

95 His Conditions

Eve 1

The flicker of pain in his eyes was undeniable this time, but it was fleeting. He masked it quickly, his grip on my chin tightening ever so slightly. His breath was warm and ragged against my skin, the air between us thick with unspoken words and unresolved tension.

"So you that's why?" he said, his voice quieter now, but no less intense. "You think I don't know what you're capable of?" He leaned closer, his face mere inches from mine. "I see it, Ellen. I see it every time you stand against me, every time you defy me. But don't mistake my need to protect you for a lack of respect. The world is cruel, and if you get hurt—" His voice broke for a fraction of a second before he recovered. "Da--- Red, don't you see? I can't lose you." 4

His words sent a jolt through me, anger and confusion mixing with something I didn't want to name. "You're not protecting me, Hades. You're suffocating me," I said, my voice trembling but resolute. "What's the point of being strong if I can't use it? If you keep holding me back, what are you saving me for?"



His jaw clenched, the muscles ticking as he fought for control. "You don't understand—"

"Then make me understand!" I snapped, cutting him off. "Stop hiding behind your power and your pride. Stop treating me like a child who can't handle the truth. Tell me why you're so afraid to let me fight my own battles."

For a long moment, he didn't speak. The weight of his silence pressed against my chest, threatening to crush me. But then, he released my chin and took a step back, his hands curling into fists at his sides. His wolf was still there, barely contained, but something else had taken its place—a vulnerability I'd never seen before.

"Because if I let you fight," he said finally, his voice low and rough, "and something happens to you... I wouldn't survive it." He looked me and a lump formed in my throat. In a grey swirls of his eyes, I saw the glint of grief. He was not seeing me. He was seeing Danielle. The realization hit me like an anvil. My heart shriveled and ached. It was no wonder. If he truly saw me, and not as surrogate of Danielle, he would not care in the slightest. But it was deserved, my father had taken his love and their child, who was I to raise my hackles?

"Hades..." I began, my tone softening despite myself.

But he shook his head, the vulnerability slipping away as quickly as it had come. "This isn't up for debate, Ellen. I won't let you risk your life for some misguided sense of independence."

My temper flared again, the brief moment of understanding overshadowed by his stubbornness. "It's not misguided," I said, stepping closer to him. "It's my life, Hades. My choice. And if you can't see that, then maybe you don't know me as well as you think you do."

He stared at me, his crimson eyes burning with an intensity that made my pulse race. But this time, I didn't back down. I met his gaze head-on, refusing to be intimidated.

"You're infuriating," he muttered finally, running a hand through his hair in frustration. "Stubborn. Reckless."

"And you're controlling," I shot back. "Arrogant. Overbearing."

His lips twitched, the ghost of a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth. "We're quite the pair, aren't we?"

I snorted despite myself, the tension between us easing just enough to let a sliver of levity through. "A disaster, more like."

He exhaled slowly, the anger in his posture softening just a fraction. "I guess you're not wrong," he admitted. "But don't think this means I'm letting you off the hook. We're not finished here."

I crossed my arms, raising an eyebrow. "I never said we were."

For the first time since he'd stormed into the training ring, his lips curved into a real smile—a small, rare thing that caught me off guard. His hidden dimple made an appearance and my treacherous heart stuttered "You never make anything easy, do you?"

"Would you be so possessive if I did?" The words were out before I could stop them, and for a moment, the world seemed to hold its breath.

His smile faded, replaced by a look I couldn't quite decipher. "You'd be surprised," he said quietly, the weight of his gaze making my heart skip a beat. "Red," his voice was husky.

His eyes were locked onto mine with renewed intensity. There was something different now,

His eyes were locked onto mine with renewed intensity. There was something different now, something almost predatory in his gaze. His shoulders relaxed slightly, but the tension in the room only thickened.

He easily swallowed up the distance between us and though every instinct screamed at me to step back, I held my ground. His expression softened, just barely, but the power of his presence still dominated the room.

"I won't hurt Kael," he said finally, his voice a low rumble that made my stomach twist with unease—and something else I didn't want to acknowledge. "But there are conditions."

I narrowed my eyes, unsure if I trusted the sudden shift in his tone. "Conditions?"

