



161 I AM NOT JULES 1

Eve 1

The suddenly blaring alarms nearly scared me out of my skin. It sounded like like a fire alarm. I calmed myself reasoning that it was just a fire drill or a minor security alert. But deep down, unease curled in my stomach.

But I continued to search for the painting that I had made for Jules. I startled when the door creaked open and I twisted to see Jules. 1

I sighed in relief, "You are here already?" I asked, taking a step towards her, eyeing the bruises that still remained on her neck. "Did you see the delta already. That was rather quick?"

The expression on Jules face was inscrutable, impassive as if she did not register what I was asking. Suddenly, she smile, some light returning to her eyes. "I was too excited. I wanted to see the gift." She beamed.

"Oh?" I grinned. "Of course." I turned back around and made my way back to the stack of painting that I was looking through. "I was just looking for you. You leaving caught me off guards and I am not quite done with the



finishing touches." I told her as I sorted through the numerous works for hers. 1

The door slammed closed and through sounds of the alarm I had a startling metallic crack. I froze, my breath hitching in my throat as my eyes locked onto the broken door knob, the twisted metal glinting ominously under the harsh fluorescent lights. A shiver crawled down my spine, and my pulse thundered in my ears, nearly drowning out the incessant blaring of the alarms. 1

Slowly, I turned my gaze back to Jules.

She stood there, still as a statue, her expression eerily calm yet unreadable. The earlier warmth in her smile had vanished, leaving behind something hollow—something that sent every instinct in me screaming in warning. Her eyes, dark and focused, bored into me with an unsettling intensity, as if she were measuring, calculating. 1

"Jules?" My voice came out steadier than I felt, though the tension coiling in my muscles made me feel like a trapped animal. "What... what are you doing?"

She didn't answer. She just stared.



A slow, creeping unease wrapped itself around my chest, squeezing tight. My eyes darted to the broken door handle again, my mind scrambling to process what this meant. The metallic crack still echoed in my ears like a warning bell.

I swallowed hard. "Jules, you... you broke the door." My voice was cautious, probing. "Why?" 1

Still nothing. Her face remained impassive, but something flickered in the depths of her eyes—something I couldn't name, and I wasn't sure I wanted to.

My fingers itched to reach for my phone, but I knew better than to make any sudden moves. I tried again, softer this time, forcing a nervous chuckle. "Hey, if this is some kind of joke, it's not funny." My voice wavered despite my efforts. "You scared me."

Jules took a step forward. 2

I instinctively took a step back.

The air between us grew heavier, charged with something raw and dangerous. My throat tightened, and my thoughts raced, searching for some reasonable explanation, some way to defuse whatever was happening. 2



"Jules," I tried once more, my voice barely above a whisper, "you're scaring me."

Her lips parted then, but the smile that curved them wasn't right. It didn't reach her eyes. It felt... wrong. Forced.

"I was too excited," she repeated, but the words sounded hollow now, mechanical. "I wanted to see the gift."

There was something detached in the way she spoke, as if the Jules I knew was being swallowed by something else, something darker. My stomach churned, and the instinct to run screamed louder in my head.

The alarms outside continued their relentless shriek, a cacophony that made everything feel surreal—like I was trapped in a nightmare I couldn't wake up from.

I took another step back, my foot hitting the edge of the canvas stack behind me. "Jules," I said carefully, "Is something wrong?" I asked. "You don't seem..."

"Don't call me that," she suddenly snapped.

I blinked, frightened and confused, my mind going in circles. "Call you what?" I whispered. 3



She did not answer. Instead, her face split into another smile, but this one was all teeth and sharp edges. My skin buzzed with raw, electric fear, my muscles coiling as though preparing for something inevitable.

My mouth went dry. "Jules," I tried again, softer, calmer, as if I were speaking to a wounded animal. "Please... talk to me."

She tilted her head slightly, an eerie mimicry of curiosity, but the glint in her eyes held nothing familiar—only something predatory lurking just beneath the surface. The alarms outside felt distant now, muffled under the pounding of my heart.

"You still don't understand, do you?" Her voice was light, almost playful, but there was something jagged beneath it, like broken glass wrapped in silk. "I'm not Jules." 1

My stomach dropped.

