372 Energy Source

Hades [1]

Rage exploded behind my ribs, vision tinging red. Jaws gritted as I forced myself to keep myself I'm check, to retrain my anger. I closed my eyes, gulping in air through my mouth and let it out through my nose.

The other Gammas, nodded and shared self satisfied expression as the head continued to speak about plans, about what their king, Darius wanted about the consequences of failing him. But I only got snipets of his words. My head was a tempest, drowning out all other thoughts.

Stealth could go to hell.

There was blood in my mouth—I'd bitten down too hard. My throat burned from holding back the roar surging inside me. Not a sound. Not a twitch. Just tremors of fury beneath borrowed armor as I stood shoulder to shoulder with monsters and listened.

Listened to them laugh about torturing Kael.

15:46

Listened to them reduce Elliot—my son—to a "bargaining chip."

Listened to them call Ellen a failed asset, a defector, like she hadn't mutilated herself just to be free.

I wanted to break every bone in their bodies.

One by one. Slowly.

But Cain's warning echoed like a snare in the back of my skull: No sudden moves. Not yet.

Not until we had Kael.

Not until I could get this suit off, rip through every last one of them, and paint this sterile lab with their arrogance.

The head Gamma turned toward the scientists again, gesturing toward the arm. "Run full diagnostics. We need to know if the tether left residual imprinting. King will want the data. The horn's power can still hold her even if the imprinted. Just a chip of that thing has powered this facility for a decade."

The horn...

The anger did not fizzle away even a little but it was not tampered with surprise as my brows flew into my hairline.

It had to be the same horn, Vassir's horn, the one we were searching from. Now, not only was it a proven fact that it was with Darius but now I was hearing the full scope of its power. A chip of the horn of the of a deceased vampire could power up a facility of this magnitude? [1]

Then again, it was not all that far fetched taking in consideration all the facts on ground. Vassir had been defeated because one of his horns had been broken when he was incapacitated enough for it to be possible. The crack of the severing of the horn revibrated in skull. I could still remember it, like a tune that could never fully forget. A singular beat, a change in tempo could bring it all back. The incident where I had tried to erace Eve's memory, it had taken her breaking of my horn to relent. I recalled my death in my past life and I knew it could be possible that a chip of the horn could be a source of power that can be converted to energy of anytime and this time it was electrical energy. If it was a capable of electrical energy and control as well as what

Vassir has said...

The female scientist scoffed. "You think she survived amputation and bonding severance and still has enough essence left to imprint again?"

"She has the Marker," he replied flatly. "We have to find her. Even a minute chance remains a chance. If we don't find her, we will have to look to the traitorous whore in Obsidan. But unlike Ellen Valmont who has no one here, Eve could as well have an army that hybrid brute and his Gammas behind her."

But they wanted to take my child.

"But why attempt to take the hybrids child instead when you know how, King Hades would react? It's is child."

The head Gamma's voice lost its sharp edge and took on a thoughtful cadence—almost curious.

"It's his child," he repeated, almost musing. "He spent years believing the boy wasn't his... and now, after finally getting him back?"

He gave a low chuckle.

"Any father would be desperate. But him? The

so-called King of Obsidian? Desperation makes kings into ghosts. That kind of pain hollows them out. Makes them reckless. Makes them predictable."

He turned to the scientist again. "We needed to take the child to make a trade—but now we've only given the wolf a reason to bite harder. Still... fear can be just as useful as leverage. Especially when it's laced with guilt."

Another Gamma chuckled. "You think he'll come for the Beta?"

"He won't have a choice," the leader replied. "The child's safe—for now. But Kael Orlov? That's the heart of their defense. The Obsidian line lives and dies on command. Strip the Beta, and the Alpha unravels. He will give us back what he want, might even give us his hybrid queen."

I nearly lost my grip.

Hybrid queen.

Eve.

I had to be still.

I had to be smart.

Because they thought they'd outplayed me.

Because they thought I'd show my hand the moment they touched what mattered.

Because they thought desperation made me predictable.

And maybe once, they'd have been right.

But they didn't understand what kind of monster I'd become to protect what was mine.

