



## 413 Full Shift

Hades 1

They both stiffened as the word left my lips, colour draining instantly. For a moment, none of them spoke, and I was left to watch as the people still gathered grew anxious, murmurs swelling like a tide. Maera simply observed, her gaze unreadable, as though waiting for the inevitable.

Kael swallowed thickly, speaking first, a slight tremor lacing every syllable.

"It's that thing you shifted into when Eve tried to escape, right? The creature that took the hit from Montegue's weapon and healed immediately?" His eyes widened with every word, fear dripping into each question as if he was bracing for the answer. "The same one with wings strong enough to strangle a full-grown man."

His green eyes were haunted. Like he was back in the lab, my fingers wrapped around his throat.

Guilt gnawed at me. I steadied him with a hand to his shoulder and gave him the same words I had said when I first learned what had happened



after Vassir had taken full control, when I became a prisoner in my own body, shackled by my own mind and memories.

"I am so sorry," I whispered.

He shook off the haze, his eyes sharpening, focusing on me.

"Can you do it?"

The ground tilted beneath me, and I wasn't sure how the hell I stayed upright as I stared at him like he'd asked me to surrender myself to Darius.

"Kael..."

"You heard me." His grip tightened on my shoulder, almost like he was fighting the urge to shake me. "You might not be able to shift into your wolf, but a shifted vampire in the night is a shadow—swift, silent, perfect. Almost too damn perfect."

Cain quipped in, drowning me further. "In elementary school, they taught us the fuckers could fly too. He's right—it's almost too perfect."

Kael nodded, his voice dropping to a fierce whisper. "It'll be the perfect form to cut through patrols, carve our way through this place. They won't see it coming, and even by the time they



figure it out, it'll be too late. We'll be home in one piece."

I could see all the advantages, but still—the thought of unleashing the residual Flux that had bound itself into the very marrow of me, that made me hybrid, was daunting.

The pressure mounted in my chest at the thought. Would it be like Vassir taking me over again? Would I be able to steer myself? Or would I lose control as I had before, drowning in the embodiment of vengeance and unfathomable evil?

"Hades, I know you fear that Vassir might not be as truly gone as we'd hoped," Kael said softly.

"He made you what you are now—a dual creature, both Lycan and vampire. If one part is out of commission, you have the other," Cain added. "If Eve says he's gone, believe her. It's Eve. She'd never jeopardize you like that."

"I know," I countered, a little too harshly. "But—"

"Eve is waiting at home," Kael cut me off.

The knot in my stomach tightened, longing cutting through me like a sharpened blade.

"She's probably not let Elliot out of her sight





since this started. Probably has him perched on her hip while she waits for your return. For our return."

That was exactly what Eve would do. I doubted she had even slept.

"And you know what makes it worse?"

Dread tightened its skeletal grip on my heart.

"She can't shift," Cain reminded me. "So she's all alone, worried sick, while she can't even protect your son from whatever that bastard has planned. Not to mention all your emotions—most of them clearly negative right now—" he gestured at me, "are being fed straight to Eve through Fenrir's chain. The last thing she needs is more stress, and I doubt the council is making it any easier on her. So unless you want her to collapse under the weight of your fear, you get it together." His voice was raw, stripped of sarcasm. "She's carrying enough already."

Fear wasn't usually an emotion that wreaked such havoc within me.

But this was visceral. This shift was tied to a time I had almost lost Eve. Almost lost Kael.

Almost lost myself.



But I had to leap.

I drew in a breath. Then another. Each ragged, burning, like swallowing fire.

Finally, I lifted my head, voice gravel and steel.

"Stand back."

The first crack came like thunder inside my ribs.

I staggered, choking on the heat flooding my veins—fire and knives colliding as bone snapped and stretched, my spine bowing until I thought it would tear through my skin. My scream never left my throat. It broke into a guttural snarl, strangled by the blood flooding my mouth.

My hands clawed the earth, nails tearing as my arms elongated, sinew twisting, reshaping. My body peeled itself open, layer by layer, until I was nothing but raw flesh and exposed muscle. The stench of iron filled the air, thick and metallic.

My wings tore free first—wet, glistening things of sinew and vein, unfurling with the sound of tearing hide. They beat once, showering the dirt in droplets of blood.

Every rib cracked outward. My chest expanded. The beast clawed free.



And through the haze of agony, memory came with it.

Not mine. Vassir's.

Faceless men bowing in shadowed halls. Screams. Chains rattling. A battlefield drenched in red. And among them—her. Eve. No—Elysia. She stood there, fire in her hair, gaze unflinching, as though she had always been the counterweight to the abyss inside me.

Her name broke me.

But another voice cut in.

"Brother."

I froze mid-shift, the word echoing like a curse. Through the flashing visions, a figure emerged—pale, wide-eyed, draped in black. His presence burned, familiar in a way that clawed at the back of my mind. His gaze was adoring as his lips formed words too quick for me to grasp.

Orion.

I knew the name before I realized I had spoken it aloud. It bled from my lips as my jaw snapped wider, fangs lengthening. Orion. I had seen him once before—in a dream that had felt like memory, a fragment of a conversation just





before I woke in the Cauterium.

The more my body broke and rebuilt, the clearer his face became. He smiled like kin. Then his expression darkened, unraveling, until his skin turned deathly, his youth leached away, leaving a shell that breathed ruin.

As I took Vassir's form, his memories poured into me, inseparable. For as long as his past washed through me, this figure—kin I would never meet in my present self—felt unbearably familiar. 2

My knees gave way, talons carving furrows in the dirt as the transformation completed. I rose from the carnage of myself, towering, wings dripping red.

The world came back into focus. Wide eyes stared up at me—some in awe, most in horror so thick it choked the air. Maera clutched Sage tighter. Kael and Cain's eyes were wide as saucers.

"Fuck," Cain muttered, almost afraid. Then he clapped his hands together, laughing in delight, his voice cutting through the tension and contrasting everyone else's terror. 1

"Who needs shifting for transport? We got a ride



right here. We're going home, fellas." 3

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