

45 Live Your Life

Eve~ 1

Another warning, my pulse jumped. Why was Cain telling me this? And why did I have a hunch that he was the unknown number that sent the first warning?

I calmed my racing heart before tossing the paper into the toilet and flushing it. I had to keep my head despite the rising dread inside me. Lia would be here soon, and just then the door was knocked.

"Who were you before this?" Lia asked. "Before all of this?"

"Before everything went to hell?"

"Yes, before everything went to hell."

I bit my lip, thinking. Everything didn't go to hell for me when I was made to marry Hades. It went to hell way before that. So it was a valid question, at least to me. Who was I before my life came crashing down?

I leaned back in the chair, my eyes drifting to the window as I sifted through memories like old



photographs, each one a little blurrier than the last.

"Before everything went to hell," I began slowly, "I was... different. Not happier, but less guarded. I had dreams of my own. I had plans. I was someone who believed in choices."

Lia nodded, waiting for me to continue, her eyes sharp yet empathetic.

"I used to be carefree, at least compared to now. I laughed more. Trusted more easily. But then... things started changing. People I loved betrayed me, the weight of expectations grew heavier, and eventually, I stopped being that person. I became the version of myself I needed to survive."

Lia's silence urged me to go deeper.

"Hades didn't break me. Not entirely. But the world before him? The lies, the betrayals, the countless things I can never undo... that's what did it. So when I was made to marry him, it wasn't some sudden shift. It was just... more weight added to what was already unbearable."

I paused, letting the truth settle between us. It wasn't often I said these things out loud. Lia was quiet for a moment, processing what I'd said.

"You've been carrying a lot," she finally said, her voice gentle but firm. "More than most people could ever handle. But you're still here. You're still standing."

I gave a small, bitter laugh. "Barely."

"That's the thing though," she continued, leaning forward slightly. "You don't have to barely survive. You've been in survival mode for so long, you've forgotten what it's like to live. To truly live."

I looked away, the idea almost foreign. "I wouldn't even know where to start."

"You start by finding that person again. The one you were before all of this. She's still in there, even if she feels like a distant memory. You don't have to be her completely, but you can adapt. You can take the strength you've gained, the resilience you've built, and mix it with the parts of you that still want joy, that still long to feel lighter." 2

Lia's words were gentle but cut through the fog. "You're in a difficult situation, yes. But that doesn't mean you can't find joy, can't find a way to feel... alive again. Start small. One thing at a time. And eventually, it won't feel so impossible."

For the first time in a long while, I felt the smallest flicker of something—hope, maybe?—begin to surface. I met Lia's gaze, her expression warm.

"Find the person you were, or at least a version of her," she said softly. "And you'll feel lighter. You'll see."

I nodded, unsure but willing to try. When she left for the day, I got up and opened the drawer. I picked up the sketchbook and the pencil.

I looked at the blank sheet of paper for a while, my mind going blank. The pencil felt a bit awkward in my hand, but I pressed the black sharpened tip to the parchment and let my hand take over.

The scrape of the pencil against the paper felt familiar. It sent a pleasant chill through me as the movement of my hands grew from tentative to certain. I wasn't sure what I was sketching, but it was as if my body knew what it was doing, even though my mind hadn't yet caught up.

After a few minutes, I stopped, adding the final details. I dropped the pencil and stared at my creation. It was the sketch of a beautiful woman. She smiled at me, her eyes twinkling on the



page, a mole on the space between her mouth and lips. She had a pair of tiny jewels dangling from her ears. She was no one familiar, yet it felt like I had seen her face before. Probably in a crowd, and it had stuck with me.

My shading was off, but all in all, I was just a little bit rusty. With a final look at the woman, I flipped through the pages just as I heard an irritated voice outside my room.

"You bratty kid!" a woman snapped on the other side of my door.

My ear perked up at the sound of a whine.

I snapped up when I heard a smack. I was at the door in a heartbeat.

"What is going on?" I asked, my voice sharper than intended.

The woman turned to me, and her scowl deepened. "What do you want?" she asked.

"Ma'am?" She spat the last word.

My gaze turned to the child, who I immediately recognized. The child with Felicia, who looked too much like her with those green eyes and sable hair not to be her daughter.

"You could be less harsh," I said.



The woman narrowed her eyes. "I am her caretaker. You don't get to give me lessons." She did not attempt to hide her disgust for me.

The girl's eyes were filled with tears, but she said nothing, not even a whimper. So I got down to her level. "What's wrong, darling?" I asked.

The woman scoffed. "Don't bother trying to get her to speak."

"Little girl, what's wrong?" I asked, getting a bit closer.

"HE is a boy, and he is impaired." She spat the word like a slur. The way she spoke showed exactly how she felt about it. It was annoying, a stain on the child. She spoke like he wasn't even human. My ears were ringing.

My head snapped to her. "Can't you be a bit more sensitive?"

"Did you just call my son impaired?" Felicia stepped out of the elevator, her eyes blazing, but her gaze was not on the caretaker. It was on me.