

435 Declaration Of War

Eve 1

The royal military uniform felt foreign against my skin, crisp matte navy blue fabric with silver threading that caught the harsh studio lights, gems, I hadn't earned pinned to my chest. My hair had been pulled back into a severe high ponytail that tugged at my scalp, every strand smoothed into submission.

"Tilt your chin up slightly," the makeup artist murmured, dabbing concealer under my eyes deftly "The lights are washing you out."

I stood perfectly still as she worked, powder dusting my cheeks, lipstick on my lips. Around me, the studio buzzed with controlled chaos—technicians adjusting camera angles, sound engineers testing levels, producers barking instructions into their headsets.

The flags behind me had been positioned just so, Obsidian's silver wolf prominent in the center, flanked by the pack's ceremonial banners. Every detail calculated to project strength, legitimacy, control.

The makeup artist stepped back, giving me one



final assessment. "Perfect," she declared, gathering her brushes.

I stared straight ahead at the camera, its red light still dark, waiting. My hands remained clasped behind my back in military fashion, shoulders squared despite the weight pressing down on them. The uniform's collar felt too tight around my throat.

A producer approached, clipboard in hand. "Remember, Luna—strong eye contact with camera two. Don't look at the monitors. Don't think be cold but be firm.

Montegue was behind the cameras and lights but it was too bright for me to see them from where I sat.

I nodded curtly.

The studio lights blazed brighter, turning everything stark white around the edges. Sweat threatened to bead on my forehead despite the makeup artist's careful work.

"Positions, everyone!" someone shouted from behind the cameras. "We are going live in..."

The countdown began, and I felt my breath slow, my pulse steady. This was it—the moment we



would seize control of the narrative. Every Obsidian would be glued to their screen right this moment and know my father and James they would find a way to witness what I was about to say.

The 16 hour window, they have given me to submit myself and the sister I didn't have had long since closed.

They would be more on edge more than ever.

"Three... two... one..."

The red light blinked on.

"Good afternoon people of Obsidian Pack. This is Luna Eve." 1

My voice carried across the studio, steady and clear despite the thunder of my heartbeat. I kept my gaze fixed on camera two, just as instructed, letting the weight of authority settle into my tone.

"I am sure that the presence of Military Gammas and Royal Gammas in your sectors must have caused apprehension, especially after what happened during the press conference. I want to address your concerns directly."

I paused, allowing the gravity of the moment to



sink in. Somewhere beyond those blazing lights, thousands of citizens were watching, waiting, perhaps holding their breath.

"We have definitively come to know that Silverpine Pack was responsible for the attack that claimed innocent lives and wounded many more. The evidence is undeniable. While the Alpha is indisposed, I am here to put all rumors and speculations to rest."

My hands remained steady behind my back, though every muscle in my body felt coiled tight as a spring. This was the moment—the pivot point where we would either seize control of the narrative or watch it slip through our fingers entirely.

"I am here to reveal what we have been sent by the Beta of Silverpine Pack."

The studio fell into absolute silence except for the barely audible hum of the cameras. Even the technicians seemed to hold their breath. This was information that would change everything—the ultimatum, the impossible demand, the proof of Silverpine's aggression laid bare for all to see.

The red light on the camera burned like a beacon, waiting for the words that would



reshape the conflict between our packs forever.

I reached into my jacket and withdrew the red envelope, its crimson seal already broken. The paper felt heavy in my hands as I pulled out the letter, knowing that somewhere to my right, a sanitized copy with certain sections redacted would be displayed for the cameras.

But I would read it anyway. Every word they needed to hear.

When i was done, I folded the letter carefully, my movements deliberate and controlled. When I raised my head again, I let steel enter my voice.

"With this proof, you should understand why safety protocols have been implemented and why everyone is to remain indoors. The enemy is Silverpine Pack—not your Alpha. The shots are not coming from inside the house."

The lights felt scorching against my skin, but I didn't flinch. "Governor Morrison was compromised. That is why he spread lies to turn you against your Alpha. The bombing was to further cause pack agitation and incite conflict—but it is all a ploy to catch us off guard. I will not allow that."

My hands remained steady behind my back as I



continued. "Silverpine Pack is looking for an opening. Therefore, I have ordered all doors be closed—even yours—and our streets be patrolled. Do not see the Gammas as your jailers, but as what they have always been: your defenders."

Then I shifted my gaze slightly, speaking not just to the cameras but beyond them—to screens I knew would be watching in enemy territory.

"I speak now directly to Silverpine, because I know you are watching this. That is how desperate you have become. Alpha Darius, Beta James—" I let their names fall like accusations.

"This pack is impervious to your dirty tricks and ploys. If Malrik Valmont could not wipe out the legacy of Luna Elysia and Vassir, where do you get the impression that you, Malrik's descendant, will win this round—or any other round?" 3

The red light on the camera burned steady, carrying my words across the airwaves like a declaration of war.

Because that was exactly what it was and the gods forbid we would not be prepared.

"And that is a wrap," the producer called and the



red light went off and so did the blinding lights.

