



310 Taking Over

Hades 1

My teeth came down on the flesh that had come to turn against me. The pain was like a distant ebb in comparison to Elliot's—and the disappointment of Eve.

I spat out the treacherous hunk of meat, even if the rest remained just as corrupted. My tongue hit the ground with a wet, sickening thud.

Only when the blood hit the back of my throat did I realize what I'd done. I collapsed against the side of the bed just as the Flux's voice filled my ears.

> "She is as fierce as I remember. As protective as she is loyal."

There was regret laced with the usual oily wickedness in his tone.

"How did I not recognize her?"

There was a moment of introspection.

> "You were blinded by your own wrath. And



now here we are."

Air escaped and pulled into my lungs in labored huffs. But it was never enough.

> "I suppose so," he replied. "But wrongs can be righted."

If I were in a better headspace, I would've rolled my eyes.

> "Shut it."

> "If the boy died..."

My spine went rigid at the invidious suggestion. My blood didn't just freeze in my veins—it recoiled, because I knew what the bastard was about to say.

> "She would have to come back. She will have no one left. No treacherous kin. Pathetic mute flesh-born error. No friend. No reason to stay away. She will be so torn by grief, she will beg for us to hold her together." 3

I stumbled to my feet, at a speed that left me lightheaded and feeling the weight of this malicious entity to the point my legs began to quake under me.



> "Stop resisting and accept me fully. You took me into your body, but you just won't give me access to your soul,"

Its voice was a sinister purr that made my skin crawl, revulsion spreading within me like a plague.

"It would be so simple. I could get them all out of the way for us. We don't have to lose her."

Its tendrils threaded through my psyche.

I shook my head until it hurt. My eyes spun in their sockets, the world around me melting—but only one thing remained constant.

The Flux.

> "I understand, you want to hang on. But the anchor is not even there. I am the wave that can rip all obstacles out of our path to her. You just have to relinquish control,"

His voice caressed me in the only way wrong things could.

"You don't have to do it. Just let go and let me. It's time we switch places. Me in the driver's seat is the only way."



> "Fuck off," I ground out, just before the ground disappeared from under me. I stumbled, my heart hammering too hard to be possible. Agony gripped me like a vice, my heart on a countdown to imploding, every inch of me bleeding anguish. Muscles spasmed, pulsing like my heart—or whatever it had become.

My skin prickled like shards of glass embedded beneath the surface, every nerve ending screaming. The Flux was clawing its way up my spine, wrapping itself around the base of my skull like it was trying to peel me from the inside out.

> "You don't have to fight me, Lucien," it cooed. "Let it end. Let us begin."

"No," I hissed, face contorted in pain as I slammed my back into the dresser behind me. I could barely breathe, barely think. But I wouldn't give in. I wouldn't let go.

> "Then I'll try another way..."

The room warped. Darkened. The walls pulsed like veins under flesh, the air thick with the iron stench of blood and decay.



And then—

"Lucien?"

The voice didn't come from the Flux.

It came from the doorway.

My head whipped toward it.

There, standing under the doorframe like a memory dragged from the bones of my past, was him.

Broad. Unsmiling. Wrath carved into every line of his aging face like a prophecy.

My father.

My monster.

My maker.

He hadn't changed. He never did. Or maybe I had simply become too much like him to tell the difference anymore.

I dropped to my knees.

Pain gave way to panic. I was drowning in it.

My mouth parted, but my words were slow,



cracked.

"...Dad?"

It slipped out like a prayer. Like I was eight years old again, bleeding on cold marble tile after another lesson on obedience because I would kill Miles. The same small, trembling voice I hadn't used in decades.

He didn't answer.

He didn't have to.

The weight of his presence was enough.

It was all coming back—every punishment, every withheld word, every twisted moment I'd buried so deep I'd convinced myself I was free of them.

> "You see?" the Flux whispered. "You've never been in control. Not really. You've always obeyed something stronger than you. Him. Me. What's the difference?"

"No," I breathed, clawing at my chest like I could rip the panic out with my hands. "No—he's not here. He's dead. I saw him. This isn't—"

But the eyes staring back at me were not dead.



They were watching.

Judging.

Unforgiving.

And I—Lucien—was a boy again.

Weak. Small. On my knees. Begging.

"You are not real." But my childish voice trembled. I felt diminished, tiny, like the night the twins were born. The night it all began.

He was silent as he watched me, those eyes burning into my soul. The eyes I had been freed from after they dimmed forever. But here I was—face to face once again.

"Lucien..."

His voice was a gavel slammed in my judgment.

Horror coiled through me, my body breaking into tremors.

"The twins have been born. Just like the prophecy foretold."

His voice wasn't just a sound. It was a sentence. Cold. Final.



I didn't breathe.

He took a step forward, and it felt like the walls collapsed inward.

"Their names have been spoken—Eve and Ellen—and we both know what comes next."

His eyes glinted, soulless.

"It is time to commence your training."

No.

No no no—

I stayed frozen, knees pressed to the floor like shackles. But the boy inside me knew better than to defy him. My adult body remembered how to fight—but my soul was still eight years old, waiting to be carved into something useful.

"Get up," he said.

I didn't move.

So he leaned forward slightly, voice lowering to a whisper laced with threat.

"Get out of bed and follow me."



My nails dug into the floor.

"Or Kael is chosen."

The name detonated in my skull like gunfire.

Kael.

I looked up, horror turning my blood to frost.

"You wouldn't," I rasped—but my voice remained small as I clutched the blanket for dear life.

"I would."

His tone didn't falter.

"He is not as gifted. But he is obedient."

I wanted to scream. To break something. To tear through this illusion and gut the Flux behind it.

But I couldn't.

Because I remembered.

I remembered the night Kael nearly died in my place. The bruises. The blood. The sound he made when Father cracked his ribs for the third time.

My body moved before my brain could catch it.



I stood.

The world shifted again.

And I was walking through the fog of memory,
led by a ghost.

A voice in my mind still whispering—

> "Good boy, Lucien. Do as you're told. Become
what you were made for.

And maybe this time... you won't lose her." 2

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