

Wife Mask 441

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A bullet crashed through Andre's left temple and punched out the right, obliterating bone on its way through. Blood pooled instantly. Bits of brain leaked onto the floor. His body gave out and dropped. Even in death, his finger refused to let go of the trigger.

"Who's up there?" Daniel shouted, scrambling to his feet. Fear sucked the color right out of his face.

His subordinates scattered backward. Their laughter died all at once. Panic crept across their faces as they desperately searched every shadow, yet the marksman remained invisible. A cold fear took hold, thickening the tension until it pressed down on everyone in the room. They all knew—a careless twitch might make them the next target. This was no ordinary enemy.

These operatives of Phantom Mercenaries were elite. But someone had managed to knock out Daniel's most trusted subordinate with a single, clean shot—no warning, no trace. Not knowing where the bullet had come from sent shivers down their spines. There was only one conclusion to draw. They had stumbled into a Living nightmare.

Daniel's expression tightened, jaw set as he tried to regain control. "Who's out there? Come out where I can see you!" he screamed, forcing his voice to sound bold.

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The air fell unnervingly still, broken only by the whisper of the wind. A heavy tension blanketed everyone present.

The drone that had hovered overhead abruptly veered and landed on the hood of the lead SUV.

Under watchful gazes, the front and rear doors of the first SUV swung open, and four figures stepped out.

Their outfits mirrored those of Daniel's crew, but these newcomers wore masks that completely hid their faces. Their audacious, unmistakable style broadcast one truth: these were Death Thorn's Four Guardians!

There was Clifton, whose gaze seemed perpetually adrift, lost in some distant reverie; Kieran, who looked like he'd never gotten a full night's sleep; Heather, her hips swaying with the confidence of a runway queen; and Damian, sporting striking blonde braids.

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Jason lay sprawled on the ground, shaken to the marrow. He had no idea where Death Thorn stood with the Evans family-or what fate awaited them.

Myles, Aron, and Hugh watched warily, hardly daring to breathe-like prey beneath a lion's piercing gaze, forced to acknowledge its dominion.

Daniel was drenched in cold sweat. He glanced nervously at Elliana, voice trembling as he asked, "I don't know how we crossed you, Death Thorn.. Please, enlighten us."

Watching the operatives from Phantom Mercenaries visibly unravel, Elliana could tell her presence had rattled them to their core. She leaned slightly, peering through the open cabin doorway.

What caught her eye made her stomach tighten-blood soaking through Cole's shirt. Didn't they say he collapsed from some sudden illness? Then what was with all the blood? Was he actually hurt? How did that happen? Who could've done this to him? Still, now wasn't the moment to chase answers. First, she had to deal with the threat standing right in front of her.

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Behind him, Daniel's men stiffened, terror settling deep in their bones.

With a slow turn of her head, Elliana scanned them all, her words hitting like frostbite. "Everyone here cuts off a pinky. Do that, and we're square. Refuse, and I'll hunt you down personally."

No hesitation followed—Elliana began the countdown. "Three... two..."

Elliana didn't even reach one. Knives flashed in the sunlight, and one by one, Daniel and his crew gritted their teeth and hacked off their pinkies. The sharp, metallic tang of blood thickened the air.

A smirk curled on Elliana's lips. "Let that sink in. If anyone even breathes near the Evans family again, I won't be this generous. Now scam."

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"Is it unfixable?" Elliana asked, her voice slicing through the tense silence.

The captain jolted, startled by her sudden presence. Eyes wide with surprise, he glanced at Elliana and replied, "The wires are toast. I can't patch them back together. We're not going anywhere."

Instead of wasting time with words, Elliana stepped forward, gently eased the captain aside, and dropped into the seat without hesitation to assess the damage.

Though uncertainty flashed in his eyes, the captain didn't dare question her. After all, this wasn't just anyone—this was Death Thorn. He stood back, silently watching.

His skepticism turned to stunned disbelief when Elliana calmly untangled the wires and reconnected them with practiced precision, coaxing the system back to life.

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Once beside Jason, she wasted no time, examining him for anything serious. To the eye, he looked fine. But the damage inside-exacerbated by that recent strike—was what had drained him.

From her pouch, she retrieved a small pill and placed it gently at his lips.

