



315 Lost

Eve ¹

The blast slammed into his chest—sunfire and runes colliding with corrupted flesh.

Vassir shrieked, the sound splitting the air, rupturing the lights overhead. His body jerked back, limbs convulsing as radiant energy tore through him like a divine lance.

And then—

His wings snapped inward.

A flash of instinct—pure, primal, ancient.

They folded, twisted, wrapped around his trembling body like a coffin of sinew and shadow. Black veins bulged and writhed across the surface as the flesh hardened, fusing together into a pulsing mass.

A cocoon.

It sealed shut with a sick, slurping sound, the outer layers rippling with every tortured pulse inside.



Montegue lowered his weapon slightly, eyes narrowing at the grotesque sphere now hanging midair, suspended by thick tendrils of shadow gripping the fractured ceiling beams.

"Containment defense," he muttered. "Smart bastard."

"Gamma Unit—formation!" he barked, voice cutting through the chaos like a blade. 2

Immediately, twelve guards stepped forward in perfect synchronicity, fanning out into a precision arc around the cocoon. Each bore heavy-caliber plasma rifles with light-infused cores, rune-filaments tracing up their arms.

"Hold your ground," Montegue ordered. "If that thing cracks open—we incinerate what's left."

The rest of the team poured in behind, some sliding over blood-soaked tiles, others moving toward the ruined side wings of the lab.

A pair of Delta medics rushed to my side, their expressions tight behind their visors.

"We've got him," one said, already lifting Kael's limp form into a stabilizer sling. "Pulse is weak."



But present."

I couldn't let go.

I couldn't.

But they were gentle. Efficient. They peeled him from my arms like a dying prayer and secured him with practiced care.

"We'll get him to the infirmary. Stay here. You're in shock."

"I'm fine," I lied, the word brittle as glass.

Kael disappeared behind a wall of bodies.

And I was left kneeling in the aftermath.

The cocoon above us throbbed once—slow and ominous.

Montegue didn't look away.

"Secure the perimeter," he growled to his second. "Reinforce the light exposure. I want UV floods installed across every access point."

"And the... entity?" the soldier asked.

Montegue's gaze hardened.



"We have to contain it. It still our Alpha's body."

And from deep within the ball of black-veined
flesh—

A pulse echoed.

As though Vassir heard.

The pulse echoed again.

Thump.

Like a heartbeat underwater—distant, warped.
Not quite alive.

Not quite dead.

I didn't move.

Couldn't.

My knees were slick with blood—his blood, my
blood, someone's. I couldn't tell anymore. My
hands trembled, resting on the cracked floor,
still stained with the final vial. My gaze wouldn't
lift from the spot where Kael had been, as if the
outline of his body had been burned into the
tiles.

Noise blurred into static. Shouts, footsteps,



orders barked through comms. Weapons charging. Light rigs assembling overhead. The Gamma unit had moved into a containment ring, shoulder to shoulder, their silhouettes a dark wall between me and the thing cocooned in the rafters.

And I...

I just knelt there.

Empty.

> "Eve."

Rhea's voice echoed in my skull, soft but insistent.

"Eve, you have to move. You're not safe here."

My body didn't listen.

Even breathing felt like a betrayal.

> "Eve, please. I know it hurts. I know it broke you. But Kael needs you. He's alive. He's fighting."

Fighting.

I had fought too.



And in the end, I chose the monster over the
man I loved. 1

Over the man who had once begged me to run
from him.

I didn't know what I was anymore.

Footsteps crunched glass behind me.

Heavy. Unhurried.

Then a shadow fell over me.

"Eve," Montegue's voice came low—gravel
wrapped in steel. "You need to get out of here."

I didn't answer.

I wasn't sure I could.

He waited. For all his sharpness, there was a
pause there. A breath. Like he didn't want to
touch me. Like he knew this kind of silence too
well.

But then—

Without another word, his arms came around
me.



Strong.

Deliberate.

He lifted me like I weighed nothing. Like I was just a child—small, limp, broken from the inside out.

My head fell against his chest as he straightened.

I didn't protest.

Couldn't.

The warmth of his armor pressed into my skin through my ruined clothes. I caught a faint scent of smoke and steel and war. His heartbeat was steady, measured. Like he could afford to be calm.

I hated that calm.

Because I didn't have it anymore.

Not after what I did.

The room receded behind us, swallowed by floodlights and gunmetal and the warped groaning of the cocoon as it shifted again.

"Let's go," Montegue murmured, and the



command was for me, for himself, for everyone.

