



357 Give People What They Want

Hades 1

"The broadcast's been replayed six times," Kael reported flatly. "No official station is running regular programming anymore. It's wall-to-wall Morrison. Even the Night Watch news block replaced their sacred hour for it."

The council chamber was silent as he projected the latest civilian compilation onto the display.

Dozens of civilian testimonies, protest clips, and impromptu news commentary flooded the screen. It wasn't staged rebellion—it was mass confusion and raw suspicion.

A civilian woman stood in front of a crowd in the Southern district. Her voice cracked as she shouted:

"Why hasn't the Obsidian tower responded? Why hasn't our King spoken?!"

Another clip showed a closed school gate in the East. A hand-painted sign read:



"We will not send our children until the Tower addresses the experiments."

A reporter's voiceover followed:

"What was once blind loyalty is now hesitant allegiance. Pack members across regions are demanding transparency. The Obsidian Tower's continued silence is being viewed as an admission of guilt."

Gallinti rubbed his temples. "We're hemorrhaging public trust."

Montegue's voice was calm but firm. "We've had forty-three civilian calls to their regional councils requesting emergency relocation outside Obsidian's jurisdiction. That's forty-three in two hours."

Gallinti didn't look up from his datapad. "Eight regional Alphas are withholding resources until they receive an internal investigation order. That includes the South Gate medical corridor."

Kael muttered. "And the broadcasts haven't even hit their peak window yet,"

Cain added. "The prime-time replay starts in



fifteen minutes. That's when the real chaos begins."

Eve, seated quietly across from me, finally spoke. "Has there been any message from within Morrison's region?"

Kael shook his head. "No formal leadership left there. His second-in-command vanished last week. No one's stepping up. Civilians are leaderless and leaning into the narrative. They are saying their Alpha has every right to run because the crown will after him for revealing the 'truth'.

Montegue exhaled. "We should've responded within the first hour."

"We would have looked more guilty," Silas countered. "It was better we left him uninterrupted and let him finish."

"The people didn't need that," Cain snapped. "The people saw his face, heard his tone. They're already choosing sides."

I stood.

"Enough," I said. "The longer we argue, the



deeper this festers. We're not debating strategies while the packs burn. The people want a response, they'll get one."

Silas folded his arms. "What are you proposing?"

"Damage control," I said. "Immediate."

I turned to Kael. "I want a short but official broadcast drafted in the next twenty minutes. I'll review it. No promises, no emotion—just clarity. We confirm the footage was unauthorized. We state that internal investigation is underway. We remind them that the Obsidian Council does not bow to fear-based propaganda. Then we reassert control of the narrative. Firm, clean, non-negotiable."

Gallinti raised an eyebrow. "You sure about that tone?"

"Yes," I said. "We do not beg for trust. We reestablish authority, then prove the truth through action."

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A chair shifted.

Eve.

She rose calmly, eyes unreadable. "With all due respect, Alpha," she said, her voice steady, "you're wrong."

The room froze—not from shock, but from the weight behind her words. No one interrupted.

She looked directly at me. "The people aren't just angry. They're afraid. Terrified, even. And the last thing fear responds to is impassive clarity."

I narrowed my eyes. "You're saying we should apologize?"

"No," she said smoothly. "I'm saying your version of control will only feed the fire. Formal, emotionless statements from behind walls? That's what tyrants do before disappearing civilians. That's what villains do right before they demand loyalty through silence."

Cain grunted. "So what, we cry on camera now?"

Eve didn't flinch. "We speak like people. Like leaders who know what it feels like to be lied to. Like leaders who understand what it means to lose trust—and who are willing to earn it back."

Montegue's brow furrowed. "You think it's that easy? To talk the masses down?"

"No," Eve said plainly. "But it's that hard. And that's the only thing that makes it work."

Kael turned from the display. "You're saying we soften?"

"I'm saying we connect," she said. "Right now, a significant percentage of the population is already leaning into Morrison's narrative. He didn't just speak—he tapped into their paranoia, their fear that they've been used as pawns. That something's been done to them. That something's coming they won't be told about until it's too late."

Silas crossed his arms, frowning. "He said just enough to make them distrust us, but not enough to be proven wrong. Classic insurgent strategy."

