

22 Her Escape

Hades~ 1

"Come in," I said after the knock at my door.

In stepped the twins, my thetas. One could call them henchmen, but all I knew was that they got the job done. But it seemed that I had been far too liberal with them. They had set my plans back ten paces.

They bowed low as I watched them.

"Your Majesty..."

One tried to speak, but a single hand stopped him. "I did not call you here for an apology nor an explanation. I have no use for those." I steepled my hands in front of me.

I gestured for them to look down, and when they finally saw it, they went pale as ghosts. On my desk were two injections filled with Nerexylin up to the 100ml mark.

"Your Majesty..." they both echoed.

"Inject yourselves," I ordered, Cerberus' voice echoing with mine as the words left my mouth.

They both froze as if they were robots before obeying, reaching for the injections, their faces twisted with horror at what they were about to do to themselves. But they had no choice; their

will did not matter—only mine did.

As they injected themselves, I watched until every last drop had been forced into their bloodstream.

"The dose could kill you, but it's not a guarantee," I told them. "If you survive this, you can return to work, but if not, I will ensure that your paycheck is sent to your family. Get out."

I could already see their struggle with the drug. They would most likely pass out once they reached their quarters.

"She is really something," Kael, who had been sitting on the couch looking through papers, remarked.

I did not need to ask who he was speaking about. Who else would it be? "Quite the character," I replied dryly.

"If she weren't a tyrannical royal, I would be impressed. There hasn't been a dull moment since she got here." Kael seemed amused, but it was no surprise—he was easily entertained.

"So...", he continued, flipping a page as if it were the most mundane task in the world. "You going to tell me what's really going on, or are we sticking with the whole 'mysterious stoic king' routine?" He was trying to lighten the mood. He could feel my blood still boiling beneath the

surface.

I raised an eyebrow, steepling my fingers in front of me. "Get your feet off my desk."

Kael smirked but didn't move. "Ah, the classic deflection. You're getting predictable, Your Majesty."

Anyone else would be dead by now. Kael, though—he somehow knew just how far to push before crossing the line. It was almost an art form. Almost.

"I mean it," I said, my voice a quiet warning.

Kael dropped his feet to the floor, his smirk still plastered on his face. "Alright, alright. But you know, you're not fooling me. She's getting under your skin, isn't she?"

I exhaled slowly, resisting the urge to engage. That was Kael's gift—he could make me talk when I didn't want to. It was infuriating, but also... useful.

"Careful, Kael. There's only so much I'll tolerate," I muttered, though the edge in my voice was less harsh than it should have been. Anyone else would have been trembling by now, but fear could not be found in my beta's vocabulary.

Kael's grin widened. "Tolerate? Please, Hades, you'd miss me if I were gone. Who else would entertain you with my brilliant wit and dazzling

charm?"

I glanced at him, deadpan. "I could have you thrown out of that window, you know."

"You could try." He stretched his arms out, not the least bit concerned. "But you'd miss my sparkling personality. Admit it."

He had a way of tempering the flames of my fury. I guess I did owe him, so I tolerated a bit of his irritating presence.

I said nothing, turning back toward the window. He wasn't wrong. Kael's humor, as insufferable as it could be, was something I'd grown oddly accustomed to. He was the only one who dared joke like that in my presence.

"She's trouble," Kael mused, tapping the papers. "And you love it."

I didn't answer, but Kael, being Kael, continued anyway. "Come on, admit it, Your Majesty. If she were anyone else, you'd have dealt with her by now."

He was wrong, and he knew it. He was the one that knew the details of my plans as well as I did. He knew her use to me.

"You're pushing your luck," I grumbled.

"Luck? Nah, just charm." He grinned, standing up and stretching. "But seriously, she's something

else. Quite the character, don't you think?"

I glanced at him sideways. "If you're done stating the obvious, you could get back to work."

He fell silent for a while, then asked, "Do you think she will try and escape?"

No doubt, she would try and get home, back to daddy, even if he technically sold her to me. She's been pampered her whole life. A spoiled princess who thinks she can still claw her way back to whatever comforts she left behind. But she's mistaken if she believes she can escape me.

Then a hurried knock cut through our conversation. Kael opened the door. Mrs. Miller walked in. "The princess has locked her door. I brought her food in the morning, but when she did not answer, I left the food for her. I came to serve her lunch, but the food was still there."

Both Kael and I exchanged glances, Kael smirked. "It was about time," he murmured.

I pressed the intercom and spoke into the microphone. "Unlock the door to the princess' suite."

The command was brief, my tone clipped and calm, but inside, my blood simmered. She thought she could defy me this easily? Locking herself away like some damn child?



I turned to Kael, who was already grinning, that infuriating gleam of amusement never far from his expression. "You know," he started, folding his arms, "I almost admire her spirit. Not many would try to pull a stunt like this."

I gave him a hard look, silencing whatever follow-up comment he had. She wasn't pulling anything. She was trying to cling to an illusion of control, one that she'd lose soon enough.

"Right, right," Kael nodded, still smirking. "But let's be honest, you enjoy this game a little too much, don't you?"

"Kael, escort Mrs. Miller to her duties," I ordered quietly, my voice laced with finality. "I'll handle the princess."

Kael's grin widened. "Oh, I'm sure you will."

Without another word, he ushered Mrs. Miller out, closing the door behind them. As the silence settled, I paced to the window, my thoughts circling around Ellen's defiance.

She thought she could lock herself away? Hide from what was inevitable? The spoiled princess still believed she had choices. Still believed she could control her fate.

But she would learn.

A knock sounded from the door again, this one soft and cautious. My eyes flicked to the



intercom before I responded.

"Yes?"

"Her chambers are open, Your Majesty," a voice answered. "What are your orders?"

"Leave her to me."

I got up and made my way to her room. She was plotting some way to escape, that much was obvious. But 24-hour surveillance was not something she could dodge.

I entered her room, my eyes zeroing in on the robe made with clothes by the window. I could have laughed if I had time for her bullshit. 2

"Princess," I called.

Silence.

I called her again and again. The more times I did, the more pissed off I became. I did not have the appetite for a cat-and-mouse game.

Her room was vast, with a walk-in closet and so many other places that I did not feel like searching.

The moment I stepped in, a familiar scent filled my nose, and my eyes shot to the bathroom door instantly.

I approached the bathroom door, the familiar scent of blood hanging thick in the air. My hand

reached for the handle, but it wouldn't budge.
Locked.

"Ellen," I growled, my patience all but gone.

No answer.

I rattled the door harder, and the lock held firm.
Something inside me snapped. I wasn't going to
play her game. Not now. Not like this.

With a single, powerful kick, the door splintered
and flew open, the crash echoing through the
room as the sound of running water filled the
sudden silence.

My eyes fell on the tub, the water a deep
crimson, swirling with thick ribbons of blood.

And there she was. Ellen.

Her body slumped, her wrists sliced open, blood
dripping from the gashes and staining her pale
skin. Her fiery red hair, now soaked and clinging
to her face.

My blood turned to ice.