Containment rigs hissed as they activated.

UV veins pulsed across the ceiling.

Reinforcements sealed the exits.

And I—

I said nothing.

I just let him carry me through the blood, away
from the remnants of the man I had tried so hard
to save... 6

And failed. 3

The hum of the medical ward was soft.

Steady.

Too clean.

Too sterile for the blood still crusted beneath my
nails.

I sat beside Kael's bed, unmoving. One hand
gently stroked the curve of Elliot's sleeping head,
his little frame curled up in my lap, the rhythmic



rise and fall of his chest a fragile comfort I
couldn't bear to let go of. 1

But my eyes...

They never left Kael.

The monitors beside him blinked in faint green pulses. His wounds had been closed, bones mended with IV regeneration, skin lined with healing gel that caught the glow of the overhead lights. But the bruises ran deeper than flesh. His soul looked threadbare. Like something had been torn out and never returned.

He twitched.

Then gasped.

His body jolted upright, sharp and breathless like a man rising from drowning.

"Where is he?" Kael croaked. "Where's Hades?"

His eyes were wild. Desperate.

They locked on mine—and froze.

And I couldn't answer.

I just looked at him.



Silent.

Shattered.

My hand never stopped moving, fingers brushing through Elliot's curls, soft and slow, as if the boy's sleep was the last thing anchoring me to the moment.

Kael's breath hitched.

His eyes darted across the room, scanning the sterile walls like he expected to find a body, or a ghost, or a god.

Then they dropped back to me.

He understood.

Immediately.

The grief hit him like a spear to the chest. His face crumpled, not into sobs—but into something worse.

Resignation.

Failure.

"I should've died," he whispered. "You shouldn't have stopped him. You shouldn't have—"



"Don't," I said.

It came out hoarse. Almost a whisper.

But it shut him up.

He looked away, eyes burning.

"As a Beta... I was supposed to protect him. I was supposed to protect you." His fists clenched in the sheets. "And instead, you had to protect me. You chose me over your mate."

I swallowed.

Hard.

My hand slipped from Elliot's hair.

"He was already gone, Kael" 2

Kael's hands trembled against the blanket.

"He was already gone, Kael," I said again, but softer this time—like it hurt to admit it out loud.

But Kael didn't nod.

Didn't look away.

Instead, he whispered, "No. He wasn't."



I stilled.

"What?"

Kael's eyes flicked to mine, something ancient and hollow blooming behind them.

"When that... thing had me," he said slowly, voice rasping from strain, "when it wrapped its wing around my neck—when I was choking—I saw something."

I leaned forward, every muscle taut.

"What did you see?"

Kael swallowed hard.

"I saw him." His voice cracked on the word. "Not the monster. Not the Flux. Hades."

My breath caught.

Kael didn't look at me. His gaze was somewhere else—distant, haunted.

"He wasn't... like we knew him," he continued.

"He looked small. Barely eight. Curled on the floor like he was trying to disappear into it. His hair was shorter. His eyes—"



He faltered.

I grabbed his wrist.

"What about his eyes?"

Kael looked at me then. And he said it like a confession.

"They were blue."

The breath left my lungs.

I didn't know they'd ever been anything but storm-grey.

Kael's mouth twitched, as if he hadn't realized it either.

"They were blue before they dimmed. Before everything went cold." His voice thickened. "And that place... it wasn't the lab. It wasn't anywhere I knew."

"What was it?"

Kael's throat bobbed.

"The Black Room," he said quietly. "He called it that when we were younger. Said it was where his father used to 'train' him."



My skin chilled.

Kael clenched the sheets. "It was worse than I imagined. There were no windows. Just stone, chains... echoes. It smelled like old blood and iron. And he—he wasn't fighting back. He didn't even look like he knew someone was watching. He just sat there. Trapped."

My heart slammed against my ribs.

"He's still in there," Kael whispered. "Some part of him. The Flux didn't erase him. It buried him. And then it used that memory... that nightmare to keep him lost inside his own mind." 2

My lips parted in horror.

He was trapped.

Not gone.

Trapped in the worst parts of himself.

In a loop of pain and fear so old it had become his prison.

Kael leaned back, his voice unsteady. "It used me as bait. Knew I'd try to fight back—and showed me that so I couldn't. So I wouldn't."



I felt sick.

Because I'd given up.

I'd stopped calling his name.

And all this time, he was inside that cocoon—

Not dead.

Not gone.

Just... lost.

And I had helped seal the door. 

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