



## 379 Final Beats

**Hades** 1

It should have taken a minute for it to sink in that we had just been trapped in. But nothing, I meant nothing, not even shock, would let me stand by and let Kael die here.

He was barely conscious, scared, and in pain.

Knowing him... he would blame himself as he slowly faded, believing that it was only because we came to save him that we found ourselves in this situation. That would be his final thought as he slowly, painfully slipped away.

Not relief...

Not a softer, more tired version of his usual bright, stupid smile...

Or a final joke, one that would forever haunt me, one I would be forced to share with Eve when I came home carrying his corpse.

None of that...

It would be guilt. Guilt would be the final



emotion before he was stolen by the darkness that is death.

Another fucking layer of sorrow. Another anvil on his already crushed chest.

No...

"Hades..."

Kael's fading voice made my heart clench, just as I slammed into the barrier.

The impact rattled through my bones like thunder against brittle glass. Pain shot down my shoulder, but I barely felt it. My fingers clawed at the surface, only to meet resistance that wasn't earth or stone.

No... this wasn't natural.

I scraped harder, knuckles bleeding against the dark sheen until I saw it...metal. Seamless. Reinforced.

Titanium.

I cursed under my breath.

"Shift!" I barked at the others, voice cutting through the rising panic. "Now!"



Snarls erupted behind me. The cavern pulsed with heat as bodies snapped and twisted, fur splitting through flesh, claws scraping against the floor.

They lunged at the barrier, one after another, tearing into it with feral rage.

And the cave... It answered back.

A low growl rolled through the earth like a sleeping god stirred. Dust fell first. Then pebbles. Then stones cracked free from the ceiling, crashing around us in jarring bursts.

Cerberus snarled as a boulder landed a breath from my foot.

"Stop." My voice was low, deadly.

No one listened.

"I said STOP!"

A sonic snap echoed as I let loose a partial shift, my own power flaring with the command. The wolves froze, claws still buried in the titanium. Their breathing was ragged, eyes wild.

But the cave didn't care that we'd paused.





The groaning deepened; long, slow. Cracks spread like veins across the ceiling, threatening to split wide and swallow us whole.

"If we keep this up," I said coldly, "the cavern will bury us before whoever locked us in even gets the satisfaction."

The silence that followed was louder than any growl.

Cain shifted back first, panting, blood on his lips. He looked up at the crumbling ceiling, then down at Kael's motionless form.

"We're out of time," he said.

"I know."

I stared at the titanium. No heat signature. No bolts. Nothing to pry or blast through. It hadn't been placed. It had been designed.

A shift echoed; but it wasn't one of ours. None of us were moving. We were on defense. 1

It rippled through the cavern like a warning bell; foreign and cold and every muscle in my body tensed, my ears twitching.



The others sensed it too.

Snarls flared again, this time quieter. Controlled. Focused. We turned as one, heads angling toward the far wall.

Another opening.

Where I had just run out of.

It hadn't been there before. And yet, it was there now. I sensed the hum of the change, it was like the earth had opened up. It had been hollow before, but whatever had been on the other side was no longer willing to stay hidden.

We didn't move.

Then...

Footsteps.

Slow. Measured. Echoing through the dark like the ticking of a death clock.

Then they stopped.

Abruptly.

Like it was waiting. Calculating. Feeling the air the same way I was.



Nothing.

Silence...

We couldn't afford a close-quarters fight. Not in unstable walls. Not with a dying Kael. It just wasn't possible without catastrophe. Or even worse, our enemies in the fortress finally finding us.

We had our hands tied behind our backs.  
Blindfolds on our eyes...

Then...

Hiss.

It was low at first, like steam escaping a pipe.  
Then it thickened.

The air changed.

No... tainted.

My lungs seized on instinct. My eyes watered.  
Burned.

Gas.

Toxin.



"Get down!" I shouted, already moving.

I was by Kael's side before the words even finished leaving my mouth. His body trembled under my grip. Skin too cold. Breathing too shallow.

He was barely holding on, and now this.

I tore the fabric from my shirt in one motion, wrapping it around his face, then mine. It wouldn't do much. But it was something. Filter something... I knew I was just hoping foolishly.

His lashes fluttered. I knew he felt it too; the weight of the end creeping closer. We had been transported here, fought so hard, unwittingly discovered the horn we were looking for... but it all seemed to be futile in the end.

"I've got you," I whispered hoarsely, holding him tighter.

I could hear the others growling. Ready to lunge. Ready to fight.

But I couldn't move.

Because if I did...





If I let go of him...

I might miss it.

That final, fragile breath.

Kael had always been terrified of dying alone. He never said it, not really. But I knew. In the quiet moments between our battles, in the way he clung to noise and people and the sound of laughter like they were lifelines. That was just the way he was. Simply Kael. And if I ever cared for him, having not been able to give him anything else; I would give him this...

So I stayed.

I didn't fight.

Not this time.

I held him like the world was ending, because for me, it was. 4

And in the darkness, something watched.

Waiting.

I heard the thuds of my Gammas and Cain's men falling around me.





"Luci..." Cain's voice was soft, too soft, before it was promptly cut off. Then silence.

Kael's heartbeat was fading, until I had to feel the tiny pulse only through the vibrations and not the sound. His heart was letting go as I held on tighter, counting each beat as I began to fade as well.

It barely had an impact on me, but I knew if I continued to inhale, I would fall just like the rest did.

So I held on, just to feel his beats.

One...

Two...

Three...

Four...

...

He reflexively tightened his grip on mine before he slacked.

Five.

...

379 Final Beats

...

Shx.

...

Then nothing.

...

Have some hope guys

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