

67 Voice In His Head

Hades~ 1

Hades!

I stilled, pausing mid-sentence. It was a single word, my name, sharp and desperate. It rang in my head like a bell. 4

"Your Majesty?"

I snapped out of it, my brows furrowing. I looked up at Governor Petrov. "Did you hear that?" I asked.

I looked around, everyone else wearing the same confused expression. Even Kael.

"Hear what, Your Majesty?" he asked.

Yet, the echo of the single voice continued to resonate in my head. I had heard it. I looked around at the men seated around the table, all of them apparently unaware of the disturbance.

I pinched my forehead, sighing deeply. I felt a rare migraine coming on. Something was tugging at my chest, as insistent and desperate as the voice.

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Cerberus prowled uneasily in my subconscious, roused by the voice. I shook away the dread that settled in my bones.

"As I was saying," I continued, "there is something that could be a thorn in the road with Operation Eclipse. According to the records, her wolf is a pivotal part of why we require her."

"So what is the issue, Your Majesty?" Governor Gallinti asked, leaning forward.

"She does not have a wolf," I revealed.

A stunned silence enveloped the round table.

"That has to be a mistake," the Ambassador muttered, trying and failing to hide the horror from his voice. "She is 23."

"There is no mistake," I replied. "I sensed none when I checked. The wolf's aura is nonexistent."

"I am sure it is Alpha Darius' doing. That was why he gave her over willingly," Ambassador Morrison blurted.

"Willingly" was not the word. The pressure I had placed on Silverpine had been immense, even with the pushback. I wanted to show him that I could burn myself if it meant that I could annihilate him.



"He had his other daughter, the cursed twin, executed to protect Silverpine," I continued.

"She was the one that would have been the ruin of his pack. So he neutralized her."

"The theory is that knowing the twins are antitheses of one another, one representing good and the other bad—Alpha Darius' actions were calculated. He killed the cursed twin as she would be the source of his pack's doom. With her death, he assumed the threat of ruin had passed, and the blessed twin's potential became irrelevant to him. So, he stripped her of her wolf to render her powerless before giving her over." It was the only plausible explanation for why the "blessed twin" did not have a wolf at the age of 23.

"He hollowed his own daughter?" the young governor asked.

I raised a brow. "Are you surprised?" I asked. Hollowing was almost the same as dewolfing, but it was a greater type of severance from the individual's wolf. It was rarely ever reversible.

It was something Darius would do. He would neutralize the threat against his pack and give over his other daughter but get rid of her wolf so she would be useless to me.



I smirked. He knew me well, and to think that I managed to con him.

Ambassador Morrison leaned back in the leather seat. "So we have acquired... a shell of a woman?"

"We have acquired a wolfless woman." The image of her crumpled face flashed in my mind, and my name echoed in my head again, more insistent this time. Hades!

I clenched my jaw. The voice in my head was familiar. It was feminine, vulnerable, with a raw quality about it that made my ears perk up.

"Your Majesty?" Kael called.

I turned to him, her voice echoing still. She drove me crazy in her presence and even when she was absent.

"Kael," I faced the screens. "I want to see the princess now."

Kael's fingers flew over the console as he pulled up the live feed of the princess's room. The screen flickered to life, revealing a dim, sterile room lit by a single lamp. But my gaze sharpened immediately.

The room was empty.

A pulse of agitation struck me, unsettling even



A pulse of agitation struck me, unsettling even Cerberus. I clenched my fists, my jaw tightening as I snapped, "Where is she?"

Kael's usual stoic expression faltered, a flicker of tension crossing his face as he typed faster. "She should be there," he muttered, scanning the feed in a desperate attempt to locate her. His fingers trembled slightly as he rewound the footage, his eyes narrowing as he scrutinized each frame.

Finally, the video froze on a scene that made my blood run cold.

The princess stood in front of the mirror, looking alarmed, completely unaware of the figure that moved behind her. A large man, broad-shouldered with a mop of blond hair, slipped into the room as if he owned it. He moved with stealth, crossing the floor without making a sound.

"Rook," I growled, my voice dangerously low. He had survived the Nerexylin, but his brother was in a coma.

Kael swallowed, his face grim as he watched the man approach her from behind, a piece of cloth in his gloved hand. The princess didn't sense a thing until it was too late. She turned just as the man clamped his hand over her mouth, the cloth



Kael swallowed, his face grim as he watched the man approach her from behind, a piece of cloth in his gloved hand. The princess didn't sense a thing until it was too late. She turned just as the man clamped his hand over her mouth, the cloth pressed firmly against her nose and lips. Her eyes widened in shock, a brief struggle flaring in her limbs before her movements slowed, her body growing limp.

The sound of her soft gasp, the helpless flutter of her lashes as she succumbed, made my heart race.

I slammed my fist onto the table, the echo of my name resounding in my head once more, sharper, more urgent. *Hades!*

"How did he get in?" I demanded, my voice trembling with fury.

Kael's face was tense, his eyes still on the screen. "I don't know, Your Majesty. There was no sign of a breach in the outer defenses." 1

"What's that?" I asked, eyeing what was sticking out of his pocket.

Kael zoomed in. "It's a key card. His ID card has been revoked." 1

"Meaning someone provided him with one.