

49 Monsters In A Cage

Eve~ 1

"You were so brave, you know?" Lia said, holding my hand.

I made a non-committal sound. It blew up in my face, did it not? But I didn't regret my actions. I just wished I had been a bit more credible to these people. It wasn't even for my sake—it was for that boy's sake. That woman shouldn't be licensed, let alone allowed near children.

Lia placed a hand on my shoulder. "You were brave, and it seems like you're taking my advice."

"The one about living my life?"

"Yes."

"I wasn't really doing that."

"You see, princess, that's where you're wrong. The simple act of standing up for what you believed in, even when no one else would, is living your life. You're not just existing, you're fighting, surviving—making choices that matter."

I turned to look at her, my throat tight with emotions I couldn't quite put into words. I hadn't felt brave. I hadn't felt strong. I had felt cornered and desperate.

"Sometimes," she continued, her voice soft but

firm, "living isn't about making the perfect choice. It's about making a choice and sticking to it. You made one today, Ellen. And that's more than most people ever do."

Her words actually helped, and I nodded. At least my brooding, infuriating husband found out and attempted to do something about it, even if his methods were wrong and downright heinous. It was something. A fragment of my shattered heart ached because of his actions.

Hades must have had a sliver of faith in me to check the CCTV footage. Maybe a tiny part of him wanted to believe I wasn't capable of doing what I was accused of. It was more than my own parents ever did for me. The thought was outlandish, but for some reason, it lingered.

After Lia left, my hand itched for a pencil, so I retrieved my drawing pad and began a sketch. My pencil moved almost instinctively across the page, lines forming without conscious thought. My mind wandered as the soft scratch of graphite filled the room. The simple act of drawing brought a semblance of calm I hadn't realized I needed.

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page, never pausing to question the shapes that began to emerge.

It wasn't until I paused, hand hovering over the paper, that I realized what I had drawn.

Hades.

Those soulless silver eyes stared back at me, cold and unyielding. His hard mouth was set in the same grim line he always wore, as if the weight of his entire pack rested on his shoulders alone. The sharp angles of his jaw, the slight curl of his lip—it was unmistakably him.

My breath caught in my throat, and a jolt of shock surged through me. Why had I drawn him? Of all things, why him?

Without thinking, I tore the page from the pad, crumpling it in my hands. The sight of him—those icy eyes, that unforgiving expression—brought back too many conflicting feelings. I threw the paper across the room, as if that could rid me of the storm brewing inside me.

But even as the crumpled sketch landed in the corner, the image of him remained burned into my mind. 1

Hades~

"You tried to what?" Amelia asked, taking off her



glasses as if that would make hearing and comprehending my words easier.

"You heard me the first time," I replied dryly, steepling my fingers in front of me, elbows on the table. "What did she say?"

"Basically nothing," she answered. "But she was mortified. I just got her to try living her life, only for you to pull that stunt."

"I am well aware," I cut her off, voice tight.

She studied me for a second and sighed. "You went about a grand gesture all wrong. I know you just wanted to make it up to her."

Her voice was too soft for my comfort.

"You really love seeing what you desperately want to see." I leaned in closer. "This..." I gestured at Ellen's file on my table, detailing her current psychological, physical, and mental state. "...is for what she can do for me and this pack. It's in no way out of the goodness of my heart."

"You feel nothing, not even pity?"

"Why would I pity that bastard's offspring?"

"She is not that bastard himself."

"She might as well be. I know what she is. I have proof of all she's capable of doing."

"Monsters are created..."



"Not born," I completed for her, my jaw locking. "I am familiar."

"Don't you see yourself in her? You became what your fath—"

"I will give you a chance to choose wisely if you really think your life would be worth you finishing that sentence," I drawled.

Amelia's lips pressed into a thin line, but she didn't back down. "I won't finish the sentence, Hades. But you know the truth. You don't want to admit it, but deep down, you see it. You're just too stubborn to face it."

I felt a flare of anger, hot and sharp. My fingers drummed against the table as I tried to keep my temper in check. "This conversation is over," I growled, the finality in my voice unmistakable.

She stood, her chair scraping against the floor as she gathered her things. "You can ignore it all you want, Hades. But remember, even monsters get tired of living in cages. And when they break free..." She paused at the door, looking back at me. "They either destroy everything in their path or find a way to heal."

I didn't respond, my eyes fixed on the stack of files in front of me. I was pushing Cerberus back from doing what we so desperately wanted.

Monsters in cages. That's what we both were.

And for a brief moment, I wondered if maybe, just maybe, she was right. But I shook the thought away, burying it beneath the weight of everything else.

I had responsibilities, a pack to lead, a kingdom to protect. I didn't have time to question who I was or what I had become. I was Hades Stavros, the Lycan King, and my purpose was clear.

But one thing Amelia said stuck with me—*you went about a grand gesture all wrong*. Which meant I needed a better, more mundane method to make sure she kept her guard down. A plan formed in my head, and I made a phone call.

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