



448 The War Where We All Perish

Hades 1

The transformation started in my core, that primal energy unfurling like liquid fire through my veins. But instead of the usual rush of power and strength, every broken bone, every torn muscle, every twisted ligament filtered pure agony into every cell of my being. It felt like being rebuilt from the inside out while fully conscious, my skeleton reshaping itself through sheer force of will.

I heard a Gamma shout to Eve, "Luna! The Alpha is shifting!"

Eve's head whipped around, her eyes going wide with horror. "Hades, no! You're hurt! Don't you dare—"

But I was already past the point of no return. My spine elongated with a sickening crack, my ribs expanding despite their fractured state. The pain was so intense I could taste copper in my mouth.

"HADES, STOP!" Eve screamed, her voice breaking with panic.

I glanced at her apologetically, trying to convey everything I couldn't say—that I was sorry, that I loved her, that this was the only way. Then I turned to face Lucinda.

The distracted Gammas holding her faltered for just a second as they witnessed my transformation, their grip loosening as shock overtook training. But that second was all it took.

Lucinda broke free with inhuman strength, her massive wolf form launching through the air directly at Eve with murderous intent.

Time slowed to a crawl. I could see Eve's face, frozen in a moment of pure terror as death hurtled toward her. Could see Montague reaching out helplessly. Could see Elliot's small hands covering his eyes.

My shift completed in that instant—not the smooth, practiced transformation I was used to, but something raw and desperate and fueled by the need to protect what mattered most.

The roar that tore from my throat was unlike anything I'd ever produced. It was disembodied, molecular-splitting, carrying with it some secret message that seemed to bypass conscious



thought and speak directly to something deeper. The sound turned my throat to mincemeat—or at least it felt that way—shredding vocal cords that were still healing from my previous injuries.

But it worked.

Lucinda stopped dead in mid-air, her massive form freezing as if suspended by invisible strings. Her feral eyes, which had held no trace of humanity moments before, suddenly flickered with confusion, then recognition, then horror at what she'd almost done.

We all watched in real time as her grotesque wolf form began to shimmer and contract, shifting back into her usual human shape. As the transformation completed, something impossible happened—the mark of Malrik on her chest, that cursed 'M' that had controlled her actions, began to dissolve. It literally dissolved, the dark lines fading like ink in water until even the stain spread across her hospital gown. 4

Lucinda collapsed to the ground, gasping, human, and free.

The silence that followed was deafening. Even my own ragged breathing seemed too loud in the suddenly still air.



I swayed on my feet, the adrenaline that had carried me through the shift now abandoning me entirely. Every bone in my body felt like it was held together with nothing but determination and spite.

Eve was at my side in an instant, her hands gentle but firm as she helped me stay upright. "You impossible, reckless, beautiful idiot," she whispered, tears streaming down her face. "Don't you ever scare me like that again."

But I barely heard her. My attention was fixed on Lucinda, who was staring at me with wonder and dawning understanding.

"Hades," she breathed, her voice hoarse from her transformation. "You broke his hold on me. You actually broke his hold."

Montague was kneeling beside his wife, pulling her into his arms as he sobbed with relief. "Lucinda. Oh, my love, you're back. You're really back."

I managed a weak smile before my legs finally gave out entirely, and I collapsed back into the wheelchair that Eve had somehow maneuvered behind me. 1

"Well," I croaked, my voice barely recognizable



after that roar, "at least now we know it works."

I sighed deeply, and for the first time in days I did not anticipate the pain that would come with the action. Even spontaneous healing was not some insane magic. It took energy from somewhere, and with the amount of damage I had done to my body due to the journey through Silverpine, all the maneuvers and close calls, a fight with some ancient creature and a fall from the height of a little less than a mountain, healing had been arduous.

But at least I didn't die.

Nor did anyone I tried to bring back home.

My eyes found Kael where he was seated beside Silas, back in shape and the damned mark erased from his back.

Then to Thea who had been invited specially for me to relay all that she knew about Darius and his plans.

"It's been a hell hole, especially for the smaller cities, the towns in the outskirts of the pack. Barely any electricity, and one day you greet your next door neighbor, by morning the entire



house is abandoned. People have been disappearing for years. But it really reached a peak almost six years ago, a month before my sister was executed in place of Eve Valmont." Her voice did not crack. Her tone was monotone to the point of robotic. Her gaze distant, clouded over like she wasn't fully here.

Eve's fingers flexed against mine under the desk, her brows furrowing, eyes hard. But there was no hiding it. Hearing it crushed her. And knowing my Eve, she would internalize the blame for something she had absolutely no control over. 1

I stroked her hand as reassuringly as I could manage.

She pursed her lips and glanced at me.

I could see behind the neutral mask she wore that she was panicking, frightened of what was to come.

Like everybody else.

The shock of my revelation about the time we truly had left everyone in the room so gobsmacked and afraid that even the pompous council members had none of their usual qualms about the second werewolf seated in their midst.



They had no mind to care for racial differences when the countdown to an apocalypse had been cut down to barely nothing.

All eyes were glued to Thea, no one leaning back, no one interrupting.

Thea unloaded all she knew, spoke about her father, the hidden city and then came to the latter end of our journey, just before we literally fell off the sky.

At the mention of the creature that came at us, I felt Eve's hand lose heat, like her body automatically lowered its temperature from the fear that gripped her.

We were living a horror movie.

It was no surprise.

"What are you talking about, Thea?"

Thea flinched but she didn't meet Eve's eyes. Probably afraid she would see her sister. "The creature looked just like Alpha Hades," she glanced at me before her gaze dulled again. "When he is shifted."

Eve faced me now. "There is another hybrid like you?" she asked, this time her horror was unmasked.



Her eyes too wide, they took over half of her face.

I squeezed her hand but shook my head. "No, it was not like me. It was a vampire."

She flinched like she had been electrocuted, her hand almost slipping out of mine, but I was quick to tighten my grip.

She shook her head, beads of sweat on her brow.

But though it hurt me to tell her, I continued.

"I saw it shift in the hidden city just before it came at us. It shifted into something similar to my vampire form and though I was not absolutely sure.

Until what we thought were search lights essentially blinded us," I recalled the utter terror when the light shone at me. "Only to realize that it was the morning sun, and when I dared to look back I watched the thing blister on every surface until it caught fire. Its weakness was the sun."

"Like a vampire." Thea completed. "That was the only reason we survived the attack, morning came." 2

The first thing that followed was this tense silence, and Gallinti burst out laughing.



Everyone looked at him, mouths still agape.

The sound was not born of humor, it was far too strained, more maniacal than that. Between choking chuckles, he spoke. "You are telling me that not only have we been played by Darius who essentially manipulated the blood moon, he has an army of ferals and now we're learning that even with the basically no time that we have left, within his arsenal is a creature that has been 'extinct' for centuries?" He rose, his chest rising and falling rapidly. "We have, by the newer updated calculations, six weeks, six fucking weeks and now an ancient force that our gammas will have to contend with. We have all the resources but with little time to get them prepared."

He was turning blue.

While voicing all the unspeakable fears that haunted us.

Silas grabbed his hand, trying to calm him down while being as pale as a sheet himself.

But Gallinti would not concede. His voice shook as he spoke, he suddenly truly looked twenty-five years old. "Alpha, Luna, tell me this won't be the war where we perish." 2

< 448 The War Where We All Perish



Eve and I look at each other. 3

Comment 16

View All >



Post your first comment!



Vote



Fandom



Send Gift

Book Badge



Swipe left to continue >