? No. That's not it. I—" Her breath hitched.

Kael leaned closer to the monitor, his expression sharpening. "Can't remember your son's name?"

"No. No, I can. It's just—" She clutched her blouse, confusion sinking into panic. "I had it. I had it, and now it's just gone."



Eve's tone was softer now, but no less urgent.
"Your mother's birthday. Do you remember?"

Lady Morrison blinked, the muscles in her face twitching.

"I know it. I know I know it." Her voice shook.
"We made lemon cakes that day. There was sunlight. I remember the plates, the smell—but the date..." Her hands started to tremble. "Why can't I remember the date?"

My blood ran cold.

Eve's voice came softer than a whisper—but it landed with the force of a blade.

"What were the color of the visitor's eyes?"

The question struck Lady Morrison like a blow.

She didn't answer.

At first, she didn't move at all—just sat there, lips parted, gaze slipping sideways like her brain had hit a wall.

Then something shifted.

Her hand reached instinctively toward the side of her head, pressing into her temple as if trying



to dig the answer out with her fingertips.

Kael's brow furrowed. "Ma'am?"

Still nothing.

Then—

"I... I don't..."

Her voice cracked, a warble of dread trembling beneath it.

"I should remember. I was standing in front of him. He looked right at me. I saw his face. His eyes were... they were..."

She trailed off again.

And I saw it—the moment something folded behind her gaze. Like a curtain drawn over a window.

"I can't," she rasped. "I can't see them! It's like there's a smear across the memory. A smudge I can't wipe off!"

Eve stepped forward, her tone firmer now. "Breathe. Close your eyes. Don't try to remember. Just feel. What lingers? What image won't go away, no matter how hard you scrub?"

Lady Morrison obeyed, hesitantly. She closed her eyes.

For a long second, the room held its breath.

Then her lips parted.

"I don't remember the color," she whispered.

"But I remember veins."

Eve froze. I did too. Veins?

"Black," Lady Morrison continued, her voice more distant now. "Black. Threaded like spider legs. Crawling just under the skin around his eyes... like they were alive. Like they were... watching me. I remember red."

Eve whispered the name but it sounded like a gasp. "Vassir," 4