Montegue was by my side, with Elliot holding his hand, all before I could blink away the harsh glare. "You did wonderfully," he gasped, clapping my shoulder.

"Amazing, mummy," Elliot gushed, hugging my legs.

I smiled at him, lifting him unto my lap.

High Gamma Victoriana's voice cut through the bustle of the studio as crew members began dismantling equipment around us.

"That was strategically sound, Luna," she said, approaching with measured steps. Her tone carried approval, though restrained. "You've given the pack something to rally behind instead of fear."

She paused beside us, her sharp gaze taking in the controlled chaos of the production breakdown. "I was informed that you want to fast-track preparations for the Blood Moon War."

I shifted Elliot to my other hip and nodded toward a quieter corner of the studio. Victoriana followed, her expression already hardening as she anticipated what I was about to say.



Once we were out of earshot from the lingering crew members, I kept my voice low but firm. "I've seen the state of the border—how tight their security is. I know Hades hasn't been captured, but I cannot freeze time while we wait. We have to keep things moving in preparation."

Her jaw tightened. "You're talking about Operation Eclipse."

"I'm taking it over. Temporarily." I met her gaze steadily, despite the weight of what I was proposing. "We can't afford to wait for his return to begin mobilization."

Victoriana was quiet for a long moment, her expression stone-hard as she weighed my words. The silence stretched between us, heavy with the implications of what I was asking—and what it meant about our faith in Hades's safe return.

Finally, her shoulders relaxed slightly. "You'll have my support," she said, though her voice carried the weight of reluctance.

Montegue stepped closer. "We will down to one year to the blood moon by the day after tomorrow," he said quietly. 2

I nodded, even as every fiber of my being



wanted to reject this path—wanted instead to slip away in the night and cross that fortified border myself, to find him no matter the cost. The rational part of my mind knew we would find each other eventually, but at what price? And to how many others?

Deep in my consciousness, Rhea stirred with quiet confidence. "He will come home," my wolf assured me, her voice steady and certain.

"Cerberus is with him." 1

I held onto that certainty like a lifeline, even as I prepared for war. 2

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436 Someone Is Watching 2

Hades 1

Kael still didn't eat, I thought as I took off into the sky, my wings capturing wind and propelling us higher with each flap. Not even a bite, he refused. Half a year ago, I would have force-fed him. But he would report me to Eve. 1

That was what he threatened me with.

So I let him be.

Thea held her brother to herself, and Kael held her to himself. I curved my lengthened spine to ensure they were secure against my back, feeling the familiar weight of passengers who depended on me to get them safely across enemy territory.

The wind cut sharp against my face as we climbed higher, the ground falling away beneath us.

In the vast emptiness of the night sky, we were ghosts.

I had to keep it that way for our safety as we would cut diagonally through the capital itself. Where the Lunar Heights were--it was the last



place on the planet that we wanted to get caught. We might as well deliver ourselves with a pink bow and a card.

We needed to be higher to get through the city if we were to stay unseen.

"Buckle up," that was all the warning I gave, Kael instantly gripping my torso with his legs, and holding on tighter to the rest of our passengers.

I pushed us higher, my wings beating harder against the thinning air. The temperature plummeted as we climbed, each wingbeat requiring more effort as the atmosphere grew sparse. My core temperature began to drop, and a wave of lightheadedness washed over me. I shook my head sharply, forcing myself to stay alert—one moment of weakness at this altitude could kill us all.

The air became so thin that my wings struggled to find purchase, each stroke feeling less effective than the last. My muscles burned with the extra effort required to keep us aloft, and I found myself suddenly grateful that Kael had refused to eat. Every ounce of weight mattered up here where the air barely existed.

Behind me, Thea let out a sharp yelp as the



bitter cold hit her, but she caught herself quickly. Her teeth chattered violently as she tried to speak through the freezing air.

"T-there," she managed, her voice barely audible over the wind. "See the c-clearing ahead? The city should be j-just beyond that ridge."

I squinted through the darkness, following her trembling finger. The landscape below us looked exactly as she'd described—endless forest stretching in all directions, unmarked and seemingly uninhabited. I remembered the way the hidden city had been drawn on her father's map, sketched outside the margins like it was uncharted, unrecorded, existing in the spaces between reality.

My vision wavered slightly from the altitude and cold, but I forced myself to focus. One wrong move, one moment of weakness, and we'd plummet straight into the heart of enemy territory.

The thin air made each breath a struggle, but I kept my wings steady, carrying us through the frozen darkness toward home.

The descent should have been easier, but as we dropped toward the warmer air below, the



sudden change hit me like a physical blow. My lungs, starved for oxygen at the higher altitude, suddenly flooded with the dense, warm air. The shock of it made my head spin violently.

My vision went white at the edges.

For a terrifying moment, my wings faltered completely. We began to plummet, the wind rushing past us as gravity claimed what little control I had left. Thea's scream cut through the air, sharp and panicked, while Kael's grip on my torso tightened to the point of pain.

Focus.