"And conspiracy theorists are already circling



like vultures," Eve continued. "Spinning it into new layers of fear—talk of forced injections, the Marker, of a king who tampered with the gods and can't be trusted. Of a Luna marked by prophecy who might be leading them into damnation."

The words landed. Not because they were dramatic, but because they were true.

Gallinti sat forward. "Then what do you suggest?"

Eve met my gaze before answering.

"We tell the truth," she said. "Not a sanitized version. Not a carefully worded release. The real story—what we know, what we've survived, what we're still uncovering. Enough to show we're not gods. We're trying to fix what was broken. And we give them something no ruler ever does anymore."

"Which is?" Cain asked.

"Access," she said. "We hold the press conference live. No scripted questions. We let the press come. Ask what they want. The more transparent we are, the less space there is for them to fill with fear."



Silas raised an eyebrow. "That's risky."

"It's necessary," she replied.

I didn't respond right away.

The council room had quieted again, but this time the silence was heavy with consideration.

She wasn't wrong. Not entirely. My instinct leaned toward forceful reassertion. But the public didn't want strength—they wanted proof that they mattered. That the people at the top still bled like everyone else.

Eve turned toward me, her voice low but firm. "We have one chance, Hades. If we try to dominate them now, they'll never believe us again. And if they believe Morrison first... it's over. We lose the war before it begins."

I stared at her, the weight of it all bearing down.

The Marker. The prophecy. Vassir. The blood moon. The horn.

And the people.

The one thing no prophecy ever accounted for: public trust.

I nodded once.

"Draft the announcement," I said to Kael. "But we're changing the format. This time, we don't talk at them."

I looked back to Eve.

"We talk with them."

The room was just starting to breathe again when Montegue cleared his throat.

"We still have a problem," he said, tone composed but laced with urgency. "Words are good. Connection is better. But this isn't just about control or clarity anymore. It's about impact. We need to respond to shock with shock."

Silas frowned. "What does that mean exactly?"

Montegue leaned forward slightly, gaze flicking across the room. "Morrison's broadcast caught us off guard. It flipped the board while we were still setting the pieces. That's why it worked—because no one expected it. Not even us."

Cain snorted. "So what? We start our own broadcast with a firework show?"

Montegue didn't blink. "No. We do what they'll never expect from the Council. We give them the one thing Morrison couldn't. The one thing even we haven't."

He turned to me.

"We give them her."

Silence dropped again—heavier, more volatile this time.

I didn't move. But I felt Eve shift me.

Montegue gestured toward her, measured and deliberate. "She is the object of the entire scandal. The mystery. The prophecy. The curse. The one who turned out to be the 'executed' one, who was then married to the monster king."

"Watch your tone," I growled.

He held my stare. "With respect, Alpha, I'm stating what the realm is already whispering. That's the image they have of her. And right now, that image has more power than any crown. It's time we let her speak."

Eve was quiet.



Not shocked. Not frightened. Just... still.

Gallint tapped a stylus on his tablet. "If she speaks, it can't be scripted."

"It won't be," Montegue said. "That's the point. The press already sees her as the heart of the conspiracy. The cursed twin. The so-called cure. They'll come for her—listen to her—if we put her forward."

Gallinti shook his head. "That's dangerous. She's unvetted. Unfiltered."

"That's why it'll work," Montegue replied.

All eyes turned to me again. The weight of the room pressing against my spine.

I looked at Eve.

Her gaze met mine. Calm. Steady. Unreadable still not uncertain.

"I didn't come to be their symbol," she said softly. "I came to stop a war."

"Then speak like it," I said. "You wanted us to connect. You said the people need truth from those who've bled for it. There's no one they'll



believe more than you."

"I don't want to be worshipped or pitied."

"You won't be," Montegue said. "You'll be real. That's the only thing they can't fake. Not Morrison. Not his editors. Not his conspiracy."

Kael crossed his arms. "And if she slips up? Says something that throws fuel on the fire?"

"Then we own it," Montegue replied. "Because honesty's ugly. But it's the only thing louder than propaganda."

The room was quiet again, but this time the silence wasn't from hesitation.

It was the sound of decisions solidifying.

I turned to Kael. "Set the time. We go live in six hours. I want security on standby, press screened, protocols tightened. This is still Obsidian ground."

He nodded.

I turned to Eve, dropping my voice. "Are you ready for this?"

She didn't look away.



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"No," she said. "But I will be."

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