



## 363 Taken

Eve 1

Time seemed to freeze to a complete stand still, everything after his statement was tuned out to a sharp sting in my ear. This words echoed in my head like an insecant bell.

"They hurt Uncle Kael."

"No..." My voice came out as a croak, the useless word scrapping out of my throat.

Elliot's eyes welled up with tears as my legs carried me, bolting towards Elliot. Hades and I reached him at the same time. How arms wound around him in an embrace that was filled with both relief and heartache.

Hades pulled away for me to comfort him. His gazing pinning the Gammas in the place. "Deploy forces to find him—scan every corridor, every shadow. I want every vent, every stairwell, every lift shaft accounted for. Now! I want routes surveyed. They can't leave."

His voice cracked like a whip, slicing through the



dazed silence. The Gammas scrambled, already relaying the order through their comms, boots pounding back down the corridor like war drums.

I cradled Elliot against my chest, my hand shaking as I felt the rapid thump of his tiny heart against mine. He was trembling, barely holding it together.

Still he tried to speak.

"I heard..." Elliot's voice cracked, his little fingers fisting into the fabric of my shirt. "I heard something blow up. It... it shook the whole room. The guards—outside—went quiet. I heard yelling. Growling. Then glass."

I swallowed, trying to keep my hands from shaking around him.

"A man came in," he continued, eyes staring past me like he was still seeing it. "Through the window. He didn't shift. But he was fast. So fast, Mama."

He looked up at me, blinking through tears. "He wore all black. His face... I didn't see it. But he didn't say anything. He just—just grabbed one of



the guards and threw him. Out the window. Just like that."

Elliot's whole body shuddered in my arms. Hades had gone still beside us, not breathing.

"I screamed," Elliot said. "I didn't mean to—I tried not to—but he saw me. He came for me."

I held him tighter, wishing I could shield him from his own memory.

"Then Uncle Kael burst in," he whispered. "He slammed into the man before he could reach me. They fought. It was so loud. The man was strong. But Uncle Kael—he didn't stop. He kept going."

Tears slipped down Elliot's cheeks.

"He saw me," he whispered. "Uncle Kael saw me and saw his eyes. He was scared. Scared the man would throw me out the window like he did to the guard. But he opened mama's painting room and fought through man into the hallway. And I—I knew. I knew he wanted me to do it. To hide. So I entered and the wall closed up."

I felt Hades shift closer, silent, tense, his knuckles pale.



"He was fighting the man," Elliot breathed. "I could hear it. The fighting. The growling. I heard something breaking."

I stomach twisted into a tight knot, bile rising in my throat but I continued to stroke his back.

"Until—until..."

His voice broke.

"Until I couldn't hear him anymore." 1

A sob tore from his chest, raw and tiny. "I waited. I kept waiting. But the man looked everywhere. He tore the room apart. But he didn't find me."

He looked at Hades now, then back to me. "Uncle Kael's okay, right? Right, Mama? He's okay...?" he looked behind me. "Where is he?"

My breath hitched.

I couldn't answer.

I couldn't lie to him.

I couldn't tell him he was okay when I didn't know if he was even alive.

I just pulled him close, pressing my face into his



hair, letting my tears fall soundlessly into his curls.

Hades knelt beside us, placing a trembling hand on Elliot's back. His eyes met mine, his eyes mirroring the depth of my pain even though he refused to show it.

"We're going to find him," I said at last, my voice breaking. "I promise you, baby. We'll find him."

Elliot nodded faintly against my shoulder, exhausted, wrung dry, but still clinging to hope.

Still believing.

And gods help the one who took that from him.

Because they would not live to regret it.

"He will be found, dear," he promised. "We have out men searching for him right now..." he cradled his head abs brought his lips to his forehead. "We will find him," he repeated as though he was trying to convince himself as well.

We lost on two fronts today.

Felicia had escaped and Kael... he had been taken.



The room had quieted to a tense hum—only the flicker of broken lights and the occasional shout from a Gamma in the corridor broke the stillness.

