



## 131 The Unicorn Vow

Eve <sup>1</sup>

When I woke up, of course Hades was already out of bed. It had clocked thirty minutes after five. I threw off the covers and retreated to the bathroom to bath. After about fifteen minutes I was out and already rummaging through the cloths in the cupboard for my workout clothes.

I finally let out a breath when I found them exactly where I had them kept. Ever since Hades prank during our first session, I had always feared he would do it again and I would end up late so that he could penalize me.

I reached for my shoes beneath only to touch a box. I reached down for the item and picked it up, confused. I didn't remember this being there yesterday night.

I spared a glance at the clock to see that I still had ten minutes left before the session began. I crouched down and pulled open the lid of the plain box.

My breath caught and for a moment I lacked the comprehension of both time and space as I stared down at the content in the box.



I dared touch it, and softness alone took me back to my childhood.

The memory unfurled like an old, familiar dream—soft at the edges but piercing at the center.

I could still see it. The onesie.

It had been the softest, fluffiest thing I had ever touched, as if clouds and magic had been stitched together just for us. Twirls of purple, pink, and yellow blended into a seamless swirl of color, with a rainbow tail trailing behind and a gold horn shimmering proudly at the front.

Ellen had squealed the moment we opened the box, hugging the onesie like it was the rarest treasure in the world.

"I'm a uniform!" she had declared, pulling it on and wriggling happily inside the warm fabric. "I have a rainbow tail!" She shook her hips for emphasis, giggling as the tail swung behind her.

I wasn't far behind, tugging my own over my head.

"I'm a unicorn too!" I said, stomping my feet to feel the plush fabric against the floor.

"No, Eve!" Ellen laughed, shaking her head with that dramatic flair only she could pull off. "You



have to say 'uniform.'"

"Uniform," I repeated, grinning. She always mispronounced it.

And that's when we made the vow.

We had stood facing each other, solemn as could be for two girls wrapped in ridiculous onesies, the living light casting a golden glow around us as the adults watched.

"We can't ever take them off," Ellen had said, sticking out her pinky. "We're two uniforms forever."

"Forever," I promised, sealing the deal with my pinky against hers.

But that wasn't enough for Ellen.

"Wait!" She twisted around, flipping her tail toward me. "Uniforms don't shake hands. They do this."

She rubbed her rainbow tail against mine, making a soft swishing sound. Then she dipped her head forward until the tips of our horns touched with a faint bop.

I burst out laughing. "That's the weirdest handshake ever."





Ellen grinned. "No no, it's perfect."

And it had been.

Until she betrayed me.

The warmth of the memory shattered, leaving behind a hollow ache in my chest. I stared down at the unicorn onesie in the box, its colors still bright, but the fabric thinner from age.

My fingers brushed over the soft horn, and suddenly, the weight of it crushed me.

"She took it off," I whispered to no one.

I had kept my promise. I wore mine until it barely fit, until the seams stretched and the tail frayed. But Ellen...

But broke the promise we made long before it stopped fitting her unlike me.

I did not understand back then but now I did. She had suddenly called it childish but maybe she had started to hate me even by then and I had been oblivious.

Tears welled in my eyes, blurring the edges of the golden horn as I hugged the onesie to my chest. It smelled faintly of lavender and dust— but maybe I was just imagining the fragile traces of a sister who had slipped through my fingers



like smoke.

"You weren't supposed to leave me," I whispered, my voice trembling. "You weren't supposed to take it off. You pro-promised me."

I pressed my face into the softness, as if I could find Ellen there, as if I could rewind the years and make her stay and stop her from changing to the monster that would stab me in the back.

But no amount of tears would change the truth.

She had taken it off.

And I had been left behind, wearing my onesie alone. I knew I was forgetting something but I did not know for the life of me what the thing was because soon I lay on the floor, my knees to chest sobbing, holding the onesie as if it could mend my broken heart.

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### **Hades**

My eyes scanned the words on the report again, my migraine growing more insistent.

