



181 Stipulations

Hades 1

The room turned unbearably silent.

Not a flicker of emotion passed over my face, but the Flux hissed, seething beneath my skin, pressing against the edges of my control like a predator ready to strike.

Not safe with her husband.

The words rang in my skull, a deliberate taunt wrapped in feigned concern.

Kael stiffened at my side, but I lifted a hand—just a flicker of movement, barely noticeable, but enough. A silent command. Stay still. Let them speak. Let them believe they had control of this conversation.

I let the weight of their statement hang in the air, drawing the moment out just enough for discomfort to settle in their bones.

Then, ever so slowly, I smiled.

It was not a pleasant thing.

It was not meant to be.

The silence stretched, the tension winding



tighter, suffocating, before I finally spoke—calm, smooth, deliberate.

"You're right," I said softly, my voice measured, controlled.

Lyra blinked, just slightly thrown off by my lack of immediate anger. Darius, however, did not react. He was waiting, watching.

Like the bastard always did.

I leaned back in my chair, one hand resting loosely against the polished table as I tilted my head, my expression betraying nothing. "Ellen is not safe."

The quiet confession made Lyra straighten, her shoulders tensing in expectation of some kind of admission.

But then I continued, my voice dropping to something softer, sharper.

"Not from those who would see her as a pawn. Not from those who stripped her of everything and sold her as a means to an end. Not from the ones who hollowed her." 1

Lyra flinched.

Darius did not.



Beta James' expression remained unreadable, but there was the faintest shift in the way he held himself—too still, too careful.

I let my words settle, let them root themselves into their thoughts before I continued.

"She is not safe," I repeated, slower this time, my gaze pinning Darius where he sat. "Because even now, her so-called family has arrived unannounced, pretending to be concerned while wielding her suffering as a weapon against me."

I tilted my head, eyes dark, unreadable. "What, exactly, do you intend to do about it, Alpha Darius? Do you wish to renegotiate the terms of our alliance? Take back what you discarded?" I paused, allowing my voice to cool to something closer to ice. "Do you believe that you can?"

Lyra's lips parted slightly, a flash of something uncertain in her eyes before she schooled her features. Darius, however, only exhaled, slow and measured.

"Your hostility is unwarranted, Hades," he murmured, his voice carrying the weight of a man who had played this game far too many times before. "We are here to discuss solutions."

"Solutions?" I let out a quiet chuckle, low and



humorless. "You think to solve this now, after months of silence? After abandoning your daughter in a foreign land, among wolves she did not know, binding her to a man she had never met?" I leaned forward, my fingers tapping against the table in a steady rhythm. "No. You forfeited the right to discuss solutions the moment you gave her away."

Darius's smile didn't falter, but I could see the sharpness behind it, the tension in the corner of his jaw. He knew I was right.

Still, he pressed on. "Ellen's well-being is still our concern, whether you like it or not."

I let the silence stretch again before I spoke, softer this time, more dangerous. "Your concern means nothing. It is an afterthought. A poorly crafted act."

Darius' fingers twitched against the table. Finally, a crack. There was more stake to this, far far more beneath the surface that they did not want to expose.

With the amount of tension that was radiating off Darius told me that having Ellen suddenly was non negotiable, it was dire. 1

I mind tried to conjure up possiblity of what



Felicia could have fucking told him. She was not enough of a traitor to the pack to relay our plans, she just wanted to inconvenience me if what Lyra said was true.

But did they know about my plans enough to come and risk a diplomatic disaster, a war or was it something else entirely?

He recovered quickly, shaking his head as if I were some stubborn fool refusing to see reason. "Do not mistake pragmatism for apathy," he said smoothly. "We did what was necessary for the survival of our pack. You of all people should understand the weight of such decisions."

I held his gaze, allowing the words to hang between us before I smiled again—slow, deliberate, deadly.

"Necessary." I tested the word, rolling it over my tongue as if considering it. Then, I leaned forward, my eyes locked onto his, my voice dropping to something almost too quiet.

"Tell me, Darius," I murmured. "When you hollowed your own daughter, was that necessary too?"

The silence that followed was deafening.



Lyra inhaled sharply.

James twitched.

Darius?

For the first time, something flickered in his expression.

Regret? No.

Guilt? No.

It was something colder.

Something closer to annoyance.

He did not deny it.

Of course, he wouldn't.

The Valmonts had never denied their sins. They simply reframed them.

Darius exhaled, shifting slightly in his seat before offering me that same carefully practiced smile.

"There are things you do not yet understand, Hades."

I tilted my head. "Enlighten me."

Another beat of silence. Then, smoothly, "Perhaps, in time."

I chuckled under my breath, shaking my head. "I don't need time to see what's in front of me



Alpha Darius." My voice was a whisper of steel.
"And neither does Ellen."

Darius' smile thinned.

Lyra's hands curled against her lap.

