

70 Beast of the Night

Eve~ 1

"Does it hurt, mutt?" Felicia snarled, grabbing my face roughly. Her claws bit into my skin, making me dig my nails into my palms to keep from crying out.

Pain flared where her claws pierced, and tubes were extracting blood from me intravenously. My head felt light, darkness creeping into my vision. The sanguineous scent wasn't strong enough to send me into a complete spiral, but only if I kept it far from my mind.

"Please..." I mumbled almost incoherently. "Stop."

Her eyes narrowed, amusement twisting her lips. "Oh, trust me. This is nothing," she purred, tightening her grip until I felt the sting of blood trickling down my cheek. She poked at my swollen right eye, making me wince.

"*Rhea*," I called, even though I knew I'd get no response. I felt so utterly vulnerable, so powerless that even if the pain had been absent, that alone would have brought me to tears. When would this end? "*Please, Rhea.*"

Nothing.

"Aww, don't look so hopeless, dear. I might actually start feeling bad for you," she taunted, looking me over, her eyes filled with sick amusement. "It's just a beating. It's nothing compared to what a Valmont whore deserves," she ground out. "You should have your guts pulled out."

My stomach sank, and I tried harder to push away the darkness. "Please..."

"Danielle must have begged too!" she snapped. "She must have asked the beast to spare her baby."

"Baby?" I asked tentatively. "She had a child?"

"She was pregnant," Felicia's voice shook slightly. "Nine months."

The haze of pain cleared just enough for ice to fill my veins. "My father did...?"

"It's not a question!" she growled. "He sent it to us that night. Sent it to tear us up like animals. My husband, my in-laws, my sister..."

"Sent...what?" I asked quietly.

Her eyes met mine fully, her expression contorted with hate but her gaze filled with

Her eyes met mine fully, her expression contorted with hate but her gaze filled with horror. "The Beast of the Night." 1

My eyes widened, alarm bells ringing. I'd heard of it before, but where?

Felicia's eyes narrowed at my expression. "You knew exactly what happened that night, didn't you?" she asked, approaching slowly. "Hell, you must have helped your father deploy it." 2

I shook my head. I was rotting in a cell five years ago when the Lycan royal family was killed. I didn't even know of the plan; how could I have? I only heard guards discussing it, also revealing that the Hand of Death, the Obsidian Beta, would become the new Alpha. "I knew nothing," I replied truthfully.

But from her deepening scowl, I knew she wasn't pleased with my answer.

She slapped me again, so hard that when I opened my eyes, I saw stars. "Don't lie to me, mutt," she snapped. "There's no way you weren't involved. You're a Valmont. You're all monsters." Her voice was thick with rage, but there was a glint of something else in her eyes—pain, raw and festering, a wound that had never healed.

"I swear..." I whispered, fighting the fog that threatened to pull me under. "I never knew. I would never..."

"Lies!" She struck me again, her claws slicing across my cheek. Blood smeared on her fingers as she leaned close, her breath hot against my ear. "Your whole family is cursed. You think I don't know what kind of darkness lives in your blood? The same darkness that slaughtered my family."

A sob escaped my lips before I could bite it back. "I'm not him. I didn't—"

"Oh, but you're just like him," she whispered, her voice venomous. "You'll say anything to survive, but the truth is, you're all the same. And you'll pay for what your family did." Her grip on my face tightened, nails digging so deep I felt the sting radiate through my skull.

I struggled, blinking through the darkness clouding my vision, desperate for an anchor, for any ounce of strength. "Rhea..." I called, my voice barely a whisper, but there was only silence.

Felicia laughed, a cold, hollow sound. "Praying to your inner wolf? Pathetic. There's no one left to save you. You're all alone." Her fingers released my face, shoving me back against the cold, metal

Felicia laughed, a cold, hollow sound. "Praying to your inner wolf? Pathetic. There's no one left to save you. You're all alone." Her fingers released my face, shoving me back against the cold, metal chair. My wrists tugged against the restraints, cold steel biting into raw skin.

She stepped back, eyes flicking over me with morbid curiosity. "It seems you won't confess to planting the bombs and erasing the footage, but you do want to leave here, don't you?"

"I am not confessing...to something that I did...not do."

She shrugged, flipping her hair away from her face. "Fine. Tell me something else. This one should be easier. What was that thing?"

Confusion swirled within me. "What?"

"What is the Beast of the Night?" she asked, her voice low. "How did your kind acquire such a monster?"

