



## 37 Evolving Goals

Eve~ 1

I instinctively wrapped my arms around his neck as we swayed on the dance floor. I couldn't bear his intense gaze, so I avoided it. The heat radiating off him was enough. Why was he suddenly on edge? Everything had been alright just a moment ago.

"Look at me, princess," his voice slashed through my thoughts. I couldn't afford his ire again, so I raised my head hesitantly. I was met with his inscrutable expression.

I frowned, unsure. "What's wrong?"

He quirked a dark brow. "What do you mean?"

Was he not angry? I bit my lip. It seemed I was wrong. I looked up again to see him watching me, expectant. "Why are you being... nice?" I found myself asking.

His lips curved into a half-smile. "Nice," he echoed the word as though tasting it. "Is that what you think this is?"

I swallowed hard, feeling the tension between us heighten. His hand on the small of my back pulled me a fraction closer, and the world around us seemed to fade. The music, the murmurs of the guests, everything was a distant

blur. It was just him and me, and the intensity of his presence was suffocating.

"I don't know. You tell me." I challenged. "What is this?"

"Would it be so unbelievable?" he asked.

I didn't reply, but I guessed that my silence was answer enough. He took my hand and raised it, twirling me before pulling me to him again.

I stumbled slightly as he pulled me back, but now my back was to the front of his body.

He leaned in close, his lips brushing against my ear as he whispered, "You can learn to trust me."

I stiffened, a jolt running up my spine. "Trust you? How can I trust the man who plans on taking revenge on my father through me?"

His breath was warm against my skin as he chuckled softly, a low, dangerous sound. "Trust is earned, I suppose," he murmured. "But I promise to let go of my former plans."

He twirled me again before what he had just said could fully sink in. When he pulled me to him again, my chest was pressed against his body, his hand too damn low on my back. Yet, my treacherous body leaned in. My nipples hardened.

I shook my head, trying to fight the haze. "What

do you mean by 'former plans'?"

"I won't hurt you in the stead of your father," he clarified.

I didn't miss a beat. "I don't believe you."

He chuckled, the sound almost entirely too sensual. "Am I that untrustworthy?"

"Men like you don't have goals and then so easily abandon them," I finished, my voice sharper than intended. I couldn't help it. His words, his touch—everything about him—unsettled me.

He studied me for a moment, his eyes dark and unreadable. Then, with an almost imperceptible smile, he said, "You're right. I don't abandon my goals. But sometimes... they evolve."

"Evolve?" I repeated, my heart racing. "And what exactly does that mean?"

He didn't answer right away. Instead, he twirled me again, but this time slower, more deliberate, as if giving me a moment to process. When he pulled me back against him, the music had slowed, and so had his movements. His grip on me was firm, possessive, as if claiming me in front of everyone in the room.

"It means," he whispered, his lips brushing against my temple, "my focus has shifted. Revenge on your father isn't nearly as... enticing... as what I could gain by keeping you

close and safe."

I froze, my heart thudding in my chest, his words wrapping around me like a vice. "Keeping me close?" I echoed, trying to keep my voice steady, though I felt anything but. "And safe?"

"This alliance is necessary for both packs," he explained. "I do not intend to push you to the edge enough that you end things the way you attempted not too long ago. If you die, this alliance goes to hell."

That made sense, but Hades was not the man to give up something like revenge. He looked like an eye-for-an-eye kind of king.

"So you're treating me better for the sake of the alliance between our two packs?"

He smirked. "Maybe that's not the only reason."

"What else?"

At my question, his head dropped to the crook of my neck. My legs buckled when his lips made contact, but he held me in place. "Let's just say I am a bit intrigued by you," he whispered.

He pulled away and continued to sway as if he hadn't spoken at all.

"Intrigued?" His words reminded me of the webnovels I used to read online years back. Still, his words piqued my interest. What game was

he playing?

Like he did in my room, he caught a strand of my red hair between his fingers. "Tempting me into ending you?" he murmured, as though lost in thought. "You might be more interesting than I thought, Red."

I froze at the nickname. "Red?"

Hades smirked, still twirling the strand of my hair between his fingers. "Fiery like your hair. Strong-willed. Tempting." His eyes locked with mine. "You keep surprising me."

I opened my mouth to speak, only to be hit by a sudden ache in my lower abdomen. I faltered a bit, but Hades' hold did not relent. "What's wrong?"

"I-I-I..." Then the pain hit me again, and so did the realization. Horror fell over me, and I pulled away from Hades. "I need to go to the bathroom," I excused myself and made a run for it. I asked for directions and soon found myself in a stall, panicking.

Goosebumps rose on my skin. Goddess, no, this could not be happening. But it was bound to. Why could it not just be period cramps? Why did it have to be this? I had no idea how I would manage it. Today, I was just feeling aches; by tomorrow, I would be losing my mind and in

heat. 1

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