They didn't understand that the only thing more dangerous than a desperate king...

...was one who'd already died for his throne.

One who'd crawled back from the grave with nothing left to lose.

A silent alert pulsed in my borrowed helmet—a brief flicker in the side HUD.

Cain.

He was in position.

I felt my pulse slow, heart syncing to the rhythm of the mission.

Time was running out.

Kael...

And if they so much as touched him...

Hell wouldn't be deep enough to bury them.

I turned just enough to catch sight of the Gamma with the datapad. My voice was low, mechanical behind the helmet's modulator.

"Where is the prisoner now?" I asked.

The head Gamma glanced back, and caught of the long jagged scar that ran from beneath his helmet. "North sublevel. Extraction Room Four. Still sedated."

Perfect.

I gave a short nod.

And stepped into place.

Because I was done listening.

It was time to move.

The moment my nod was complete, I struck.

Faster than a whisper. Quieter than death.

I lunged through the center of the formation, seized the head Gamma by the collar, and drove him backward—hard—into the steel diagnostics table with a clang that split the room. His armor cracked under my grip. He reached for a weapon, but I was faster.

Much faster.

My other hand shot forward, claws half-formed, curling into a jagged arc of bone and flesh.

I pressed a stolen sidearm—still hot from the Gamma I'd silenced earlier—directly under his chin.

He froze. All of them did.

"Don't move," I said, my voice no longer modulated. No longer masked.

Just mine.

Rough. Cold. Unmistakable.

Every weapon in the room turned on me.

But I didn't flinch.

I leaned down slowly, deliberately, and tilted my head.

My spine snapped, twisting once as I let the false armor shed like a serpent's skin. The helmet fractured beneath the pressure of my shift—splitting clean down the center with a sharp crack.

It fell away.

Their guns didn't drop, but their mouths did.

Eyes widened.

A collective shudder rippled through the room like static through wires.

"It's him," someone whispered.

"Hades Stravos."

"The King of Obsidian—"

One Gamma dropped his rifle without realizing. The scientist nearest the door took a staggering step back, pale as a sheet.

The head Gamma tried to speak—tried to bark an order—but I pressed the barrel harder to his throat, silencing him with a twitch of my finger.

"Try it," I said, voice low, deadly. "Give them an order. Let's see which of you gets to die first."

No one moved.

A slow hiss cut through the stunned silence. The automatic door behind us slid open.

Cain stepped through like a shadow slipping from between cracks in the world—flanked by two Obsidian operatives in disguised armor. In his grip was a bloodied lab coat, still twitching. The man inside it was barely conscious, head lolling forward, mouth gagged with a strip of surgical cloth.

Cain tossed him to the ground like trash.

"Head scientist from Faculty Fourteen," he said calmly. "Was hiding behind cryo-storage and piss-poor encryption. Cried like a pup when I fried his retinal lock."

The man groaned, barely audible.

Cain dusted his gloves and gave a glance around the room. "Well. Looks like I missed the party."

"You're just in time," I replied, eyes still locked on the Gamma beneath my weapon.

The Gamma swallowed—hard. Tried to mask the way fear rippled down his spine, but I saw it.

Smelled it.

Still, he lifted his chin, forcing that smug superiority back into his voice like a reflex.

"What do you want?" he rasped. "You think this ends well for you? You think you're walking out of here, Alpha? This is Darius's compound. You're in his kingdom now."

I smiled.

Not kindly.

Not even cruelly.

Just enough to show teeth.

"We're going to take a walk," I said, pressing the barrel tighter to his throat until I felt his pulse flutter. "You're going to lead us to Kael. And you're going to give him back."

"And if I don't?" he spat, though his voice wavered.

Cain answered for me, tone flat as steel. "Then I pull every nerve in your arm out through your heel before breakfast. And I won't even be the worst part of your morning."

I leaned in close.

"If Kael has one scratch," I whispered, voice edged with something far older than rage, "I'll tear the memory of you from your mother's bones."

The Gamma's eyes darted toward the others— some trembling, some frozen. None willing to die for him.

"I'll walk," he choked. "I'll walk."

"Good."

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