



380 Piercing Light

Hades 1

"Brother, that... will never happen. It can't... for a mutated dog?" He tried to keep the respect and reverence in his voice, but I could hear it slipping away as his face hardened.

I pulled the midnight coat over my shoulders, shrugging as I considered him through the mirror. "Watch your tone, Orion," my voice was soft, but my red eyes gleamed.

He blinked, eyes darting like he couldn't believe I had just said that to him. "Brother..."

"You heard me," I cut him off. "Today is the matrimony. I will not change my mind."

His brows disappeared into his hairline as though he was just now finding out about the wedding.

"You will forsake your race for... her?" His voice cracked with disbelief. "You would bind yourself to a creature so far beneath our kind that even the soil recoils from her touch?"



"Careful," I said again, quieter this time. That kind of quiet that rattled bones and left no doubt.

But Orion—Orion had never been good at reading lines until they bled.

"You taught me pride," he hissed, stepping closer. "You taught me discipline. Legacy. Bloodline. And now you—you—would shatter that for a cursed mongrel?"

I did not speak.

"Have you forgotten they are werewolves? Have you forgotten what we are? We are creatures of night—the ones who carved our dominion from ash and silver, who watched their kind kneel beneath our thrones. And you—you would crown one as your queen?"

I met his fury with stillness. "She is not one of them."

Red hair and those menacing eyes crept into my mind, a smile touching my lips, a more genuine softness coloring my voice.

"My Elysia was more than special."

"You romanticize her disease," he spat. "You wear your affection like armor, but we both know what this is, Hades. Weakness. Decay. Desperation." 1

I stepped forward, the air thickening with my silence. "Do not mistake my love for her as the absence of power. If anything, it is the reason I still have any left."

Orion's eyes flickered. "Love?" he whispered, stunned. "So that's what this is."

"No," I said, voice like crushed velvet, "this is warfare. She is my weapon, my ally, my moon-sent match. You see a mongrel—I see a mirror."

He flinched, like I'd struck him. "You would damn us all."

"No, Orion. I would free us." 1

He snarled. "We are vampires, Vassir! We do not put faith in creatures beneath us, much less love them." 1

He never called me by name. It was always brother. And I knew then, in that moment,



something had broken between us.

"We don't love, we conquer," Orion spat. "We devour. We endure. That is what makes us eternal."

"And yet you tremble at the idea of change," I said quietly, stepping closer. "Tell me, brother... what good is eternity if it is spent in chains forged from the bones of our past?"

"You speak like a prophet," he sneered. "But all I see is a fool wearing love like a crown made of rot."

"Then open your eyes," I hissed. "Because this rot, as you call it, has done what all your centuries of discipline never could—it made me feel. It made me choose." 1

Orion's jaw clenched. "You're choosing wrong."

"No," I said again, calmly. "I'm choosing different."

The air between us crackled, a tension older than time stretching thin.

Orion took a breath, but it didn't steady him. His next words came out sharp, broken, desperate.



"She'll ruin you, Hades. You think you're in control? You're not. That girl is prophecy and pain wrapped in pretty flesh. The moment she falters, they'll turn on you. We all will, as well." 2

My eyes narrowed to slits. "Let them."

Orion stared, stunned.

"If they turn," I went on, "then they were never mine to begin with."

"You would go to war for her?"

"I already have," I said.

"And what of your people?"

"I am my people."

"And what about me?"

I paused.

And in that pause, we both heard it—the moment our brotherhood cracked.

"You chose the bloodline," I said at last. "I chose the bond."

Orion looked stricken. A prince stripped of every



illusion.

"She is not worthy..." But there was no venom in his voice, only resignation.

I rose slowly, adjusting the ceremonial cloak.

"Brother..." I murmured.

Orion gazed up at me, his eyes filling slowly with hope. Hope that would amount to nothing but disappointment.

"Draw the curtains," I ordered.

Orion's face did not just fall—it withered into something ghastly.

I smiled, menacingly. "Gaze at the sun..."

His eyes widened, flecks of red and amber pulsing with horror.

"Do it, brother. Show me your power. Prove me wrong. If you can do this... I will not marry her. I will walk away from this, and we will complete your plan, as you have always wanted. Wage war against the werewolves, and take it all."

An obvious tremor passed through him, his mouth hanging open, void of words.



I waited, the clock ticking in my head. I tilted my head. "You can't, yet you call yourselves conquerors."

He blinked.

And I moved. I was in front of him before he opened his eyes.

"You remember legacy, but you forget we bow to a red-hot ball in the sky. You forget the days are longer than the nights—no time to hunt, our blood banks have gone dry. You forgot we are slowly dying out. Our lands are barren. You forgot that the old ways no longer serve us."

My voice was a whisper, but it struck like a lash. "And yet here you stand, trembling before the sun like a child afraid of being seen. We've ruled from shadows for so long, we've forgotten how to live in the light."

Orion's lips parted, but no sound came. Just a choked breath. Just the faint scent of burning pride.

"We are not gods, Orion," I said. "We are relics. Fossils wearing crowns of bone and dust. You think marrying her is betrayal? No. This—" I



gestured to the dim room, the shuttered windows, the heavy velvet drapes suffocating daylight—"this is betrayal. Of ourselves. Of everything we could become."

His hands clenched at his sides, veins like dark rivers under pale skin. "You are deluded," he rasped.

"Then step into the light," I challenged. "Let it judge you. Let it judge us both."

Silence.

I turned away, knowing he wouldn't. Couldn't.

"That's what I thought." I adjusted the obsidian clasp at my throat, letting the final piece of my ceremonial cloak fall into place. "You want to lead? Then lead from the crypts. I'll lead from the pyre if I must, because at least I'll be burning for something."

Behind me, I heard him fall to one knee; not in worship, not in loyalty—but in the quiet collapse of a man who had just lost his world.

"You've lost your mind," he whispered.

"No," I said. "I've found my soul."



"You might have found that... but I swear you will lose everything else, even if I have to do the same."

I raised a brow. "What is that?"

"Ally myself with the enemy." 1

The light pierced my eyes like a heated blade as my lids snapped open. My heart was racing, drenched in sweat, every treacherous muscle aching. The remnants of the dream—or whatever it was—melted away as my eyes darted around the strange environment.

The room was large and unfamiliar. Painted a solemn, clinical gray and illuminated by a bright hanging bulb in the ceiling. The room was minimally furnished, like a cottage room.

I was in a bed.

I launched off it the moment it all came back to me—the cavern, our sudden entrapment, the gas, Kael's final heartbeat...

Goosebumps rose as I remembered it all.

< 380 Piercing Light



Kael was dead. 3

Where the fuck was I?

Comment 12

View All >



Post your first comment!



Vote



Fandom



Send Gift

Swipe left to continue >

16:24

10/10