



385 When Will Be A Child?

Eve 1

Montague didn't speak for a moment. His mouth opened, then closed again. The tremble in his hand stilled, but something new crept into his expression. Not fear. Not skepticism. Something far heavier.

He knelt slowly, lowering himself to Elliot's level, eyes locked on the boy like he was trying to peer into the very marrow of him.

"How are you seeing this?" he asked, voice low. Not demanding. Just... lost. "Elliot, how do you know all this?"

Elliot looked up at him, blinking once, then again. His brows furrowed, like he'd only just realized what he'd said out loud.

"I don't know," he said softly. "Grandpa, I don't know."

The words were so innocent, so painfully sincere, that the silence that followed was deafening.



Montegue's shoulders stiffened slightly. His eyes didn't leave Elliot's face.

He swallowed once, hard. "But what you see... it's real? You're not pretending?"

Elliot shook his head. "I'm not pretending. It's real. It's always been real. I just... didn't want to say it before."

"Why?" I asked gently.

He hesitated, glancing toward me. His voice was smaller now. "Because no one would believe me. And because if I say it out loud... then maybe it becomes true."

My chest ached.

Rhea stirred again, sharper this time.

"This type of illusion is not of your kind. Neither Lycan nor werewolf. Illusion by glamour, compulsion by mind control, healing and rearranging a broken mind like was done to Morrison—this is not what your kinds can do. The only creature capable of those abilities are —"

"...Vampires," I figured. But vampires are... gone."



"Yet you almost got your mind scrambled by a supposed Lycan." Her voice held a little knowing humor. "It took the remains of one vampire to do just that—to wreak such havoc. To use those abilities. Now who else has more remains and is capable of this, Evie? Tell me."

"Darius. And the horn. He used the horn."

I didn't even realize I had spoken out loud until Montegue responded.

"The horn has something to do with this?"

"Rhea says so. And it points to that too, don't you think?"

Montegue scrunched his brows, surveying the environment again.

I clarified. "According to Morrison's wife, her husband's mind was mysteriously healed after a visit. Lucinda tried to bite off her own tongue out of compulsion—clear signs of mind control. And now we find ourselves in a room we think is clean, but Elliot can see through the glamour while we cannot. So this might be an illusion. Elliot sees the room the way we believe it ought to be after Hades thoroughly searched it. I can



even tell Hades would have punched that mirror out of frustration because he couldn't find Kael. The context clues are... too perfect," I continued, my voice trembling with the weight of what we were unraveling. "No broken furniture. No overturned chair. No trace of scent past a certain point. No blood. Just... staged normalcy. It's too clean—like someone reconstructed this room from memory." 2

Montegue still had doubts—I could see it in his eyes. A man so used to logic, to evidence and discipline, he clung to reason like it was a sword keeping the chaos at bay.

But this wasn't logical.

This wasn't something he could command into submission or dissect with military precision.

"But how can Elliot see through the glamour?" he asked. "The illusion is so perfect that I, the owner of the house, can't see through it." He was sincerely puzzled, agitation and apprehension growing with the panicked pitch of his voice. "How can he see through it?"

The moment he asked, it all dawned so fast I gasped, my already pounding heart leaping into a



sprint.

"Because of the same resonance."

"Resonance? Like what happened when Elliot could communicate with Hades, even when Vassir tried to take over? But this isn't Hades."

"Elliot has the Flux. And so does Hades. That's how the resonance was possible. Where does the Flux come from, Monte?"

He didn't need to think. "Vassir's Vein."

"From?" I urged.

"Vassir's preserved remains," he answered—just as his eyes widened with revelation.

"And what is the horn?"

"It is also one of Vassir's remains."

I pushed further. We had to be on the same page with something so convoluted, yet in some ways so simple.

"Which means?"

Montegue's eyes flicked to Elliot, then back to me, the pieces finally locking into place behind



the storm in his gaze.

"It means..." he breathed, "...he's immune to the glamour because he's one of them."

"Not like them," I corrected gently. "Of them."

He looked down at Elliot again. The boy stood quietly, his expression calm, eyes flicking across the room like he was seeing two versions of it at once.

"Like how only a vampire could ever see through another's illusion," Montegue said slowly. "And vampires are extinct. But Elliot—" he paused, his throat tightening, "—Elliot was born with the Flux already in him. From Hades."

"And Hades got it from Vassir's Vein," I added. "Which came from Vassir's own body."

Montegue turned sharply. "And the horn—"

"—Is Vassir's body," I finished. "Or what's left of it."

The silence after that was suffocating.

Elliot shifted slightly and said, very softly, "So I can find Daddy and Uncle Kael?"



My heart shriveled at the hopeful apprehension in his voice. He was being pulled into this again. First, Felicia's insidious games, then the Fenrir's Rite, and now this. When would it end? When would he get to be a child?

Elliot reached for my hand, curling his small fingers into mine with quiet determination. His voice, though soft, carried a strength that made my throat tighten.

"I can help, Mummy," he said, eyes steady on mine. "You don't have to worry."

"Elliot—"

"I want to bring Daddy and Uncle Kael home," he said firmly, chest rising with a breath too deep for someone so small. "They're lost. But I'm not. I can see through it. I can follow it back to where they are." 1

Montegue looked as though someone had knocked the air out of him. His lips parted, but no sound came.

And me—my heart broke all over again.

"You're a child," I whispered. "You shouldn't have



to carry this."

He shrugged. "But I already am." 1

And there it was. The truth, laid bare in the quietest voice in the room.

Before I could say anything else, Montegue's communicator crackled, cutting through the thick silence like a blade.

"Sir, this is the Medic Wing at the Obsidian Tower—come in."

Montegue flicked it on. "Go ahead."

"There's... there's been a complication. It's Mrs. Montegue. We can't move her."

My body tensed instantly.

"Why not?" Montegue demanded.

"She's awake, sir. But she's—she's not responding to her name. She's speaking like—"

The voice cut off, interrupted by a low, strange male voice—guttural and unnatural.

"I must get the boy. They have Ellen. We take their children."



Elliot gasped sharply.

I turned to him, alarmed, only to find him as white as a ghost.

"That's the voice of the man," he whispered, trembling. "The one who hurt Uncle Kael." 4

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