



## 361 Act Two

Eve <sup>1</sup>

The air was razor-thin now.

Everyone sensed it—that they were brushing up against something bigger than treason, bigger than scandal.

Cesare's question lingered like a loaded weapon.

Hades didn't answer right away.

So I did.

"The Flux doesn't just grant power," I said carefully, "it feeds. It corrodes. The longer it lives inside a host, the more of that host it devours."

A murmur swept through the room—unease blooming in every row.

"It learns them," I continued, "their rage, their sorrow, their regrets—and turns those into weapons. Against them. Against everyone."

Hades looked down at his hands as if remembering something only he could see.



"If we hadn't purged it," he said softly, "I wouldn't be standing here. Not as myself."

"And what would you be?" someone called out, quiet but firm.

His gaze lifted slowly. His voice was grave.

"A god of ruin."

The words fell like iron. No one laughed. No one scoffed.

They believed him.

Cesare straightened. "And how was it purged?"

This time, I stepped fully forward. No fear. No mask.

"With the Fenrir's Marker."

A beat of stunned silence.

Then—

A flick of tablets. Pens flying. Hands rising faster than breath.

The press exploded in intrigue.

A tall woman barked first, cutting through the

noise. "What is the Fenrir's Marker? Is it a relic? A curse?"

"It's neither," I answered. "It's a spiritual trait. A blood signature. With properties that make it a blessing."

Another reporter jumped in. "So it's inside you?"

"Yes."

"So it makes you...?"

I nodded. "Immune to the effects of the bloodmoon to come."

"Hold on—" the older woman from before leaned forward, wide-eyed. "You said the Marker purged the Flux. How?"

I exchanged a glance with Hades before replying.

"We performed a forbidden rite," I said. "The Fenrir's Chain. It hasn't been practiced in over five centuries."

"Why?"

"Because it requires sacrifice. Pain. A soul-deep tethering that either saves the host—or destroys them both."



There was a stunned pause. And then:

"You bonded with him through this rite?"

"Yes," I said quietly. "Spirit to spirit. Psyche to psyche. I entered the part of him the Flux had consumed and dragged what was left of Hades back from it."

"And what happened inside?" someone dared to ask.

Hades answered, voice low. "Madness. Memory. A war of everything I was, everything my father made me to be, and everything the Flux wanted me to become."

He turned toward me, reverent. "She won."

A rush of emotion hit me then, but I didn't show it. I couldn't.

Another journalist raised her hand, breathless.

"If the Marker neutralized the Flux—could it be used again? Against others? Against future outbreaks?"

"Yes," I said. "But only in rare cases. The Marker reacts differently depending on the spirit it's





bound to. It doesn't cleanse evil. It cleanses corruption."

"And you still carry it?"

I met her eyes. "Yes. And I always will."

Dozens of hands shot up again.

But they weren't just asking for clarification.

They were hungry for revelation. For understanding.

"Next question," I said.

A reporter near the front—bald, thin-framed, with two sets of glasses hanging from his collar—lifted his hand halfway before speaking.

"Lady Eve," he said, voice tight, "there are whispers from within Morrison's laboratory that a serum is being developed using your blood—specifically, your Marker. Is that true?"

I nodded once. "It's not a whisper. It's a fact."

The murmurs exploded.

"And what for?" another reporter demanded from behind him. "What purpose would that

serve if the Flux is gone?"

I didn't answer.

Not because I didn't want to—but because this time, it wasn't mine to explain.

Beside me, Hades exhaled slowly, his voice breaking through the uproar with eerie calm.

"The Bloodmoon will rise in fifteen months."

The hall silenced.

You could hear the whirring of cameras, the creak of chairs, a pen falling to the floor and rolling once—before stopping.

He continued, each word measured like a surgeon with a scalpel.

"And though I'm certain many of you know it won't be... pleasant, I must tell you that 'unpleasant' doesn't begin to cover it."

He paused just long enough for the tension to coil tighter.

"The last time the Bloodmoon aligned with Silverpine's apex was over eight hundred years ago. Records from that period are scattered,



contradictory, but they all agree on one thing."

He looked out at them—not as a king, but as a bearer of terrible truth.

"It wasn't a celestial event. It was a cataclysm."

Gasps.

