

## 84 Forgiveness

Eve~ 1

The cool air hit my damp skin, and I gasped, instinctively curling into his chest. My cheeks burned as I realised how exposed I was, my body pressed against his, but he didn't seem to care. His focus was on wrapping me in a thick, warm towel, his movements firm but gentle.

"Put me down," I murmured, my voice weak and unconvincing.

"No." His tone was absolute, brooking no argument.

I gave up fighting as he carried me out of the bathroom, his grip steady and secure. Despite everything, I couldn't help but feel safe in his arms, even as his earlier words echoed in my mind, stinging like fresh wounds.

He placed me gently on the bed, his hands lingering just long enough to make my heart race. His gaze was intense, his eyes scanning my face as if searching for something.

"You don't need to fight," he said quietly, his voice softer now. "That's what I'm here for." 1

I looked away, unable to meet his eyes. "I don't want to be a burden," I whispered.

"You're not a burden, Red," he said, surprising me with the softness in his tone. "You're my damn wife." 6

The words hung between us, heavy and charged, and I didn't know how to respond. So I stayed silent, my heart pounding as he tucked the towel tighter around me.

"Rest," he ordered, his voice gruff once more. "And get that foolish idea out of your mind." 2

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By the next morning, Hades was gone.

The space he left behind felt cold and hollow, a sharp contrast to the firestorm of emotions he had stirred the night before. I sat up slowly, the towel he'd wrapped me in still draped across my shoulders like a shield. But it wasn't enough. It didn't dull the sting of his words.

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They echoed in my head, over and over, a

They echoed in my head, over and over, a relentless reminder of how little he believed in me. The softness in his voice when he said I was his wife had almost been enough to comfort me, to make me believe he cared. But it wasn't enough. Not when his actions, his condescension, told a different story. 1

I swung my legs over the side of the bed, my movements stiff and deliberate. The fire inside me burned brighter with every passing second, fueled by a mix of frustration, humiliation, and something far more potent: determination.

Hades thought I was weak. Helpless. A liability. 1

But I wasn't.

I couldn't afford to be.

I stood, the cool morning air brushing against my skin, and I pulled the towel tighter around me as I moved toward the closet. My body ached with exhaustion, my emotions raw and jagged, but I refused to let that stop me.

The truth was, I didn't care if Hades didn't support me. This wasn't about him. It was about me.

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Jules' face flashed in my mind, her unwavering strength and her fearless determination. She didn't have a wolf, just like me, but she didn't let that stop her. She fought for herself, for her survival, and she did it with grit and resolve that I could only admire. 1

I wanted that.

No—I needed that.

I wasn't doing this to prove Hades wrong, though the thought did bring a small flicker of satisfaction. I was doing this because I couldn't keep living in fear. I was tired of being vulnerable. I recalled the rush of power that has courses through me like a heady current when I shifted into Rhea. I had felt not an ounce of weakness even though I was terrified.

But ever since the night she was ripped out of me, I had become utterly defenceless and weak in every sense of the word. I had believed that it was my fate until I witnessed Jules. The fluidity of her movement, the power in her stance, and the fire in her eyes had struck something deep inside me. Jules wasn't just surviving; she was thriving, even without a wolf. She had built her strength with her own hands, not through some innate gift, but through sheer will and

A knock on the door slashed through my thoughts, pulling me from the swirling tempest in my mind. It was too early for Jules to be here, so confusion prickled at the edges of my focus as I rose from the bed, tightening the towel around my shoulders.

I opened the door cautiously, expecting anything but what I saw: Kael, standing there with his usual composed posture, yet there was something different about him. His normally easygoing expression was replaced with a solemn intensity that caught me off guard.

"Good morning, Your Highness," he said quietly, his voice carrying a weight I wasn't used to hearing.

My brow furrowed. "Good morning," I smiled. "Kael? What are you doing here so early?"

His lips pressed into a thin line as he stepped back slightly, his hands clasped behind him in a posture of respect. "I came to speak with you... to apologize on behalf of my family."

Realisation dawned on me. It took a minute because I could not quite reconcile the fact that the kind and funny shared blood with those people. "Oh..."

Kael's eyes darkened, and he looked away briefly, as if gathering his thoughts. "For everything, but most especially for Kavriel." He sighed deeply, his shoulders sagging for just a moment before he straightened again. "His actions were reckless, and his words were cruel. I know he's caused you pain, and for that, I am deeply sorry." 1

The mention of Kavriel's name sent a fresh wave of anger surging through me. Memories of his cutting remarks, the disdain in his gaze, and his deliberate attempts to humiliate me and Jules was burned into my mind. But I swallowed my ire. "I'll live. Thanks." I managed a shaky smile.

His face brightened a little. "Thanks for understanding." He murmured. "I have given a stern warning."

"I appreciate that," Then an idea clicked into place. "But for my complete forgiveness you have to do something for me."

He raised his brow, more intrigued than perplexed. "What is it?"

"You teach me self defence." I proposed with an hopeful smile. 1