



## 390 Elliot's Wolf

Eve 1

I rocked him gently, whispering, "Shh... it's okay... I've got you, sweetheart. I've got you."

But he wasn't hearing me.

Elliot trembled like a leaf in my arms, breath hitching in silent sobs that wracked his tiny chest. His grip on my shirt tightened with every shallow breath, his shoulders hunched, his whole body locked in sorrow.

"I know," I murmured into his hair. "I know it hurts, baby. I know it's too much. But Grandpa's strong. He's going to pull through. He is. He has to..."

He still didn't speak.

The machines continued their urgent beeping.

And then...

Elliot's head jerked up.

I felt it before I saw it, heat. Not from the room,



but from him. A pulse. Like something thudding beneath his skin, like something trying to wake up.

His teary eyes met mine and they weren't the same.

For the briefest second, just a blink, they shimmered red. Not blood-red. Lunar red. Like the rim of an eclipse.

I froze. My heart stilled.

"Elliot?" I whispered.

His mouth parted slightly, his chest still heaving, but now from something more than just grief.

He blinked again. The red was gone, his eyes back to those wide, warm eyes. His lashes were still wet with tears. Confused. Like he didn't know what had just happened.

But I had seen it.

So had the medic standing across from us, still holding a used injector, her mouth agape.

"Was that...?" she breathed.

I couldn't answer. Because I didn't know.



And yet, deep in my bones, I felt that rattle like my body knew what it saw, even if my mind had not yet caught on. Or maybe I simply refused to believe it.

I swallowed hard as I adjusted him in my arms. My voice came out, but each word was tentative, like I was afraid if I asked, it would make it all real—realer than it already was.

"Elliot..."

His bloodshot eyes met mine, confused by my sudden reaction to something he didn't even seem to notice himself.

"How are you feeling?" I asked.

He blinked, a tear falling. His confusion was palpable.

My worry only rose. He was not even six yet. He was far too young to have found his wolf. He was nowhere near mature enough. A child's eighteenth birthday was the usual time for a wolf's appearance. I looked down at him again before running my hand over my face.

I was seeing things due to the stress of the



situation.

I was overwhelmed. That was the only possible reason I would be seeing it. 1

I was tired.

But I could see the anxiety on Elliot's tear-streaked face.

I managed a tight smile for his sake.

"We are alright," I said. The lie was sour as I wiped his tears.

But of course, my ever-vigilant son was not convinced.

He reached out his hand to my face, doing the same thing I did for him. "You are crying too, Mummy." Contrition flared in the green whirls of his eyes. "Sorry. I made you sad."

I didn't even realize that I had begun to cry. "Never blame yourself," I said, planting a long kiss on his warm forehead.

I stilled again. His head wasn't just warm, it was burning.

A slow dread bloomed in my chest, but I pushed





the thought away, locking it behind exhaustion and denial. Not now. Not today.

Then...

Clank.

The sound was loud. Metallic. Final.

Clank. Clank. Clank.

Four in total.

I barely had a second to register it before a shriek ripped through the infirmary, followed by the harsh crash of overturned equipment.

I whipped around.

Too late.

Lucinda had shifted.

Her restraints were in twisted ruins behind her. Her body was no longer human, no longer recognizable. Thick tawny fur rippled across her contorted frame, her eyes glowing with that same blistering madness that had consumed Hades once. Elongated limbs, snarling maw, claws like obsidian daggers...



And they were coming straight for me.

I didn't move.

I couldn't.

Everything—the heartbreak, the Flux, Hades, the Council, Monte, the blood, the mark, Elliot—it collapsed on me like a tidal wave, and my body simply refused.

My knees locked.

My muscles were unresponsive.

My heart thundered, but my limbs were traitors.

The world slowed as Lucinda lunged, and all I could do was stare up at those monstrous claws arcing toward my skull.

Maybe this was always meant to be.

Maybe I was never meant to survive this story.

Maybe my death would be the last offering to the gods who had written my tragedy in stars before I was ever born.

