



457 The Tunnels To Silverpine

Hades 1

Eve crouched down slowly, and Sophie's eyes followed her down until they were at eye level.

"You are afraid of Alpha Hades, why?"

Sophie scrunched up her nose, "He is not a good man."

"Hmm," Eve mused. "Because he does not like werewolves?"

Sophie glanced up at me and withdrew into the room a little more.

I took a step back. What she said hurt more because she was right. I was not a good man.

"Yes," Sophie replied. "But I am not one." She lied.

She was far too young to understand the complexity of the wrought rivalry between our two kinds but she was justified in having disdain for a man that would have wanted her dead months ago.

"This uncle Luci of yours," Eve said softly. "How does he look?"

She blinked, glanced up at me again, eyes



narrowing before facing Eve again. "He had blue eyes, pretty ones, my papa said he used to be jealous of them because his are black."

I was suddenly dragged down by Eve so that I was face to face with Sophie.

She recoiled.

But Eve drew her back with her voice. "What is the colour of his eyes, Sophie?" Eve asked.

Sophie's eyes hesitantly met mine and from this angle I could see more of Cain in her face. Dark long lashes, a pointy chin despite the softness of her face, her distinct cupid's bow and a long philtrum.

She finally answered. "His eyes are blue but Alpha's eyes are the colour of steel."

"See?" Eve probed.

She pouted in response. "He is not Uncle Luci. Uncle Luci has pretty dimples and smiles a lot." She smiled wide, pointing at her dimples. "Papa said I got them from Uncle Luci. But he looks like he eats babies' pinkies for dinner." 1

I was not sure if I was supposed to bark a laugh or shoot myself in the head.



The guard still standing above us choked on a laugh and tried to cover it with a cough, only to fail woefully.

Eve jabbed me in the side, prompting me. I could taste her urgency from the Fenrir's chain. It tugged at me.

I knew what she wanted from me. The smile. The dimples that had disappeared along with the boy who'd once built pillow forts and laughed until his sides hurt.

Taking a shaky breath, I let the iron mask I'd worn for decades crack just enough. I thought of Cain as a child, chasing me through the corridors. I thought of the way Sophie had painted that door with her papa. I thought of Eve beside me, believing I could be better.

The smile felt foreign on my face, rusty from disuse, but it came. And with it, the dimples that genetics had carved into my cheeks.

Sophie's grip on the doorframe loosened completely. Her brown eyes went wide, then began to sparkle with something that made my chest squeeze tight.

"Uncle Luci?" she whispered, and this time it wasn't a question.



"Hello, little star," I managed, the old pet name falling from my lips before I could stop it. 6

The transformation was instant and devastating. Sophie let go of the door entirely and launched herself at me with a shriek of pure joy that echoed through the reinforced hallway.

"UNCLE LUCI! YOU CAME BACK! YOU CAME BACK!"

I caught her automatically, this tiny whirlwind of honey hair and caramel skin, and she wrapped her arms around my neck so tightly I could barely breathe. She smelled like strawberry shampoo and childhood innocence, and when she pulled back to look at my face, her eyes were bright with tears of happiness.

"Papa said you might never come home," she babbled, her small hands patting my cheeks as if to make sure I was real. "He said the black room took you away forever, but I knew you'd come back! I knew it! Papa is going to be SO happy! He misses you every single day!" 1

Behind me, I heard Freddy clear his throat roughly, and even Eve's breathing had gone unsteady. But all I could focus on was this child—my niece, my family—who looked at me like I



hung the moon instead of like the monster everyone else saw. 1

"I'm here now," I whispered, and held her tight against my chest, feeling her small heart beating against mine. For a moment, everything else faded away—the war, the threats, the impossible odds we faced. There was just this child who saw Uncle Luci instead of Alpha Hades.

"Uncle Luci," Sophie said, pulling back to look at me with those bright brown eyes, "do you want to meet my mami?"

I froze. Every muscle in my body went rigid. "Where... where is she?" I had not even considered that possibility.

"Sophie—" Freddy started sharply, but she was already talking, the words tumbling out with childlike enthusiasm.

"She's in the tunnels! Papa said that's where he met her, in the tunnels that go all the way to Silverpine, the werewolf place! She had to go back because—" 8

"Sophie, no!" Freddy's voice cracked like a whip, but she kept rambling.

"—because the bad people there don't know



about the secret ways and papa said mami has to stay safe until—"

"Little miss!" Freddy stepped forward urgently. "Your papa will be very hurt if you tell these secrets. Remember what he said about keeping mami safe?"

Sophie's mouth snapped shut so fast I heard her teeth click together. Her eyes went wide with fear—not of me this time, but of having said something that could hurt her father.

I opened my mouth to ask what the hell was going on, but Eve was already moving. I felt her rage surge through the Fenrir's chain like molten metal in my veins, but when she spoke, her voice was calm as still water.

"Freddy," she said, rising slowly to her full height. "What was that about?"

Freddy's jaw set like concrete. His winter eyes met Eve's without flinching, but he said absolutely nothing.

The silence stretched between us, heavy with implications I was only beginning to understand. Tunnels to Silverpine. Sophie's mother, hidden away in enemy territory. Cain's desperate secrecy suddenly made horrifying sense.



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My brother wasn't just protecting a half-werewolf daughter. He was protecting a family split between warring territories, connected by secret passages that could change everything about this war.

And now we all knew about it. Whether Freddy liked it or not.

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