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Eve~ 1

I kept my face down as Kael unbound me, my mouth filled with blood, and every cell screamed for reprieve. I didn't meet Hades's eyes, even though I felt his stare burn through my skin. The tubes were removed from my body, and the bags of blood were collected.

"Your wife, huh?" Felicia questioned, but her voice wavered. She was not as collected in Hades's presence as she tried to appear. She was afraid. Judging by how the men had been ripped into by Kael, it was obvious they were very much dead.

The scent of fresh blood filled my nose, my vision swirling. Luckily—or perhaps unluckily—my nose was broken and partly blocked. The sanguineous fragrance didn't hit me as hard as it normally would have, and with my exhaustion, it was hard to be too aware of anything, even blood.

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I felt Hades's intense gaze shift from me as he likely cast his eyes on Felicia. "You can be both dumb and brazenly foolish at the same time," he muttered, his voice like cold steel, sending a chill down my spine. 1

"I am Luna," she blurted.

"Were," Hades corrected.

I could hear her teeth grinding from where I stood. "Why has it not been you?" she asked.

"Why was it not you that died?" she screamed. 2

Hades said nothing.

Ice-cold arms wrapped around my shoulders, pulling me to a wall-like chest. I startled, freezing.

"Red," the ice from his voice was gone. His tone was soft. "You're limping."

Hesitantly, I looked up at his face. It was hard as granite, his expression taut.

"I'm fine," I lied.

He made a noncommittal noise before I was off the floor and in his arms. He cradled me to his chest, his cologne wrapping me warmly. I was tempted to snuggle closer, into his warmth, but I held myself back. I barely made a reaction,

"You are barred from the Tower until further notice," Hades announced.

I flinched when I heard the clinking of heels on marble. Hades held me closer, his grip tightening.

"You cannot do that, Hades," Felicia all but shrieked.

"Is that a dare?" he asked, already walking away.

"You're doing all this because of a mutt."

He stopped dead in his tracks, and I felt him vibrate. His head snapped to Felicia. "She is my wife. The next time that slur is directed at her, be assured I will ensure you lose the liberty of speaking."

I heard Felicia make a whimper, like a puppy scolded.

"Ellen!" she screamed. "You—"

At the sound of her voice again, my heart launched against my ribs, and the creeping darkness spread at a rate I could not understand. My eyelids fluttered closed, my body going limp with exhaustion, pain, and shock.

The last thing I heard was Hades whispering something I couldn't quite make out.

The moment I opened my eyes, the migraine that hit me was bad enough to knock me out again. I groaned.

I felt a shift in my surroundings, and my head pulsed even harder. "Who..."

"It's me, Red," Hades's grave voice slithered its way into my ears.

I narrowed my eyes, soon finding him towering over me. His expression was unreadable, his mouth set in a harsh line.

Danielle.

I said nothing as her name resounded in my head. We simply stared at each other for a moment. The silence was interrupted by a growl from my stomach.

My face heated up, and I turned away too quickly, pain searing through my skull at the action. I moaned in agony.

"Easy," Hades murmured, his hands coming to cradle my face, gently placing it on the pillow properly. "I'm here, don't worry."

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The aroma of food wafted through the air, making my stomach growl louder. I turned, and there it was—a steaming platter of food, resting delicately on Hades's lap as he sat at the edge of the bed, watching me with an intense, unreadable expression.

The sight sent a flush of warmth to my cheeks. "Thank you," I whispered, my mouth suddenly watering as I reached gingerly for the spoon, wanting to avoid his gaze as much as possible.

But as my fingers brushed it, his hand shot forward, gently pushing my hand away. "I'll feed you," he murmured, his voice calm but unyielding.

I tensed, glancing up at him in disbelief. "I can eat on my own," I protested, a flush creeping up my neck as I tried to assert myself. He didn't respond, didn't even blink. His piercing gaze was locked on mine, the weight of it almost unbearable.

My hand trembled as I reached for the spoon again, determined to prove I could handle something as simple as eating. But the pain flared immediately, the effort making me wince despite myself. Hades took in my reaction with a slight raise of his brow, but there was no satisfaction in his gaze, only a calm patience that disarmed me.

Without another word, he slid a hand behind my back, gently lifting me into a sitting position. "Let me," he said quietly, as if daring me to resist further.

Feeling defeated, I swallowed hard and nodded, finally allowing him to lift the spoon to my lips. The warmth of the broth melted away some of the tension in my chest, and I felt a pang of gratitude despite the awkwardness. Each spoonful was slow, deliberate, and though he didn't speak, the silence felt... comforting. It shouldn't have felt that way.

"You don't have to do this," I murmured as he raised another spoonful to my mouth.

He stilled, his gaze never leaving mine. "I know," he replied, his tone softer than I'd ever heard. For a brief second, something raw flickered in his expression—a vulnerability he quickly hid away.

I lowered my gaze, my heart beating faster than I wanted it to. The room was thick with unspoken words, tension lingering in the air as he continued to feed me in silence.