I forced my wings to spread wide, catching the air in a desperate glide just as my vision began to clear. My chest heaved as I fought to stabilize us, each breath feeling like I was drowning in the thick atmosphere after the thin air above. My heart hammered against my ribs so hard I was sure Kael could feel it through my back.

We leveled out, but barely. I was panting now, my chest expanding and contracting like a bellows about to give out. Every muscle in my body felt like it was on the verge of collapse.

"Hades," Kael's voice was tight with concern, his breath warm against my ear. "Do you want to



land? Rest for a moment?"

"No." The word came out sharper than I intended, between ragged breaths. We couldn't afford to stop. Not here. Not when we were this close.

Kael's voice took on an urgent edge. "Thea, do you have any idea when we'll get there?"

Her response carried a bite of frustration, but I could hear the fear underneath. "I've never actually been there myself, Kael. I'm going off my father's maps and what little he told me."

"You have got to be kidding me," he growled even his hand on her waist, still securing her to me.

I was making things harder than they needed to be.

I blinked hard, trying to clear the lingering dizziness from my vision as I scanned the endless canopy below. Nothing but trees stretched in every direction, dark and impenetrable.

Then I blinked again.

For just an instant, a brilliant city blazed to life beneath us—towers of light piercing the darkness, streets glowing like veins of silver. The



hidden city in all their impossible insidious glory.

Another blink, and it was gone.

Nothing but forest again, as if I'd imagined the entire thing. "I think I see something," I muttered, unsure

"Wait—what do you see?" Kael's voice sharpened with surprise at my sudden certainty.

I forced myself to focus, fighting through the exhaustion and dizziness. This time, when I blinked, the vision held longer. The city materialized below us in all its impossible splendor—a sprawling metropolis that seemed to be carved from light itself. Every surface gleamed like it was made of gold and gossamer, catching and reflecting illumination that had no visible source.

The buildings rose in perfect symmetry, their architecture both ancient and impossibly modern. Spires twisted skyward like frozen flames, connected by bridges that looked too delicate to bear any weight yet somehow supported the gentle flow of what might have been traffic or people moving between structures.



At the city's heart stood a tower that made my breath catch. Not as tall as the Lunar Heights, but breathtaking in its own right—a spiraling monument that seemed to pulse with its own inner light, its surface shifting between gold and silver like liquid metal.

"Can you see it?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

"See what?" Thea leaned forward, squinting into the darkness. "I don't see anything but trees."

"Nothing," Kael confirmed, tension creeping into his voice. "Hades, what are you looking at?"

They couldn't see through the illusion. Of course they couldn't—I was the only one among us with the blood that might pierce such ancient magic. Like I had pierced through the Cauterium security with my howl.

He was using the horn to keep up the illusion too, it made sense that I could see through it. 1

The city seemed to slumber beneath us. I could make out movement within the uniform luxury houses, shadows passing behind gossamer walls, but the streets themselves were eerily empty. As we flew closer to the central tower, my enhanced vision picked out details that made my



stomach clench with unease.

Stone statues dotted the plaza before the tower—dozens of them, frozen in different poses. But these weren't monuments to heroes or gods. Each figure was carved with expressions of pure terror, their faces twisted in horror, hands raised as if trying to ward off some unspeakable fate.

"Go diagonal through the city," Thea instructed, her voice steady despite not being able to see our destination. "That should get us to Obsidian territory on the other side."

I locked onto the path she described, angling my flight to cut across the golden metropolis. My eyes remained fixed on those terrible statues as we approached—

One of them moved.

My heart stopped completely. For a moment that stretched into eternity, I forgot to breathe, forgot to fly, forgot everything except the impossible sight of stone coming to life in the plaza below.

My wings locked in position, carrying us forward on momentum alone as I stared down at the impossible sight. What I had taken for stone

wasn't stone at all—it was a figure so perfectly still it might as well have been carved from marble. But now it unfolded itself from its frozen pose, revealing a tall, slender form draped in elegant black clothing that seemed to absorb the golden light around it.

The creature moved with fluid grace, each gesture deliberate and predatory. It didn't walk—it glided across the plaza with movements too smooth for anything mortal. And then, as if sensing my gaze from this impossible altitude, it slowly raised its head.

Even from thousands of feet above, its eyes found mine with unerring precision.

My breath caught in my throat. The face that looked up at me was achingly familiar—sharp cheekbones, pale skin that seemed to glow with its own inner light, features that belonged in classical paintings of fallen angels. A face I had seen before, though I couldn't place where or when.

Then its lips parted.

Even at this distance, even through the darkness and the golden haze of the hidden city's illusion, I could see them clearly: fangs. Long, curved,

gleaming white as bone in the ethereal light.

Vampire.

The word hit my mind like a physical blow. My wings faltered for just an instant before instinct kicked in and I forced them back into their steady rhythm. But my heart was racing now, not from exhaustion but from pure, primal fear.

The creature below continued to watch us, its head tilted at an unnatural angle, tracking our flight path with the patience of a predator that had all the time in the world.

It knew I could see it.

I could see through the illusion.