"What...?" The word barely escaped me before she took another step forward, her presence suffocating, pressing into me with invisible force.

"Jules was weak," she continued, her tone almost wistful, layered with guilt. "Soft. Naïve." She lifted



her hand slowly, almost reverently, to her bruised throat, her fingers trailing over the darkened skin like a fond memory. "She did not deserve that. I should have saved her like I did for all those years. But I thought she was finally safe, that no one would hurt her. I was wrong." Her voice was tinged with guilt but laced with loathing. 2

I stumbled backward, my hands shaking as they clutched the edges of the paintings behind me. "You're not making any sense," I whispered, my voice trembling. "You're scaring me."

The sharp grin never wavered. "Good."

The word sent ice down my spine.

Then, without warning, she lunged.

I barely had time to react, instinct alone dragging me into a wild scramble to the side. My shoulder slammed against the stack of canvases, sending them crashing to the ground. I gasped, my pulse hammering, as Jules—or whatever was in Jules—turned toward me with a slow, deliberate grace.

My hands darted to my pocket, searching for my phone, but before I could even grasp it, she was there, her grip closing around my wrist like a



steel vice. I yelped, the sheer strength of it startling and unnatural.

"You never saw it, did you?" she murmured, her breath fanning against my cheek as she loomed over me. "The way they looked at her. The way they used her. Only for him to reject her." She took moved closer. "For a werewolf. For a mutt." She screamed.

I struggled, my free hand shoving against her chest, but it was like pushing against solid rock. "Jules, stop!" My voice was desperate now, ragged.

Her grip tightened, and I bit back a cry. "I told you," she whispered, her lips ghosting over my ear. "Don't call her name. You have no right." She growled.

Panic clawed at my throat as she leaned closer, her expression softening in a way that only made my fear spike. "

My pulse pounded in my ears, drowning out the alarms, the room, everything except the crushing weight of Jules—no, not Jules, something else, something *wrong*.

"You have no right," she growled again, her voice reverberating through my bones, a twisted



symphony of rage and grief. Her fingers curled tighter around my wrist, the pain sharp and unrelenting, as if she could snap it with a flick of her wrist. I gasped, struggling, but she was stronger—so much stronger than she should have been. 2

My mind screamed for logic, for a reason, but fear twisted everything into chaos. This isn't Jules. This isn't the woman I knew, the friend who had once laughed with me, confided in me. This was something darker, something that had been festering beneath the surface for far too long. And now it was free. 2

Her breath was hot against my cheek. "He threw her away," she hissed, her voice trembling with something deeper than anger—anguish. "They all did. But not you, right, Ellen? You're the good one. The perfect one."

I shook my head, gasping. "No... Jules, please—"

"STOP CALLING ME THAT!" She roared, and before I could react, she slammed me backward. My back hit the table with brutal force, knocking the air from my lungs. A painting crashed to the floor, glass shattering into a thousand razor-sharp pieces around me. 1



I coughed, stars bursting in my vision, but there was no time to recover. She was on me again, her hand around my throat, lifting me effortlessly off the ground. My feet kicked uselessly, scraping against the wooden floor, my nails clawing at her grip. 1

I'm going to die.

No.

Something snapped inside me, a primal instinct I didn't know I had. My body surged, heat flooding through me in a way I'd never felt before. My vision sharpened, the world crystallizing into painful clarity. I could see the faint twitch of muscle in her arm, the dilation of her pupils—a warning before she moved. 3

I moved first.

With every ounce of strength I had, I twisted my body and brought my knee up, ramming it into her stomach. The impact was brutal, and for the first time, Jules—or whatever she was—staggered, her grip loosening just enough for me to wrench free.

I hit the floor hard, coughing, gulping in ragged breaths, but I couldn't stop. My body moved on autopilot, instincts screaming at me to fight or



die. 3

I grabbed the largest shard of broken glass from the fallen painting and whirled, slashing blindly. The edge bit into her forearm, blood welling instantly.

Jules—or the thing inside her—didn't scream. She only blinked, staring down at the crimson seeping from the wound. Then, slowly, she looked at me, and for a terrifying moment, something *human* flickered in her gaze.

"You're fighting back," she whispered, almost in awe. "Finally. You better hope that the man she loved trained you well enough." 1

She pounced.