



422 Proof Of Life, Proof Of Lies

Eve ¹

With every word, I watched them lean in, murmured discussions rippling through the chamber as they analyzed the letter. With each sentence, I explained what its writer had been thinking—because James might as well have handed me his hardened brain to scan.

With a long sigh, I concluded, "So as you can see, Silverpine is not as in control as they want us to think. It's all a ploy—to create panic, incite desperation within our ranks. And while we scurry about searching for solutions, we walk straight into the trap they've set." ³

Reluctant hums of agreement rolled through the room. Some nodded; others still turned the words over in their minds. But the pieces were falling into place.

I just had to drive the point home.

"I have known Beta James long enough to know him as well as I know myself. He never folds—not even when he's bleeding out, a breath away from demise. He clings to secrets like armor, never divulging them—not even when they could be



used for manipulation. His motives are as elusive as the true face that hides beneath his many masks."

Memories stirred—childhood slips in his mask that I'd once dismissed as quirks. The way he spoke in circles, never directly answering. The way his stories evolved over time, testing which version would be swallowed whole. His lies always threaded with just enough truth to make you doubt yourself—never him.

That foolish girl who once trusted him had shriveled up and died.

In her place stood a woman ready to use their familiarity against him.

"Yet here, he lays it bare. The motive behind every attack, every rivalry, supposedly 'for the good of werewolves,'" I said, making air quotes and rolling my eyes. "At least, those he deems worthy," I added, quoting him verbatim. "Even as he tried to bring me back to Silverpine—slithering into my mind—he never said this much."

"You can see the way the ink deepens," Silas observed, "like he's cracking... losing control of the pen. He assaults the paper."



"Exactly," I returned, my lips twitching upward. "I know our enemy well—at least this one. He never concedes defeat. Never admits being outsmarted. Never acknowledges a miscalculation. He manages—his plans, his masks. But now?"

Gallinti cut in. "He concedes that you've become a thorn in his side—a wrench in the gears of his plans. He admits it."

Montegue stepped forward, his smile sharp. "I can see him shaking as he writes. Like he can't believe he's writing the words. He nearly tears the paper."

Another Alpha added, "He's losing control. Enraged—but most definitely panicking."

Even when I'd refused to return to Silverpine—choosing Hades—he hadn't accepted it as defeat. He'd called it mental illness. He couldn't admit he'd been outplayed. Not then. Not now.

And yet, while we took blow after blow from their machinations, something shifted on their side.

Now they were scrambling.

Their table shook—and they were trying to



shake ours too.

"I believe it started with Ellen escaping—or revolting—and disappearing."

Some still looked confused. Less than a month ago, I was Ellen to them. But those who were up to speed—Silas and Co—were already nodding.

They knew where I was going.

"The Blessed Twin escaped," Gallinti said. "Darius recruited Morrison to begin the first phase. His interview was a distraction. While we scrambled to calm civilians, they struck again—during the press conference no less. A two-act plan," he gestured to me, lips quirking with a faint smirk. "Just like you predicted."

"I heard someone say it," Elliot's small voice pierced the tension. "They said... because we took Ellen, they would take our children. That's why they tried to take me. Because they think we took Ellen... they wanted me in return."

Silence.

Then a few chuckles. Muttered remarks about how children always catch on—or say the darndest things.

"Yes, honey. That's exactly what they said," I



murmured. Lucinda had confessed that under compulsion, but this wasn't the time.

"Like my son said," I continued, "when they lost Ellen, it tilted the playing field. So they tried to level it—by taking Elliot."

"Breaking Felicia out was probably the secondary mission," Montegue added solemnly. "Taking the prince—that was the first. They got Felicia. But they failed to secure Elliot."

"Which is why they grabbed the Beta during the post-blast chaos," Gallinti continued. "They needed leverage. A bargaining chip. Anyone would have sufficed."

"And Hades followed the scent trail—only to disappear, just like Kael."

Only later did we learn Felicia's room had become a passage—to somewhere we couldn't reach.

"That brings me to the images."

The Monitor stepped forward and bent to whisper to Elliot, "Keep your eyes on those men. Be careful."

He nodded—eager to help. He faced the Alpha's squarely.



I couldn't let him see Kael like that.

I gestured to the first image without looking directly at it. "Beta Kael was captured. This letter—and these images—were sent to us."

Some grimaced. Others shuddered. A few remained stoic—but their jaws clenched.

Then the next image appeared—Hades and Cain.

I watched several pale.

Some of them had ties to Cain's underground syndicates. But this wasn't the time.

"This was the only image Silverpine sent of the Alpha," I said.

"Meaning?" someone asked.

"They had nothing more," I replied coldly. "They tried to threaten us... but this was all they had. Kael in terrible condition. But Hades? Untouched. Not even a scratch."

"If they truly had him," Montegue muttered, "they would've sent something worse. Something meant to shatter us. Something sadist, something truly harrowing. But they couldn't."

I still recalled the video of my 'execution'. It had been all a message, propaganda to make civilians



submit. It had been bloody, I shuddered when Cain had shown me. But to scare me, the traitor, all they had to show was those photos? It was not nearly as flamboyant as they liked.

His gaze lingered on the image of Kael.

I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Instead, they sent Hades and Cain—in uniforms that aren't Obsidian's. Which means they were uniforms from..."

"Silverpine," Gallinti said, rising slightly. "They disguised themselves. Infiltrated their ranks. Rescued the Beta."

I allowed myself a small smile. "And if, after three days, they still can't prove Hades is in chains... then he isn't. They escaped. Silverpine does not have Hades, Kael, or Cain."

Conviction radiated from me.

I knew it as fact.

Because my trust in my mate was unshakable. 3

My faith was intertwined with love—and knowing the kind of man he was.

Hades would never fail.

Not when Kael needed him. Not with war on the



horizon. Not when he had to come home to us—to Elliot and me.

> "I would know," Rhea whispered in my mind. "We share his pain. We are interwoven. We would know—even before a moon-cursed letter arrived—that all was lost."

> "Of course," I muttered back internally, then faced the room again. "So? Have we lost?"

"No," the room echoed, unanimous.

My face hardened. "Then if anyone here wants to act like a coward or a fool—and believe Obsidian has no hope—step out. And don't come back." 4

No one moved. Not even a blink.

"Good," I said darkly. "So we're on the same page?"

"Yes, Luna," they echoed.

My breath hitched at the title.

Luna.

There was no time to dwell.

"Are you prepared to hear the strategy as we await the Alpha's return?"

A thunderous chorus answered:

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"Yes, Luna." 5

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