Peace, I thought.



Maybe this would finally be peace.

But it didn't come.

A sound shattered the room—a low, primeval growl that vibrated through the floor and shook the windows in their panes.

It didn't come from Lucinda.

It came from behind her.

No, from beneath her.

Lucinda froze mid-lunge, her claws inches from my face. Her eyes flicked behind me in slow, stuttering realization.

Her lips curled back as she snarled, but there was hesitation now. Confusion.

Fear.

I followed her gaze down...

My arms were empty.

"Elliot?" I breathed, horror clawing up my spine.

And there, crouched on the floor between me and Lucinda...



Was a wolf.

Small. Still gangly in the legs. But unmistakable. Thick, mottled fur—charcoal and white—with a streak of red tracing the ridge of his back like a brand.

Eyes burning like lunar fire.

He bared his teeth at Lucinda.

"Elliot...?" 5

He snarled. Low and guttural.

Lucinda backed up a step, hackles raised, her head tilting in disbelief.

She sniffed the air, then let out a whimpering bark. Conflicted. Disoriented.

Because whatever power Elliot was radiating, it wasn't childlike.

Far from it—not when it scared even me, even Lucinda.

I stared on, stunned, before the shifting of the medics behind me pulled me out of my daze and I quickly scooped him up into my arms. He kept growling and snarling at Lucinda, who, strangely,





began to retreat, her ears drooping.

I looked between them, trying to figure out how it was possible that when even Gammas and tranquilizers had not been able to subdue her, the growls of a premature wolf were enough to have her confused and retreating.

"How is he doing that?" one of the Gammas who had now surrounded us asked.

"He's barely half her size," another added.

"It's the same thing that happened at the manor, Eve. He could see through the vampiric illusion, and now his growls can disrupt the effects of the mark for a bit. He seems to have that power."

"Because of the resonance he shares with the Flux. Because he inherited it. And by extension, the resonance he has with the horn. It's allowing him to have some type of power over it."

It dawned quickly.

He also had power over the mind control Lucinda was under.

There was relief and a sinking feeling as I realized that Elliot was only getting further



entangled in this. I had not even yet come to terms with his shifting, not to talk of any more implications from that.

I missed his first shift.

Because I had been so preoccupied with wanting it all to end—like the coward I was.

I stroked his fur, trying to keep myself from bursting at the seams.

He turned his head—the size of a full-grown dog, far from the size of normal wolves that awakened at maturity. He lapped at my hand, stretching up to lap at my tears as well.

A warmth bloomed in my tight chest before...

As suddenly as he shifted, he jumped out of my arms and straight for Lucinda.

My heart slammed against my ribs, my body quaking from shock as I shifted, ready to fight.

The Gammas were already on the offensive with me...

But my eyes widened as I watched.

Elliot's little form whimpered to Lucinda, and in



an instant, she shifted. Her face was wet with tears as Elliot willingly jumped into her arms.

"I am so, so sorry," she whispered against his fur. "I tried to... fight... it." Her words morphed into gibberish as she began to full-on cry. Her eyes found mine as I shifted back.

"Eve, I am... so scared," she whimpered, this middle-aged woman having completely crumbled. "His voice is... is in my head. And he wants Elliot."

I took tentative steps in her direction and she opened her arms. I accepted the embrace—the three of us, two broken women clinging together with a boy far too young to be saving us.

Lucinda sniffled. "I don't want his voice in my head. I want it to stop. I am tired, so, so tired." She chuckled, the sound as brittle as how I knew she felt. "You need to keep me locked up for your safety. Who would have thought a drop of blood on the floor of my daughter's room would bring me here."

I stopped in my tracks and she noticed.





"Let me tell you everything I know before I have another episode. The mark is already beginning to burn. If you're going to be our only hope, you need to know."

Her eyes turned hazy again, and I was ready to rip Elliot out of her arms.

"Before I don't get the chance to tell... I saw Lyra. Your mother. Down there."

She shuddered.

"She is like me. She has been marked." 4

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