"Two," he clarified, holding up his fingers. "First, you will no longer train with him. If you want to learn, you'll train with me. No one else."

My heart sank and leapt at the same time.

Training with Hades meant he wouldn't hold back—he wouldn't go easy on me. But it also meant I'd be tethered to him even more than I already was.

"And the second?" I asked cautiously.

His lips curved into a slow, wicked smile, and the

His lips curved into a slow, wicked smile, and the look in his eyes shifted to something darker—something far more dangerous. "I get to erase his scent from my wife's body."

The words were low, laced with a possessive hunger that sent a shiver down my spine. My breath caught, heat rushing to my cheeks as his meaning sunk in.

"I—" My voice faltered, and I hated myself for the way my body betrayed me, warmth pooling in my core as he stepped even closer, invading my space with the sheer force of his presence.

Hades tilted his head, his crimson eyes gleaming with unrestrained desire. "Do you understand what I mean, Red?" His voice was a velvet whisper, brushing against my skin like a caress.

I swallowed hard, forcing myself to meet his gaze. "You're impossible," I said, but my voice lacked the venom I'd intended.

"And yet, you can't seem to walk away," he countered, his smirk growing. His hand reached out, fingers brushing against the curve of my jaw with a gentleness that caught me off guard. "I can smell him on you, Ellen," he murmured, leaning in until his lips were just a breath away from mine. "And it drives me insane."

My knees threatened to give out, but I clenched my fists, refusing to let him see how much his proximity affected me. "Maybe you should work on controlling yourself," I managed to say, though my voice trembled.

His grin widened, the sharp edge of his teeth flashing. "I don't want to control myself when it comes to you." His other hand came up, settling on my waist as he pulled me closer, the heat of his body radiating through the thin fabric of my clothes. "You drive me mad, Red. And I won't stop until you're mine in every way."

I gasped, my hands instinctively rising to push against his chest, though the movement lacked any real force. His touch was fire, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to escape it—or be consumed by it.

"Hades—" I started, but he silenced me with a look, his thumb brushing across my lower lip.

"Say yes," he said softly, his voice a command wrapped in a plea. "Agree to my terms, and I promise you'll never doubt your strength again. Train with me. Fight with me. Let me be the one to see your potential, not him." His eyes darkened further, his wolf stirring just beneath the surface. "And let me remind you who you



My heart thundered in my chest, torn between defiance and the undeniable pull of him. I wanted to argue, to tell him he had no right to make such demands—but the fire in his gaze, the raw need in his voice, made the words catch in my throat.

"I'm not agreeing to anything," I whispered, though even I could hear the uncertainty in my tone.

Hades's smirk returned, knowing and triumphant. "We'll see about that." And then, before I could respond, his lips descended on mine, claiming me with a kiss that left no room for argument—only surrender.

His lips were relentless, a storm of heat and possession that stole the air from my lungs. His hand slid from my jaw to the back of my neck, pulling me closer, while his other hand remained firm on my waist, anchoring me in place. My fists clenched against his chest, but instead of pushing him away, I found myself gripping the fabric of his shirt, caught in the whirlwind of his touch.

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He kissed me like he was trying to imprint himself on my very soul, a desperate, demanding need that sent my senses spiraling. I hated how easily my body responded, how my heart betrayed me with every wild beat, every shiver that coursed through me as his tongue traced the seam of my lips, seeking entry. Against my better judgment, I opened for him, and he claimed me fully, his wolf's presence brushing against me like an inferno.

I didn't want to give in, but Hades wasn't giving me a choice—not when he kissed me like this, like I was his air, his lifeline. My resistance crumbled piece by piece, my anger melting into something just as fierce but far more dangerous. Heat pooled low in my belly as his fangs grazed my lower lip, a low growl rumbling deep in his chest.

I let out a whimper and grabbed him harder by his shirt before I pushed him away, panting and flushed. Our gazes clashed and I, without avail tried to regain a semblance of calm.

But his eyes grazed my body and I fought a shiver. His hair tousled and lips slightly swollen. I did not need to look down to know that he was hard. I had felt the hot, throbbing flesh against my abdomen when he was kissing me. "I have