Hades stood slowly, his hand slipping from Elliot's back as he rose to his full, imposing height. But something about the way his shoulders dropped, the barely contained storm in his eyes... it told me everything.

He was going after them.

"I'm going," he said quietly, but there was no room for argument in his tone. "I'll follow their scent. If they're still in the perimeter—"

"I'll come with you," I said instantly, rising to my feet, heart hammering as my wolf stirred beneath my skin. "We'll run faster together."

"No," he said sharply, then softened. "No, Eve. Breathe. You're shaking. You're not thinking straight."

"I'm fine," I snapped, even though I wasn't. My limbs were trembling, my chest tight.

"You're hyperventilating."





I tried to speak again, but my throat felt like it was closing. Hades stepped closer, his hands catching my arms. "Elliot needs you here."

I looked down at our son, curled against the floor now, hugging my gown like it was his last tether to safety. I flinched.

"The Tower needs you too," Hades continued. "You're Luna. You're their voice when mine leaves the room. You need to be the one who holds this place together while we run diagnostics—while we figure out how the hell this breach was even possible."

My breath hitched again.

He was right.

And I hated that he was right.

"You'll be okay?" I asked, voice barely above a whisper.

"I've hunted through worse," he said, forcing a crooked smile that didn't reach his eyes. "I'll be fine."

But something about the way he looked at me—like he was memorizing me—sent a chill through



my spine.

He leaned in, brushing a kiss against my forehead, then Elliot's. "We'll find him. I swear it."

He straightened, about to turn.

But I grabbed his wrist.

Pulled him back.

And kissed him.

Not romantic. Not longing. Just raw.

Like giving a piece of myself to anchor him.

Like a prayer sealed with lips.

His breath caught against my mouth. He didn't kiss back, not right away—just stared at me when I pulled back, like I'd struck something deeper than bone.

"You have to come back," I said, my voice trembling. "And when you find whoever did this—you do not get reckless. No decisions in the heat of the moment, Hades. Not one."

He blinked.





Then nodded slowly.

Once.

His thumb brushed my cheek before he turned and strode from the room, cape trailing behind him like the shadow of war.

The Gammas followed—boots pounding in unison, the war drums of vengeance.

And I stood there...

Holding our son.

Holding what remained.

And praying to the gods that what Hades chased didn't end up chasing him back.

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Hades

My head was still spinning as I bounded down through the emergency transport to the lowest floor.

The scents in the stairwell were chaotic—burnt wiring, ash, blood, scorched fur. But beneath it all was something else.



Metal.

Sterile.

Not ours.

They had come prepared.

I shifted mid-motion, landing hard on two feet as the Gamma command team met me at the lower security ring.

"Status?" I barked.

"Tracking systems were partially restored, Alpha," one of them said, handing me a tactical slate. "We isolated three distinct energy spikes moving out of the East Wing corridor within five minutes of the detonation in Cell Nine."

"East Wing?" I frowned, scanning the map. "That cuts through the engineering tunnels—straight to the launch sub-bays."

"Yes, sir. Gate access logs were wiped, but a manual override was recorded on Bay Twelve."

"How long ago?"

"Six minutes."



I cursed. "That's too close."

I was already shifting again, claws scraping marble as I burst past them toward the lower exits. The scent was clearer here—Kael's blood, raw and coppery, mixed with the sharp static of tech dampeners. They hadn't just taken him.

They'd neutralized him.

Temporarily or permanently—I didn't know. I couldn't think about that.

No.

Not Kael.

Not the brother I chose.

A wall vent up ahead was pried open and twisted at the hinges. One of the tech Gammas shouted something behind me, but I didn't stop. I barreled into the tunnel, teeth bared, breath hissing through my fangs.

Every corridor I passed felt colder. Sharper. The air thinned.

They were heading out.

But they were slowing.





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I followed their scent to a split in the ductwork, nostrils flaring. One path led to the inactive south sector. Dead end.

The other—

Blood.

More of it.

Kael had been dragged.

Or worse—he'd kept resisting. 

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