The ringing in my ears had turned to alarm bells, a lump forming in my throat. I forced myself to steady my voice, though every part of me screamed with fear and pain. "I...I don't know. I've heard stories, but—"

"Stories." Felicia's laugh was harsh, devoid of

My voice trembled. "I've only heard rumors... that it's uncontrollable, that it spares no one in its path." I lied. The Beast of the Night had been a well-guarded secret, or I would have heard more from the guards in prison. 4

Felicia's sneer deepened, eyes glinting with cruel satisfaction. "Uncontrollable, you say?" Her voice was sharp, dripping with scorn. "You think I don't know that you're lying. I saw what your family's monster did that night. I saw it move like a blur—too fast for any of us to see, let alone run from. We heard it first, a roar so loud it shook the ground, made our hearts stop in our chests." 3

I swallowed, cold sweat gathering at my brow. The more she spoke, the more vivid her words became, like shadows creeping into my mind.

"It ripped through cars like they were nothing more than cardboard," she continued, her voice tightening with the memory. "One swipe of those claws, and the steel was shredded, peeled away like paper. Do you know what it's like to see something with that kind of strength coming toward you?"

Every word dug into me like a blade, twisting deeper. Images formed in my mind, unbidden—metal torn apart like tissue paper, blood-slicked

"The beast didn't stop," she whispered, her tone a venomous hush. "It tore through homes, slammed through doors, and ripped through walls as if they were nothing. And that roar... that sound... it still haunts me. I hear it every time I close my eyes."

My throat tightened, panic clawing at my insides. I tried to shake off the horror, but her words lingered, planting seeds of terror. The creature... the Beast of the Night... was it really something my family had created, unleashed? My skin tingled with unease as my mind kept prodding me at every mention of the beast. 4

Felicia leaned closer, her face twisted with fury and pain. "And now you're telling me you knew nothing?" Her voice was a low growl. "You expect me to believe that your father sent that monster, your family's creation, and yet you're clueless? You were there, weren't you?"

I shook my head, desperate. "I swear, I wasn't—" "Enough!" Her slap was brutal, sending another wave of stars across my vision. "Stop lying, mutt. We will soon find out what that 'thing' was. We don't need you, and when we find it, it will be slaughtered as well."

I flinched hard, my body's reaction confusing me, but I pushed it away. I swallowed, my tongue heavy. "I am... sorry for your loss. I truly am."

She blinked at me, her expression unreadable for a second before she smirked, revealing pale fangs. "You could have fooled me."

"I meant it."

"Of course you do. It's part of the act. This show you're putting on is why Hades is acting the way he is. Men will be men. Give a weeping woman, and they fall to their knees." She clapped. "Even if the woman is related to the man who killed their pregnant wife."

A chill ran down my spine, my mouth opening, but no words came out.

Felicia laughed at my expression. "Who did you think Danielle was? You should have known. You drew her, did you not?"

My brows furrowed in confusion. "I didn't..." Then it dawned on me. That was why he had been so agitated, why he'd made me take a polygraph test. She had been his wife, the woman he loved. My stomach turned, bile rising in my throat.

"You've gone pale, mutt. You're really committed. No wonder you passed the polygraph test even when you were lying out of your ass."

Her voice was soon muted by the sound of my raging thoughts. How was it possible? What was happening? This was why Hades had been so adamant about making my life hell. My father had not only killed his family but his pregnant wife. He had every right to hate me.

It also explained why he had been cold and then kind, only to pull away again, hurting me. He had changed again after my phone exploded; he wanted to begin the cycle anew. That was his revenge. He would continue giving kindness and then pulling it away, leaving me in tatters every time I dared to hope. It was his twisted way of making me pay, one small wound at a time, each one carefully inflicted to remind me that kindness was just another weapon in his arsenal.

"Let's stop with the chitchat. Let's have some more fun. Without your wolf, you can't heal wounds fast enough to avoid a scar. I've done justice for your face," her eyes shifted down my body. "Why don't I adorn your body as well? So at least it matches."

Her hand morphed into a claw again as she

Her hand morphed into a claw again as she turned to one of the men. "Strip her," she ordered.

Horror coursed through my veins as the man approached me, a chilling smile curving his lips.

"No, no, please," I pleaded, struggling against the binds. "Please don't..."

But Felicia's expression only grew more amused. She was getting off on my fear and desperation.

"*Please, please,*" I begged, tears glazing my eyes. "*Save me!*"

"*I am here,*" another voice in my head spoke, spooking me into silence.

Then a loud crash sounded as the door was torn open. A large wolf stepped in, pouncing immediately on the men. Behind him, Hades entered, his eyes dark and his face contorted in a rage that simmered off his very being. My heart stuttered. "Release my wife, Felicia, or I will forget that we are family." 1