



318 Nox

Eve ¹

Elliot kept turning in bed. Sleep seemed to evade him, no matter how many cups of milk he downed. We were in the same boat. Sleep was as distant to me as the moon.

He whimpered softly in his sleep—caught in another dream. Or a memory. I couldn't tell the difference anymore. Not for him. Not for me.

I reached over and smoothed his hair back. It was getting longer again. I'd have to trim it soon.

My fingers lingered against his temple. He calmed. Just a little.

Outside, the Obsidian Tower was quiet.

But that kind of quiet was never safe.

It was the kind of quiet that came before a storm.

The kind that settled over a grave before the scream.



I turned away from Elliot and pressing my palms over my eyes until the dull ache behind them sharpened. I hadn't cried. Not properly. I didn't know if that was strength or cowardice.

There was a soft knock.

I didn't move.

Then the door opened anyway.

Kael stepped in.

Still pale. Still recovering. But there was something different about his expression now. Less anguish. More purpose.

He looked at Elliot first, then at me.

Then he held out a single datapad.

"The rite is ready," he said. "They've finished stabilizing the field lines. Montegue had the glyph perimeter reinforced this morning."

I nodded slowly, taking the pad. My fingers felt numb around the edge of it.

Kael stayed by the door, his hand braced on the frame. "You don't have to do this, you know. We don't know what could happen."



I glanced at Elliot, who had started curling into himself again—his thumb near his mouth, but never quite touching it. He didn't suck it, just held it there, like a forgotten comfort.

"Yes, I do," I whispered. "He's slipping. Every day we wait, Vassir roots deeper. If there's anything of Hades left in there and injection the Fenrir's marker directly did not even dent the... thing." Something painful bloomed in my chest. Hades had become a thing.

Kael didn't finish the sentence. He just nodded.

"You think it will work?" I asked.

He hesitated. "I think... if anyone could reach him, it's you."

Kael exhaled through his nose, stepping closer. His voice was quiet now, almost reverent.

"Montegue's ordered the gate cleared. The route's been sanctified, mapped, and anchored by sunset. We leave two hours before midnight. If the winds hold, we reach the burial grounds at the cusp of Eterna Noctis."

I stilled.



The name sat heavy in the room. Eterna Noctis.
The eternal night. The grave of the first
moonbound. The resting place of Elysia.

My past.

And somehow—me.

I gripped the datapad tighter. "Right. Of course."

But Kael was watching. He didn't miss the
hesitation in my voice.

"You don't have to face that part of it tonight," he
offered gently. "You only need to get to him."

I swallowed. "I know."

But I couldn't stop the echo behind my ribs. The
scream I hadn't let out.

Get to him.

Not bring him back.

It wasn't the same thing.

Kael rubbed the side of his neck—scar tissue still
livid across his collarbone. It didn't heal. My
dread only grew. "Only Stravos can enter the
boundary. That's why it has to be you. Cain's



preparing the offerings now. Just you, him, and... Hades."

The name lodged like splinters in my throat.

I nodded again, more to end the conversation than to agree.

And that's when it happened.

A sound—small, sharp, almost inaudible—cut through the air.

Elliot.

I turned, heart jerking.

He was still curled up on the bed, his thumb trembling at the edge of his mouth. But his lips were moving now.

His eyes were shut tight. His lashes damp.

And then—

"Don't go." 2

The words were paper-thin.

So soft they almost broke on the air.

But they were real.



Kael froze.

I couldn't breathe.

Elliot whimpered again, burying his face deeper into the pillow. "Please..."

It was the first time I had ever heard his voice.

The first time anyone had.

Kael stepped forward instinctively, stunned.

The air in the room turned brittle.

Neither Kael nor I moved.

We didn't dare.

Elliot's voice—fragile, like something stolen from a place it didn't belong—wasn't just a sound. It was a miracle and a rupture all at once.

My spine straightened.

Kael's breath caught audibly.

We stared.

"Don't go..."

The words slipped out of Elliot like a thread



unraveling from a long-forgotten fabric. Faint.
Trembling. Real.

Real.

My brain scrambled for meaning, for logic—he doesn't talk, I thought, almost frantically. He had never talked.

I hadn't even heard his cry when he was taken.

Kael took a step forward, slow and stunned, like he was approaching a ghost.

Elliot didn't stir.

Still curled in the blankets, his thumb hovering near his mouth. But the words didn't stop.

"Cold..." he murmured. "It's too cold..."

Kael glanced at me, eyes wide. I could see it—his mind racing, searching for explanation, for context. I had none. My pulse hammered in my throat.

"Floor hurts," Elliot went on, voice hitching in that hiccuped way children get when they've been crying too long. "No pie... said there'd be pie..."



I pressed a shaking hand over my lips.

He wasn't just speaking. He was remembering.

But remembering what?

Kael crouched near the bed, carefully, reverently.

"Elliot?" he whispered, as if afraid to wake him,
or break whatever had cracked open inside him.

"Did good," Elliot mumbled. "Passed... still
hungry..."

My throat clenched.

This wasn't the voice of a boy talking in his sleep.

This was the voice of someone reliving
something.

Someone far too small, too scared, and far, far
away.

I reached for him, brushing my fingers across his
temple.

He didn't react to the touch.

Then—

"...Nox." 2



The name was barely a whisper.

But Kael flinched.

Not blinked. Flinched.

I turned to him sharply, startled. "Kael?"

He didn't answer right away.

His eyes were locked on Elliot. But not with fear.

With recognition.

Real, shaken recognition.

Finally, his voice came, low and unsure. "That name. I... I knew someone once. A long time ago."

I waited.

He didn't continue.

And I didn't press. Not yet.

Because Elliot had stilled again, the words fading like smoke, breath even and shallow, retreating back into silence as if nothing had ever happened.

As if he had never spoken at all.



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But he had.

He had.

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