Jason accepted it without protest. The moment it dissolved, a cooling sensation spread down his throat, pooling in his core like warmth after a storm. His strength began to rally fast. "Thanks," he whispered, his eyes lingering on hers.

With a practiced motion, Elliana wiped her fingers clean and straightened. "Try to stand, Mr. Evans. See what your legs can handle."

Pushing himself upward, Jason braced for weakness—but to his surprise, his body responded. He was still unsteady, sure, but the pain had faded to a manageable throb. Whatever she gave him was nothing short of incredible. The moment took him back to the last time Elliana had treated him—her medicine had worked like a miracle then, too. A twist of self-reproach curled in his stomach. He wasn't even sure Elliana had survived.

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"Enough gossip," Elliana remarked, the tension creeping into her voice. "Cole's hurt bad, and I'm worried sick. I'm heading back to Ublento now. You coming?"

"Wouldn't miss it," Adah replied with a wicked grin. "Time to check in on my darling family and that fiancé of mine, Allan."

Elliana and Adah returned to Ublento together.

Elsewhere, Jason had wasted no time. After ensuring Cole was safe, he passed responsibilities to Myles and headed straight for Podgend with Lanny in tow...

Despite his injuries, Jason returned to Riverbend in Podgend. Only Lanny, the captain, and the pilot accompanied him on this journey. Their private jet descended through darkness to the exact coordinates where the Phantom Mercenaries operatives had staged their brutal ambush.

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Lanny's words died in his throat as sweat cascaded down his spine like melting ice.

Jason continued his verdict with surgical precision. "When I reached six years old, my grandfather had posed a question that would define my existence: did I wish to become the Evans family's eternal guardian, placing its welfare above all else and serving whichever heir claimed the throne? I had answered without hesitation-yes. From that moment, my grandfather had poured the finest resources into forging me into the weapon I've become. My entire existence revolves around protecting the Evans legacy and Cole's rightful place within it. No force on earth will alter that sacred purpose.

Jason added, "Lanny, twenty years have passed since you joined my ranks. You understand the code that governs my actions. Yet, you shattered my trust and nearly ignited a catastrophe that would have consumed everything. I cannot permit your continued existence. For the memories we once shared, I'll grant you a single final request. If it's reasonable, I'll make it happen."

Terror paralyzed Lanny's thoughts as Jason's pronouncement echoed like a funeral bell. His disbelieving stare searched Jason's face for mercy that no longer existed. "Mr. Evans, are you truly going to end my Life with your own hands?"

Jason's voice carried the finality of a judge delivering a sentence. "I've spoken these words before, and they remain unchanged. The Evans family's interest comes first. My sworn duty demands the elimination of every threat that dares challenge its supremacy."

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Jason did not shy away from the camera's scrutiny. Instead, he lifted his cold gaze and met Irene's stare through the screen with unflinching intensity.

Irene had sacrificed half her life's savings to hire the Phantom Mercenaries for Cole's life, convinced the plan was foolproof. She had intended to confess everything to Jason after Cole's death, believing Jason would then have no choice but to claim the role of the head of the Evans family. But the plan's spectacular failure and Jason's discovery of her doings had never entered her calculations.

Even now, facing exposure, Irene felt no shame—only righteous indignation burning in her chest. "Jason, throughout the years, Lanny has devoted his loyalty to you and labored tirelessly in your service. How can you show such cruelty toward him?"

"Are you suggesting I should tolerate someone who nearly murdered my family?" Jason's voice cut like a blade. "Would you expect gratitude if someone harmed Jeff while claiming to help me?"

"That's completely different!" Irene's shout cracked with fury. "You and Jeff are brothers, while Cole is just your cousin—an enemy who stole the inheritance that belonged to you!"

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Recognition hit both Irene and Lanny like a thunderclap.

"Jason!" Irene's scream from the other end shattered the silence, raw and ragged. "Lanny was trained by me—his loyalty is unshakable! You can't do this!"

Lanny was quivering, eyes brimming with tears. "I don't want to die!" he said, barely audible.

But Jason's gaze was icebound. Once his mind settled on a choice, no force could unmake it. "Lanny any last words?" he asked flatly.

Lanny's mouth moved-open, close, open again-but no sound came. He'd never once pictured death arriving like this—on his knees, in the dead of night, staring into the eyes of a man he'd once followed without question.