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### *Lunar Synchronization Index Report*

*Subject 1: Hades Stravos(Lycan, Obsidian Pack)*

***Subject 2: Ellen Valmont (Werewolf, Silverpine)***

***Test Type: Mate Compatibility Analysis***

***Status: Inconclusive***

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***Findings:***

***The Lunar Synchronization Index (LSI) was conducted to assess mate compatibility between Hades and Ellen.***

***Primary Result: Negative for Mate Bond***

***No definitive markers indicating mate alignment were detected. Standard indicators of fated pair bonding, such as lunar-linked neural resonance and shared pheromonal patterns, did not register during testing.***

***Anomalous Disruptions:***

***Genetic anomalies present in Ellen's DNA appear to interfere with standard LSI parameters. These deviations affect loci traditionally linked to mate bond validation.***

***Lunar Receptor Instability was detected in Ellen's genetic profile.***

***Heightened Regenerative Markers mimic the signature of a bonded mate, resulting in***





*conflicting readings.*

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***Result Interpretation:***

***While the test did not confirm a mate bond between the two subjects, the anomalies present prevent a conclusive determination. The LSI flagged Ellen's genetic irregularities as a potential bond disruptor, suggesting that either:***

***1. Ellen's physiology operates outside the standard parameters for werewolf mate recognition. 1***

***2. An external force may be blocking or altering mate bond signals. 2***

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***Recommendation for Next Steps:***

***Direct Lunar Exposure Analysis: Perform mate bond testing under the influence of the full moon to bypass genetic interference.***

***Controlled Blood Exchange: A secondary test involving a limited blood-sharing ritual may bypass superficial anomalies and assess mate alignment at a deeper, ancestral level.***

***Long-term Monitoring: Continuous observation***



*of interactions between the two subjects during peak lunar cycles may reveal suppressed or latent mate bond indicators.*

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***Addendum:***

***The current inconclusive result does not rule out the potential for bond development under unusual circumstances. However, caution is advised - incomplete or fractured bonds can lead to instability in both subjects.***

***Report Compiled By:***

***Dr. Chaol Morgan***

***Head of Genetic Research, Obsidian Pack***

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This too was inconclusive? We are not mates, but there was that damn anomaly. I stared at the results as if trying to will it out of existence, but the white sheet remained in my hand.

Whatever this anomaly was, whatever secret her DNA was hiding had to be unraveled. It was very rare for werewolves to operate beyond normal standard parameters of mate recognition.

The werewolf race was far more stable, and so





was their DNA. Such a phenomenon was only known to Lycans because we were biologically hybrids; therefore, our instability was inevitable. My hand tightened around the paper.

But Ellen wasn't Lyncan. She was a werewolf—a Silverpine wolf at that. Stable. Predictable. Ordinary.

Except, clearly, she wasn't.

"Anomalies," I muttered under my breath. "That's all she's ever been."

The first time I met Ellen, I knew there was something different. Her scent was muted, not in the way of someone suppressing their wolf, but as if her very existence refused to fully manifest. She felt incomplete, like the moon had forgotten to leave its mark on her. Something had always been odd about her.

Which made more sense when I found out that she was wolfless. The hypothesis that she had been hollowed with large doses of wolfbane fit perfectly into the symptoms. But could wolfbane also alter her DNA? 1

I exhaled sharply, dragging my hands down my face.



"This shouldn't be possible."

The words echoed, but I wasn't sure who I was trying to convince—myself?

"So what do you think, Hades?" Kael asked, his arms crossed as he assessed me.

I glanced up from the report and met Kael's gaze. His posture was relaxed, but his eyes were sharp. He wanted answers too. He knew what was at stake.

"I think something doesn't add up," I said, rubbing the back of my neck. "Wolfbane can suppress a wolf, yes. But DNA anomalies? Lunar receptor instability?" I shook my head. "That's not wolfbane. That's something else."

Kael's eyes narrowed slightly. "You think it's genetic tampering?"

"I don't know." I leaned forward, bracing my elbows on the desk. "But I know the Silverpine Pack isn't known for experimentation. If something like this was happening under their noses, the spyware should have noticed."

"The spyware was just recently implemented. It will still take months before we discover something worthwhile, and they had failed



before."

I gritted my teeth. "How could I forget?" The muted phone calls and the bombs. The security had been heightened and better devices put in place, but I couldn't shake the chill of unease. We still hadn't been able to find out who was behind it. But it was not the first time we were attacked, nor the last. There was a horde of people that did not like me on the throne.

My head snapped up and I glanced at the clock. "Where is she?"

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## 132 The Unicorn Vow (II)

Hades 1

"Ellen?" Kael asked.

But I was already at the door of the room.

"Yes, Ellen. She is thirty minutes late." She had never been even a minute late before—even when I had her clothes discarded without her knowing.

I walked through the hall, Kael on my tail. As I made my way down to our room, my mind had already begun to make up scenarios.

Had it been another bomb? My stomach flipped. But there had been no alerts.

Another damn kidnapping. Had I not been clear enough with the Montegue? Maybe I should have had more than just three of their wineries burnt down.

I stalked down the corridor, the walls narrowing with each step as tension coiled around my spine. My senses sharpened, pulling in every sound, every flicker of movement.

