



308 Her Boy

Eve ¹

The bottom dropped out of my stomach.

"Oh, baby..." I breathed, reaching out gently, carefully—not touching until he closed the distance.

When I finally scooped him up, he clung to me so tightly I thought he might disappear into my skin. He buried his face in my shoulder, his whole body shuddering with silent sobs.

I held him like I was trying to hold the world together.

Montegue didn't speak.

He didn't have to.

Because this?

This wasn't politics.

This was the aftermath of something broken.

Something that should never have fractured in the first place.



And all I could do was rock Elliot slowly.

"Please..." the old man whispered. "I... I failed my grandchild enough." He bit his lips, trying to hold back the wave of emotion that no doubt mirrored mine.

"He has been... failed by everyone else in his life. We... should have protected him. I should have known that something was happening..." He slowly unraveled the crippling guilt gnawing at him. He clenched his jaw, still unwilling to fall apart in front of me. "I failed him. I failed my Dani too. I know she curses me for letting him get hurt. For letting him endure so much abuse."

His eyes remained glued to the ground. "I know I have no right to ask you for favors. We are far from that, but..." I watched the old man's bottom lip tremble. "Please, take care of him. You will have my loyalty and vote for as long as I draw breath."

Watching the ambassador splinter beneath the weight of guilt and desperation was so surreal that I could not form words as I continued to rock Elliot.

He hacked a painful cough as he raised his head,



red-rimmed eyes meeting mine, shadowed by years of deceit and agony that would only continue to fester. "I know he is the child of Danielle, and you might have your reservations about the late wife of the Alpha..."

I was stunned that I raised my hand to stop him. "Monte—" I cut him off.

He blinked, taken aback by the sharpness of my interjection.

I rubbed slow circles into Elliot's back to calm him. "You might be surprised to find that your grandson is very attuned, and I would prefer you not refer to such things while he is present."

He blinked slowly, as though it took a moment for my words to sink in—and when they did, he nodded enthusiastically. "Of course, Lady Eve. My mistake."

I sighed deeply. "Your daughter's fate was horribly unfortunate, and I cannot begin to understand how you feel."

He swallowed again, his expression somewhere between cautious hope and plain wariness, as though waiting for me to lash out.



"I respect Danielle," I said quietly, still rocking Elliot in my arms. "And I love her son."

Montegue blinked rapidly.

"I don't care how he came to be. He's here. He's real. And he's hurting. Whatever Danielle and Hades were... whatever Hades and I are..." I swallowed hard, brushing Elliot's curls gently from his forehead, "it doesn't matter. Not when a child is caught in the crossfire." 2

Elliot's breathing was starting to even out, but his fists still clung to my shirt like it was the only thing keeping him tethered.

"You have my word, Monte. He'll be safe with me." I pressed a kiss to the top of his head. "I'll make sure of it." I had tried to keep my distance, even after I found out I was not responsible for his mother's death, but fate had other plans—like it always does.

His hair was soft. Softer than I expected.

Delicate, like the rest of him. He wasn't just a prince or a pawn in someone else's legacy.

He was a boy. 1



My boy now, whether anyone liked it or not.

"He'll be in safe hands," I said again, stronger this time—if not for Montegue, then for myself. For the part of me that needed to believe it.

Montegue's eyes glossed. He bowed his head once, deeply, like someone surrendering more than politics.

And still I held Elliot, stroking his hair in slow, rhythmic patterns until his trembling began to fade.

Then, without quite meaning to, I smiled—soft, distant—as I stared off at nothing.

"He saved me," I murmured.

Montegue looked up, confused. "Pardon?"

I shook my head slowly. "Just... remembering. He saved me. Just like he promised." Recalling that day in the White Room when Felicia had come to gloat at my downfall, not knowing the child she had used as a pawn for years was plotting hers. It was ironic.

And this time, I wasn't talking about the Flux. Or Hades. Or even the goddess I had just found out



was buried beneath my skin.

I was talking about the small miracle in my arms.

The one thing in this entire bloody world that
hadn't asked for power or prophecy.

Just love.

Just safety.

And gods willing, I'd give him both.

I glanced down at Elliot. His lashes fluttered—
wet and heavy—but his breathing was calmer
now, less like sobs, more like sleep trying to
reclaim him.

"He needs rest," I said gently. "It's been too much
for him. For all of us."

Montegue straightened, brushing invisible dust
from his jacket. A habit, maybe. A way to keep
himself from shattering again.

He nodded. "Of course."

He hesitated at the threshold, hands trembling at
his sides.

Then, softer than before—like a man saying



something sacred:

"Thank you, Lady Eve. I get to bury my daughter now... knowing what's left of her will be safe. And happy."

The weight of that broke something behind my ribs.

He looked up at me then, a flicker of peace softening his grief-lined features. "It would be an honor if you graced the burial with your presence. No pressure, of course. Just... if you can find it in yourself."

My throat tightened. I thought of the greenhouse. Of the body perfectly preserved. Of a woman I never met... but who had given me this boy.

A boy I'd come to love in ways that couldn't be untangled anymore.

I didn't want to see her.

I wasn't sure I could.

But I owed her this.

"I'll contemplate it," I said quietly, honestly.



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He bowed. Not ceremonially. Not as a politician.

But as a grandfather finally allowed to grieve.

"Goodnight, Monte."

He paused once more, as if to say something
else—then thought better of it. 2

And left.

The door clicked shut behind him.

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