

92 Jealousy Jealousy

Hades 1

Ellen was at the dinning table before anyone else, Jules hovering around her both taking in hushed tones and smiling. For a fraction of a second I paused on my feet, watching her. The corners of her eyes crinkled and her mouth curved into a genuine smile that softened her usually guarded demeanor. It was rare to see her so unguarded these days, her laughter light and free. Jules leaned in closer, gesturing animatedly, her own smile wide and effortless. Whatever they were discussing seemed to be a source of mutual amusement, and for a moment, the tension that usually surrounded her seemed to vanish.

She was so carried away that she did not notice me and Kael come in. When we were close, only then did she turn to our direction. Her smile widened, it was touched up today with a coral lipstick that made those plump lips all the more enticing. Her smile widened but her gaze was not me but on the person beside me.

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"Good morning," she greeted, her eyes on Kael, twinkling like a teenager whose crush just walked into the room.

"Good morning, Ellen," he greeted, almost with the same enthusiasm like they were best friends or some other shit. "You look well,"

I could have sworn that the crimson on her cheeks deeper ever so slightly. 1

My hand twitched at my side and my jaw tightened instinctively. I shifted my weight, fighting the inexplicable annoyance curling in my chest. Ellen? Since when had he started calling her by her first name? And why the hell did it sound so damn... personal?

"Morning, Ellen," I greeted curtly, my voice cutting through the warm atmosphere like a blade. Her head snapped in my direction, and for the briefest moment, I caught the dulling of the light in her eyes before schooled her expression, her smile dimming slightly as she finally acknowledged my presence.

"Your Majesty," she said, her tone polite but distant, a stark contrast to the warmth she had just shown Kael.

Your Majesty? Fuck, what had I done? 7

I resisted the urge to scowl, instead sliding into the chair across from her.

Kael, oblivious—or perhaps intentionally ignoring the tension—pulled out the chair next to her, his easy grin still firmly in place. "So, what's for breakfast? Smells amazing," he said, glancing between her and Jules like they were all part of some cozy little club I wasn't invited to. What was happening? 4

I clenched my jaw again, my fingers curling around the edge of the table. It wasn't jealousy. It couldn't be. But something about the way she looked at him, the way she didn't look at me, made my wolf stir restlessly beneath my skin.

"You're up early," I said, my tone sharper than I intended. Her eyes flicked to me again, this time holding steady, as if she were daring me to challenge her.

"Yes, I am, your majesty," she replied coolly, arching a brow. The warmth from earlier was gone, replaced by the guarded demeanor I had come to expect.

Damn her. And damn Kael for being so damned... likable. Was this her way of punishing me? Who did she think she was? 1

Jules and I exchanged a glance before she continued to speak with Ellen. It seemed the first phase of her plan has been completed. The way that Ellen was angling her body towards Jules told me all I need to know. She was in. 1

This was the first breakfast that we were having together since Felicia's affair but despite not having been at the dining table for almost a month, Ellen actually seemed in her element. She was even slightly dressed up.

Her titan curls were swept back into a sleek ponytail, and she wore a simple but elegant blouse that hinted at effort without being overdone. The coral lipstick was a subtle touch, but it caught my attention every damn time she smiled—especially when that smile wasn't directed at me.

Ellen looked... confident. Collected. Like she had nothing to prove. It was unsettling. The last time we sat at this table, the air had been thick with accusations, her eyes sharp with anger. Today, she was composed, almost radiant.

"So, what's the occasion?" I asked, my tone laced with forced nonchalance. "You don't usually bother dressing up for breakfast." 1

Her gaze flicked to me briefly before settling

Her gaze flicked to me briefly before settling back on Jules, as if deciding whether my question even deserved an answer. Finally, she spoke, her voice smooth and unbothered. "No occasion. Just felt like it."

Felt like it. Right. I wasn't buying it.

Kael chuckled softly, leaning back in his chair with that infuriatingly easygoing manner of his. "Well, whatever the reason, it's good to see you looking more like yourself, Ellen."

I hated the way her name rolled off his tongue, casual yet intimate. And I hated the way she seemed to respond to it, her posture softening ever so slightly.

"Thank you, Kael," she said, her lips curving into that damn smile again. "It's good to be back."

Back? As if she'd ever really left. Physically, maybe. Mentally? Emotionally? Ellen had checked out long before Felicia's fiasco.

The mess had just made things worse.

