

Chapter 12

Parting my eyes to my new reality was one of the most painful things that I had ever done. There is no slap in the face in the world that can compare to parting your eyes in a tiny, dark closet, knowing that the person you are supposed to adore murdered the person you loved. It felt like the moon goddess hated me, but I couldn't understand what I had done to suffer such a brutal consequence.

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I stayed in that closet for as long as I could, just thinking. Thinking about how Caleb would've held me all night if I couldn't sleep or how my mom would cluck her tongue at the outfit I had on now. I thought about how beautiful my plan was, getting a job, moving out, being with the man of my dreams.

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Now, I was hiding from a monster.

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But, my body started to ache from being cooped up so tightly. As much as I wanted to stay in my little bubble I knew it couldn't last much longer. I exited the closet, feeling awful. Every inch of my body was sore. Sleeping while curled up like that hadn't been a wise choice. Plus, I had a throbbing headache now, the dehydration of crying all those tears and screaming into a pillow for hours had caught up with me.

I weighed my options. I could stay in the bedroom and my dehydration and hunger pains would get worse. As aggressive and as bloodthirsty as Hades had been I had a feeling that, should I keep myself in this room, he may come and seek me out. Then I would be cornered as he tried to talk to me, tried to explain his situation. I didn't want to hear it. I didn't need to. Nothing he could ever say would make me change my mind. It would never change what he had done to Caleb.

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Maybe going out on my own accord would be a better option. I would eat and drink on my terms. He wouldn't feel the need to force me if he saw that I could take care of myself and I could retreat into the safety of my room when I was done with less of a threat of him following me. Plus, the sun was up now and I hadn't heard anything for a long time. Not the clash of metal or loud cursing. Not even the squeak of an old floorboard.

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I cracked open my suitcase and thought about what I was getting myself into. I wondered briefly if walking out there would be like walking into a war zone. But then I remembered how I had lunged at him, how I had tried to go for his jugular.

Yes, in the end, I had submitted. But Hades had let the dance go on for a long time. He had only pushed me away when I had gone for his throat and he had tried to talk me into a calmer state, though it only made me angrier. And when he finally shifted into his wolf, releasing the animal within, he had only snarled at me.

If he wanted to hurt me, he would've. And if he wanted to kill me then I would've already been with Caleb.

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With my hair pulled up into a sloppy ponytail, I tugged on a pair of old jeans that had faded grass stains on them and slipped into a highnecked tee shirt. Caleb's necklace was looped around my throat, tucked under the cotton of my top and pressing against my skin. Then, I took a deep breath and pulled open the door.

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There was no one in the hallway, no one in the foyer where I had fought with Hades. At first, I had crept around, not wanting to wake the beast if he was still sleeping, but without a soul in sight, I began to relax.

Then, I nearly shrieked when I saw movement in the kitchen.

But it wasn't a hulking mass with dark hair and evil intentions. It was Ethel, muttering to herself as she scrubbed a pot in the sink.

"Morning," she greeted, barely glancing up at me.

"Hello," I said warily. She wasn't Hades, but she was an ally of his. I didn't know where we stood with him not being present.

"Hades has left to his morning meeting and won't be back for several hours," she said, like she could read the way I was glancing around the kitchen.

"Whenever he goes away for more than a couple of hours I come in to clean. He doesn't ask me to, but he is such a guy you know? Not everything goes in the dishwasher, but he doesn't care. If it fits, he's not washing it by hand," she grumbled.

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I felt my mouth open and close several times. I almost couldn't believe what I was hearing. Hades was a murderer and she was worried about the fact that he didn't wash dishes up to her standard. Then again, she had been very calm when she first met me, when I was still deep in my shock.

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"Feel free to poke through his fridge," Ethel continued. "Half of the stuff is probably expired because apparently that isn't his strong suit either."

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"Um, thanks," I whispered, moving to the stainless steel fridge.

The kitchen was surprisingly out of place in the house. Everything else followed the same vintage, almost Victorian era line, but the kitchen was all modern appliances and sleek counters that would've made my mother faint. But when I pulled open the fridge it was damn near empty and had a funny smell that told me Ethel's expectations were not far off.

"Damn it, Hades," Ethel grumbled, looking over my shoulder. "It's a good thing I love this kid otherwise I would kill him. I'll go grocery shopping once I finish up here. Do you have any allergies or foods that you don't like?" I turned to face her and shook my head. "Do you need anything else, like shampoo?"

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"That would actually be really great, plus some other stuff," I answered, racking my brain for all the things that would have been left in my bathroom back home.

"How about you make a list? I can pick it up for you and bring it over tomorrow," said Ethel.

I nodded and sat down on a bar stool at the island. She temporarily abandoned her scrubbing and fished out a pen and pad of paper from a drawer. I scribbled down a list of things that I needed if I was going to be staying in this house for more than a couple of days. Ethel let me work in peace for the most part and I was grateful for both her comforting presence and her silence. Despite the fact that she clearly sided with Hades there was a softness about her that was comforting. But, the quiet allowed me to think without the implications of harsh realities.

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I had jotted down about ten things that I wanted when Ethel spoke again.

"Well, I guess he's home early," she murmured.

I didn't even bother to look out the massive bay window. I snatched up an apple from the fruit bowl in front of me and grabbed an unopened water bottle off the counter. Then I was racing to my bedroom, hoping for cover before he came into the house.

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~~~Distraction Section~~~

Hey everyone!

We hit three thousand so I will be doing two updates in a row. Check back in 24 hours for another update. On a side note Alberta has opened up their provincial parks and I could not be more stoked. I love holding up and writing but my fingers are starting to hurt, no joke. Some sun and fresh air would do me good.

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Question of the Day: When did you conquer your fears?

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On the topic of hikes there was one I did last year with awful steps with no railing and raging rapids about forty feet below. If the falls didn't kill you the water would've. But, I held my boyfriend's hand and shook like a leaf, but I climbed and descended those stairs like a bad ass!

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