



322 Inheritance

Felicia didn't answer right away. 1

Her expression didn't shift, but something behind her eyes stilled, like a ripple freezing over in the wake of a thrown stone.

I stepped closer to the rune line.

"I didn't come here for your war stories," I said, voice low. "Not for your madness, or your jealousy, or even your grief. I came for Elliot."

Felicia's smile faded at last.

"What did you do to him?"

The chains creaked as she leaned back, but her eyes never left mine. For a breath, she was quiet. Contained. Then—

"When did he start speaking?" She asked.

I blinked. "What?"

She looked at me, unfazed. "Take a guess of the time he began to speak?"

I was tongue tied for a minute, my mind wafting



through facts. By six months, children begin babbling, twelve months they say their first words, most of the time being either mama or dada. And judging by how quietly assertive Elliot was, it was possible that his first word was before the twelve months.

Felicia watched me closely—too closely.

I swallowed, voice thinner now. "Maybe... maybe ten months?"

Her lips twitched. Not a smile. Just a small, sick tremor.

"Three months," she said softly.

I went still.

"Three months," Felicia repeated, eyes distant now. "That was the first time he said something. He'd crawl into the corner of the nursery and whisper it again and again."

I felt my chest tighten. "He was crawling at three months?"

Her gaze sharpened, cutting right through me.

She waved her hand, dismissively. "That started



at two months. Same as his teeth."

The silence that followed was unbearable. Children grew their bottom insicors by four months. My heart rate had leapt into a sprint.

"What was his first word?"

"More like words?" A slow smile that told me I would like what those certain words were crept onto her lips.

I swallowed. "What were his first words, Felicia?"

Her gaze intensified painfully. "You know them very well. I am sure those same words haunt you."

My brows jumped into my hairline. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"My baby. Please, don't hurt my baby." she mimicked, panick feigned.

The world collapsed. I could never forget those words, spoken from the mouth of Danielle as I tried to reach her through the wreckage of the car. But how was that even possible?

"Like he was telling the air. Or the shadows. Or



himself. I don't even know who taught him the words. But he knew what it meant."

A sharp pressure built behind my eyes.

"He wasn't babbling, Eve," she added, and now her voice was almost reverent. "He was pleading. Like Danielle had been. Like he has heard her pleas even as he was in her womb."

I bit down hard on my tongue. Because I couldn't cry here. Not in front of her. Not now. That child...

It was not Mama or Dada but the pleas of his mother as she thought she was being attacked. How would he ever heal?

"But that was not all that said that day,"

The lump in my throat hardened. "What else?"

"Please! Felicia, please, not him. Not my child. Don't hurt him!"

The words from Danielle but this was from the muzzle Cam just as Felicia attacked her and took her son. "How is this possible?" I muttered more to myself but Felicia answered.



"Those eyes of his, always watching, weighing, calculating..."

"He is just a child."

At that Felicia laughed out loud. "Elliot is not just any child. That child sneaked in a bomb, put it on his own neck, making an hostage of himself so that even without a voice he would be heard? Which four year old does that?"

Felicia's laughter rang off the cold walls—bright, hollow, unhinged.

"Tell me, Eve," she said, eyes glittering like broken glass, "what kind of child does that?"

I couldn't answer. My thoughts were a snarl of grief and dread. The image of Elliot—mute, trembling, with that bomb strapped to his neck—flashed behind my eyes like lightning. He had used that to save me, to expose her.

"I'll tell you," Felicia went on, her voice now low, conspiratorial. "A child who remembers. Who watches. Who calculates. A child born into violence and betrayal, shaped by it like clay on a wheel. But even that is not enough to create that... thing. He is an anomaly, like someone you



know." She smiled.

Before I could answer, she spoke. "Hades. He is like Hades because of the flux."

The words landed like a blade to the gut.

Hades... because of the Flux.

And suddenly, the pieces began to fall. One by one. A quiet, horrifying click of clarity behind my ribs.

