



453 Longing For Her

Hades 1

The car ride was wrought with a strange type of silence. My fingers flexed against the leather of the car seat. It was tortuous having her so close yet so far. The ambrosia so achingly familiar had filled the enclosed air in the car.

But she stayed seated, eyes forward and back pin straight and her legs crossed. I did not need too long to know that she had changed; we both had. My time in Silverpine pack had been a journey for me, not just a physical one but one that tested who I was at my very core.

And now as I sat by her, it was hard to think that months ago I had wanted every werewolf gone, a dissimulator in the works to ensure that an entire race would utterly and completely perish. 1

Then I had pulled her into my life with a chain on her neck and shackles around her ankles. How naive I had been to think the tables would never turn. She had left questioning everything I had ever believed in. 1

I learned that even without a heart, I didn't have to be heartless.



I wanted to crown her Luna over Obsidian but from what respect I saw the council members had awarded her, I knew she had made her mark as a Luna long before a coronation.

The silence stretched between us, and every second that passed tested my control. Every fiber of my being demanded I reach across the space separating us, to shatter the invisible barrier she had erected with my bare hands. My fingers curled against my thigh, aching to trace the curve of her jaw, to remind her exactly how she trembled under my touch.

But I held myself in check—not from uncertainty, but from a restraint that was costing me everything.

The war loomed over us like a specter—less than two months until everything we had built could crumble to ash. I could see the weight of it in the rigid set of her shoulders, in the way her breathing had become measured and controlled. She was carrying the burden of her pack, of all the lives that hung in the balance, and I wanted to strip that burden away, to make her focus on nothing but me. 1

I wanted to pull her across this seat and claim her mouth, to bury my face in the crook of her



neck and mark her until her scent was mine alone. I wanted to return to that moment in the royal infirmary when the world had narrowed to just us, when I had broken through every wall she'd built and made her mine completely.

The memory of her skin against mine, soft and yielding, sent fire through my veins. I could still feel the ghost of her heartbeat against my palm, still hear the way she had gasped my name when I'd pushed her past every limit.

But that felt like a lifetime ago, and my restraint was wearing dangerously thin.

"You're thinking too loudly," she said suddenly, her voice cutting through the tension like a blade. She still didn't look at me, but I caught the slight tremor in her words. 1

The beast in me roared to life. While she was strategizing, planning, bearing the weight of survival, I was consumed with the need to possess her completely. I should feel guilty for wanting to be selfish with her when the world was ending, but all I felt was hunger.

"The things I want to do to you," I said, my voice low and controlled.

Her breath caught—barely audible, but I heard it.



Her eyes flicked to the divider that separated us from the driver, and for a moment, I saw something flicker across her face. Shock, perhaps. Or recognition of exactly what kind of fire she was playing with.

Without a word, she reached forward and slid the privacy divider closed with a soft click.

The sound echoed between us like a declaration of war. Or surrender.

Now we were truly alone, enclosed in this space where the air grew thicker with every breath. Her scent intensified, that intoxicating blend of ambrosia and something uniquely her that made the beast in me strain against its chains.

She turned to face me fully, and when our eyes met, I saw her walls beginning to crack. "Hades," she whispered, my name falling from her lips like a warning. Or an invitation.

The distance between us felt like torture, even though she was close enough that I could claim her in one swift movement if I chose to. But I held myself perfectly still, letting the tension coil tighter between us.

"Tell me to stop," I said, my voice rough with hunger so visceral it twisted and churned in my



gut. "Tell me to keep my hands to myself, and I will."

But we both knew she wouldn't.

"Tell me this isn't the place or the time," I continued, my gaze never leaving hers. "Tell me that everything we know, everything we love and hate, could be dust in the next six weeks. Tell me the war should matter more than this."

I leaned forward slightly, the space between us crackling with electricity. "Tell me any of that matters more than the way you're looking at me right now."

My voice dropped to barely above a whisper. "Tell me, and I'll believe you. I'll sit back, keep my distance, and pretend I don't want to consume every inch of you."

The challenge hung in the air between us, heavy and dangerous. Her lips parted slightly, and I could see her pulse racing at the base of her throat.

Her lips parted, trembling on the verge of words she couldn't force out. My control finally snapped. I surged forward, my mouth colliding with hers in a kiss that was all teeth and desperation, fire and ruin. 3

It wasn't gentle. It wasn't meant to be. Weeks of distance, of restraint, of silence poured out of me in a flood as I crushed her against me, devouring her like I'd been starving for her taste and I had.

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