Mouths dropped open. Some reporters instinctively turned to one another, seeking confirmation, reassurance—anything to lessen the horror of the word.

"A cataclysm?" someone echoed.

Hades nodded grimly.

"One that breaks the spirit of every Lycan who attempts to shift beneath it. One that warps the blood. Shreds the connection between body and beast. And most who survive the shift... don't survive what comes after."

There were no murmurs now. No scribbling.

Just fear.

Raw and stunned.

"If left unprotected," he said, "our people will die."



The kind of death that doesn't just erase life—it erases lineage."

The silence was deafening.

Finally, one brave voice cracked through it.

"Then why—why weren't we told?"

Hades didn't hide from it.

He didn't deflect.

He stepped forward with the steadiness of a man who had already asked himself the same question a thousand times.

"Because panic," he said plainly, "is a disease that spreads faster than infection."

He looked at no one and everyone.

"And because fifteen months is time enough to find a solution. Not to unravel society."

His voice held no theatrics. No flourish. Just truth.

"We weren't ready to announce this until we knew whether the Fenrir's Marker could be synthesized. Until we had proof it wouldn't kill





more than it cured."

"And now?" someone whispered.

Eve answered this time. "Now we know. The Marker—my blood—can be stabilized into a serum. It won't save everyone. But it will save most."

"But not without pain," Hades added. "And not without cost."

The woman's question trembled in the air.

"What cost?"

Hades inhaled slowly.

Then turned to face them—fully, squarely, like a man about to give a verdict that would shake the world.

"The cost," he said, "is her."

Gasps erupted. Pens dropped. Eyes snapped to me like I'd just been marked for death.

But I didn't flinch.

"Eve," he continued, "my wife... the one who bears the Fenrir's Marker... will pay the price



each time this serum is made."

Whispers swirled like smoke through the chamber.

Hades didn't let them grow too loud.

"She is being monitored around the clock. Evaluated by our Delta teams and Sanctum seers. Her vitals, her psyche, her spirit. Every draw of the Marker drains her. Not like blood—worse. It pulls from her essence."

I kept my eyes on the room. On the weight of their realization.

"It is not fatal," Hades clarified. "Not yet. But it is exhausting. Debilitating. And must be controlled."

"And if it gets worse?" someone asked, breathless.

"Then I'll step in," Hades said.

He raised his chin, voice firm. "What remains of the Flux in my body—residue, not corruption—has rendered me immune to the Bloodmoon. I will offer myself for testing. If I can donate, I will. If my altered blood can assist the production of



this serum, I'll bear the burden beside her."

My chest tightened. He hadn't told me that part. But I didn't stop him.

"And I swear this to you," he said, stepping forward. "As your king, and as a man—you will receive it. All of you. This cure, this shield against the coming Bloodmoon... will not be reserved for the elite, the noble, or the Council. It will reach the farmers, the soldiers, the orphans, the unborn."

He let the promise settle.

"This isn't just about surviving," he said, voice softening, "it's about deserving to survive."

Silence hung to the walls like something sacred.

"I do not ask for your worship. I ask for your patience. Your unity. Because the tide is coming—and when it does, we stand together, or we fall alone."

A slow murmur of approval stirred through the press. Not celebration—alignment. Understanding.

"There is still hope," Hades added, gentler now.



"Because what tried to destroy me only awakened something more enduring. What cursed my Luna only unveiled her purpose."

He turned to look at me.

"We are no longer bound by the sins of our fathers."

He looked out at the press again.

"Now, we choose what we become."

And for a moment—just a breathless, hanging moment—no one asked the next question.

The silence was almost reverent.

No more shouting.

No more questions.

Just the quiet, trembling breath of a nation listening to the truth for the first time.

Hades' hand was still wrapped around mine—warm, grounding. My heart had steadied. My voice had held.

We had survived the press.





For a moment, it felt like the worst had passed.

Then—

BOOM.

The explosion split the world in half.

My ears rang. My bones screamed.

The floor tilted under me, then buckled as the ceiling collapsed in a hail of stone and steel and fire.

I didn't scream.

I didn't even think.

Because in that flash—

I saw Hades' eyes widen.

I felt him let go of my hand.

And then—

He lunged.

"Eve!"

His body slammed into mine, arms wrapping tight, just as a slab of ceiling cracked from above.