But there was nothing.

**She was not coming.**

**Kael's footsteps echoed behind me. He knew better than to speak right away, but I could feel his gaze burning into my back.**

**My nails scraped against the wall as I passed, already half-shifted into claws. I clenched my fists, but the transformation didn't recede. My teeth ached—fangs pushing through too quickly, too violently, until I could taste iron on my tongue.**

**"Hades," Kael's voice was a low warning behind me.**

**I didn't stop.**

**I couldn't.**

**I could hear my own pulse roaring in my ears, drowning out everything else. I did not take the elevator. I sped up the stairs, and within seconds I was on our floor.**

**My eyes flickered toward our bedroom door at the end of the hall.**

**The air felt wrong.**

**I felt it.**

**I was not alone in this.**



Cerberus bristled because he felt it too. He sniffed the air, taking in and assessing the scent like a hound dog.

Her scent was the first thing that hit me—but there was something else unmistakable even through the door. But all I caught was a faint trace, like a fading echo.

My vision blurred with crimson.

The door cracked off its hinges as I stormed inside, the splinters flying as if hurled by the force of my rage.

The scene hit me like a punch to the gut.

Ellen lay curled on the floor, gripping something tightly. Her chest rose and fell faintly, but her lips were parted as if struggling to catch her breath. 1

Kneeling over her, her ear hovering above Ellen's mouth was a woman—Jules. 1

She gasped when she saw me, her wide eyes locking onto mine for half a second—enough for her to understand.

In the next breath, I had her by the throat.

A choked sound tore from her throat as her feet dangled inches above the ground.





"Get away from my wife!" I roared, the words cutting through the tension like a blade.

She clawed at my wrist, desperate, nails scraping against my skin but leaving no mark. I barely felt her struggle.

"Hades—Hades, wait!" Kael's voice barely pierced through the fog in my mind, but I didn't let go.

Cerberus raged beneath my skin. His snarl was a second heartbeat, thudding louder than my own pulse.

I tightened my grip. Her heart stammered against my palm, fragile and weak.

"I—I was just—" she rasped, words spilling out between gasps.

I bared my teeth. "I don't care what you were doing. You fuckin' dared!"

Her eyes darted to Ellen, filled to the brim with fear and desperation.

"She—she was like this when I came in."

Ellen stirred faintly, her lips parting as a soft, broken whisper escaped.

"Hades..."

The sound hit me harder than any blow ever



could.

Jules was out of my hands before I even realized it, her body slamming against the wall with a force that rattled the entire room. She crumpled to the floor, unconscious, a smear of blood trailing from where her head had struck the plaster.

I didn't care.

I was already kneeling beside Ellen, gathering her into my arms like she might slip away if I didn't hold on tight enough.

"Red... wake up. Talk to me."

My voice dipped into something gentler, something that only existed for her. I brushed strands of her hair away from her face, tucking them behind her ear, but her skin felt cold—too cold. 2

Her eyes fluttered open, bloodshot and ringed with exhaustion. Dry streaks of tears marred her cheeks. She looked so small, so fragile, like the weight of breathing alone was too much for her.

I brushed my thumb against her temple, my heart lodging in my throat at the sight of her.

"Kael," I growled, not taking my eyes off her. "Get



the physician. Now. And call security for that bitch."

Kael didn't hesitate. I heard him rush out, but my focus stayed locked on Ellen.

Her gaze drifted, unfocused, as she lifted trembling fingers to my jaw.

"Tell me who did this," I demanded softly, leaning closer, searching her face for answers.

Her lips parted, but nothing came at first.

She swallowed with effort. "Promise me..."

I froze.

Her voice—so small.

I could feel the faint tremor in her body against mine.

"Promise me, Hades," she whispered, as if she wasn't sure she'd get another chance to speak.

"Tell me," I muttered.

She opened her mouth, but only a strangled cry came out. Her eyes filled with tears again, and before I could blink, sobs racked her body.

The onesie was still in her grasp, her grip tightening on the clothing.



Confusion swirled in my head. I recalled her reaction to the onesie yesterday and how her mood had shifted so fast.

Did what was happening have something to do with the onesie she refused to let go of?

"Tell me, Red, and I will swear it to you," I vowed fiercely. "Please just fucking tell me."

But I was not getting through to her. She only continued to sob in my arms, her face flushing bright red as she cried.

I pressed my forehead to hers, tightening my grip, pulling her closer.

"I swear it, Red. Whatever you need. Just tell me," I whispered.

She paused for a moment, her voice as soft as a breeze.

"Don't take off the onesie. Don't leave me. Promise you won't betray me." 10