Beta James remained silent, but I could feel his
gaze on me.

I rose from my seat, slow, deliberate, my
movements controlled. The room felt smaller, the
air heavier as I leveled my gaze at them.

"You came here thinking you had leverage." I took
a step closer, my voice carrying that quiet,
unwavering authority that had kept my enemies
in check for years. "That you could use Ellen's
suffering to manipulate me into bending to your
will."

I leaned in slightly, my voice barely above a
whisper.

"You miscalculated."

Darius' fingers tensed against the table before
letting out a sigh, tension bleeding out of him. "It
was stipulated in the contract we signed," he said.
"The one you signed."

"That she would not come to any harm," James
said, he retrieved a phone, and tapped away,



until the hologram of a the pages of a signed contract beamed up above us.

I did not even spare a glance at it.

James didn't flinch. "The clause stipulates that unless Ellen is subjected to punitive measures for defiance toward His Majesty, any harm she endures shall not incite the neutralization of the alliance. However, should such circumstances arise that she subjected to mindless unwarranted harm, she is to be returned to Silverpine until her family deems her fit to reassume her position."

He let the words settle, the weight of them pressing into the room like a slow, creeping force.

I let out a slow breath through my nose, my expression unreadable.

So that was their angle.

Not to break the alliance.

Not to start a war.

But to take her back.

To take my wife out of my territory and place her back under their control.



And they thought they could do it under the guise of their so-called concern.

I exhaled, my fingers tapping once against the polished wood of the table, slow, deliberate. "I see."

Lyra straightened slightly, sensing a shift, her sharp eyes watching me for a reaction.

Darius, however, merely smiled. "It is a fair stipulation, is it not?"

Fair.

The word tasted bitter in my mouth.

Fair would have been letting Ellen choose where she wanted to be.

Fair would have been not hollowing her in the first place.

Fair would have been not selling her off like a sacrificial lamb and now pretending to be the ones best suited to protect her.

I leaned forward, my elbows resting against the table, my fingers threading together. My voice was quiet. Controlled.

"And tell me, Darius," I murmured, eyes cold, sharp. "Would you consider the woman you



handed over to me whole? Intact? Unharmmed?"

Darius' smile didn't falter, but his fingers twitched slightly where they rested against the table.

"Ellen was given to you as a wife," he said smoothly. "She remains one."

I tilted my head. "And yet, you stripped her down to the bone before sending her off. You carved out pieces of her and now you sit before me, pretending to be concerned that someone else might do the same."

Lyra's expression tightened.

James shifted, but said nothing.

Darius merely exhaled, slow and deliberate. "We hollowed her for her own good, to cut what ever ties, she has to the cursed twin to give her a chance to be severed from the prophecy on her head. But despite that the past is irrelevant," he said lightly. "What matters is that Ellen is in danger now. We are here to ensure her safety."

I let a slow smile stretch across my face.

Cold. Calculated.

Deadly.



"Ensure her safety," I echoed, testing the words as if they were foreign to me. Then, I leaned forward just slightly, my voice dropping to something softer, sharper. "And yet, you had every opportunity to do so before. Tell me, Alpha Darius, why the sudden urgency?"

I had tortured her in past for the goddess' sake, yes it had been for her trying to attempt to harm me.

The tension in the room spiked.

For the first time, something flickered in Darius' eyes—too brief to place, but I caught it.

Lyra, however, was the one to answer. "The attempts on her life have escalated."

There was something in her voice that almost sounded genuine—but I wasn't foolish enough to believe it was for Ellen's sake.

"I understand you Hades," Darius drew out carefully. "But we have given you enough chances. We knew her life would be in danger amongst those who saw her as an enemy but we believed you would protect her. But now not only as she come to bodily harm, her fragile mental health is on the fucking line." His words came out as a hiss. "I will not have a mentally



unstable daughter living amongst those that can prey on her in her vulnerable state. You have failed as husband and partly as an ally so it is only right that she comes with us the meantime." 2

My eye twitched, the flux burned beneath my skin, writhing like a caged beast.

Failed as a husband.

Partly as an ally.

The words slithered through my mind, testing the edges of my restraint. My fangs began to elongate again, every muscle on fire as my shifting initiated.

"Father," A feminine voice tore through the tension. 1

I froze.

Ellen.

I twisted to see her, the room froze.

Ellen walked in, poised, graceful, every step deliberate. Dressed in deep midnight, she looked nothing like the fragile, unstable woman I had left to sleep. Confidence radiated off her, her chin lifted, gaze sharp as it landed on her father.

"I did not know you still had two daughters." Her



voice lacked the tremor that had never left since the incident.

Silence.

"Who is this mentally unstable daughter you speak of?" As she plopped herself unto my lap. 

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*PS: That is still Eve not the real Ellen
I might have written something that
made you misunderstand*

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Lilac_Everglade

Creator's Thoughts