Breakfast continued with a strained sort of normalcy, though my focus never strayed far from Ellen. Every gesture, every glance she exchanged with Jules or Kael felt deliberate, like a puzzle I couldn't quite piece together. She was

Breakfast continued with a strained sort of normalcy, though my focus never strayed far from Ellen. Every gesture, every glance she exchanged with Jules or Kael felt deliberate, like a puzzle I couldn't quite piece together. She was too comfortable, too at ease. It didn't sit right with me. 4

Ellen barely spared me a glance throughout the meal, her attention firmly on Jules, whose lighthearted banter seemed to keep her entertained. Kael chimed in occasionally, his tone just a touch too warm for my liking.

I pushed the food around on my plate, my appetite thoroughly ruined by the sight of her leaning slightly toward Jules, her expression animated as they discussed something about the supply chain logistics. Jules responded in kind, nodding and smiling, her voice carrying just enough for me to catch snippets of their conversation.

"He was too cocky, always believing she would run back to him," Ellen said, her tone confident.

"Quarterbacks tend to be egocentric," Jules replied, beaming. "Thinking the whole world revolves around them."

She was talking about a man?

Ellen waved him off with a modest laugh, but the blush on her cheeks lingered. "I was too shy," some sadness seeped into her features.

I clenched my jaw, my wolf stirring again. She hadn't smiled like that for me in... I couldn't remember how long. 3

When breakfast finally ended, Ellen and Jules rose together, their plates already cleared.

"Thank you for breakfast," Ellen said, addressing no one in particular but glancing briefly at Kael before heading toward the door. "Jules, shall we?"

"Of course," Jules said, her tone chipper as she followed Ellen out.

Before she could leave, I stood abruptly. "Jules. Stay behind for a moment."

Both women turned, Ellen's brow arching slightly in curiosity while Jules' expression became unreadable.

"Go on ahead, your highness," Jules told Ellen, her tone light but laced with caution. "I'll catch up in a bit."

Ellen hesitated, her eyes flicking to mine for the briefest moment before she nodded and walked

Ellen hesitated, her eyes flicking to mine for the briefest moment before she nodded and walked out, her movements graceful and unhurried.

When the door shut behind her, I turned to Jules, my expression hard.

"Where is she going dressed up?" I asked her.

Jules squirmed under my gaze. "The library, your Majesty."

"The library?" I echoed taken aback. "Since when?"

"Since yesterday," she supplied.

So she prefers books to me now? 5

I stood there, trying to piece everything together. The library? Since when had Ellen become so... unpredictable? But of course, Jules would know exactly how to worm her way in. Books. I did not even know.

I narrowed my eyes at Jules, letting my frustration seep through. "You know she's not here for the books, don't you?"

Jules bit her lip, trying to hide the smirk creeping at the edges of her mouth. "She's definitely interested in the books, Your Majesty. But..." She paused, shifting uncomfortably under my gaze. "I

"Things like?" I prompted, my voice low, letting the sharp edge of my curiosity cut through the air.

"Like... trust. Like vulnerability," Jules continued cautiously, her fingers twitching in a way that signaled she knew she was treading dangerous ground. "She's been opening up more, Your Majesty. Not just about the kingdom or your affairs, but about herself. It's... it's her way of trying to regain control. Through stories, through characters she can relate to."

"Is that so?" I muttered, my mind racing. I remembered the way her eyes had lit up when she entered the gallery, the way her walls dropped when she'd spoken of art.

Jules nodded slowly. "She's been talking about romance novels, Your Majesty. She says she finds solace in them—how characters navigate pain and betrayal, how they build their lives back from the ashes. She even mentioned that she feels... understood."

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I cringed at the mention of romance novels. Rielle, my cousin would not stop talking about them back then especially about the men there. It made me perplexed but I swallowed it up. This was what I wanted, for Jules to get close to Ellen. I was getting just that.

I cleared my throat. "Alright,"

The tension bled from her shoulders. "And you don't have to worry, she is not the brightest so it won't take long before she spills everything." 5

Disgust and irritating slithered into my veins mingling with my anger. "What did you just say?" I rose from me seat.

Her smile died on her lips as she realized her mistake. The room grew thick with the weight of the tension, the air so dense it almost felt suffocating.

"Your Majesty, I... I didn't mean—" Jules began, her voice faltering, but I silenced her with a sharp glance.

"You speak of her again like that," I growled, "and I will make sure you regret it. No one—no one—has the right to belittle my wife. Understand?" 3

Jules swallowed hard, her bravado crumbling. Her eyes darted nervously, but she nodded,

She left but Kael remained silent his gaze on me, his expression dark. "Something is not right with that woman." 2

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