He had it when Elliot was conceived.

The Flux wasn't just possessing him—it was poisoning everything it touched. It was in his bloodstream. In his soul. In his seed.

And that meant—

Elliot.

My lungs stalled. My thoughts turned to ash.

He didn't just witness horror.

He was born from it.

That was why he'd developed faster than he should have. Crawling before three months.



Teeth by two. Pleading phrases before most babies could lift their heads. Not mimicry. Not echoes.

Memories.

That's what they were.

Impressions from the womb, from his mother's terror, from something darker in the bloodline that should've never been passed down.

The Flux.

He hadn't been infected.

He had inherited it.

No. No, no, no...

My knees threatened to buckle.

Because the Flux doesn't just mutate—it molds. It reshapes minds. Rewrites instincts. It watches for weakness. It whispers.

Elliot was kind. Gentle. But sharp in ways he shouldn't be. Clever in ways that frightened me. He had always been too quiet, too self-contained, as though some part of him had been born holding a secret.



This was that secret.

I pressed a hand over my mouth, but it didn't stop the trembling.

"I see it," Felicia murmured. Her voice slithered into my thoughts like oil. "You're putting it together, aren't you?"

I didn't respond.

Couldn't.

He was just a boy.

My boy.

But now—gods, now I saw what it had cost him just to exist.

The darkness he carried wasn't his fault. But it lived in him, curling at the edges of his thoughts, sharpening the corners of his mind.

The Flux had made Hades a monster.

And now it lived inside our son.

A child born from love—and ruin.

And one day... it might try to claim him too.



Felicia's voice cut through my thoughts like a blade made of glass.

"You want to know why I did it?" she said. "Why I made him undergo all those bone marrow transplants?"

I looked up, barely breathing.

"At first," she said slowly, "it was simple. I just wanted to erase Hades."

The words hit like a slap.

She smiled thinly. "Erasing his paternity—cleaning up the bloodline, rewriting it on paper—was the first step. I knew the tests could be tampered with if I corrupted the marrow. It worked. For a while, it worked."

She looked away, but her voice didn't soften.

"But then I realized it wasn't just Hades I needed to erase. It was what came with him."

My heart dropped.

"The Flux," I whispered.

She nodded, chains clinking.



"That parasite was in him when Elliot was conceived. I saw the signs early—too early. That speed, that mind, those eyes." She shuddered, just slightly. "I knew what he carried. And I knew what it would grow into."

"So you tried to suppress it," I said, voice barely above a breath.

"Bone marrow isn't just blood," Felicia said. "It's memory. It's identity. I thought... if I could change it, dilute it, maybe I could smother the infection before it took root. Kill two birds with one stone. No Hades. No Flux."

She gave a hollow laugh.

"But that child—he didn't just carry blood. He carried memory. And it remembered me."

A chill skated down my spine.

"I thought he'd forget," she whispered. "Thought he'd grow up blank and soft, and I could shape him into something... manageable."

Her eyes turned glassy.

"But he remembered that night. The screams. The impact. The sound of Danielle's ribs



breaking beneath my claws. He remembered it all."

I was frozen.

"He heard it from the womb," she said, voice unraveling now. "And I knew one day he'd speak it. Expose me. Bring it all back to light."

The realization dropped heavy in my gut. "So you took his voice."

Felicia's gaze met mine.

"I tampered with his vocal cords," she said, too calmly. "Softly. Carefully. Just enough to muffle him. Then I filled him with fear. Conditioned him. Every sound punished. Every silence rewarded." 2

The bile rose in my throat.

"He was a baby."

"He was dangerous," Felicia snapped. "He was Hades' son. A walking memory. A fuse. And I—I survived too much to let a four-year-old destroy everything I'd buried."

I shook my head, tears burning my vision now,

my fury laced with something far colder.

"You broke him."

Felicia's expression didn't shift.

"I caged him," she said. "But you—you're the one letting him remember."

And for the first time in the entire conversation, I wanted to kill her. 

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