



461 When You Know, You Know

Kael ¹

Eve and Hades had not returned. It was in the air—their absence. I glanced at the watch strapped to my wrist.

Almost seven in the evening.

Hades did say that his expedition into some secrets in Cain's life might take a minute to uncover, but he promised to be home within the day and pull an all-nighter for the responsibilities he'd put on hold for this mission.

I was pretty sure it had something to do with the Sophie that Cain had mentioned, and despite everything, I smiled at the thought of Hades having a little niece.

The old Hades would have been dismissive of another kin—especially one connected to him by his half-brother. ¹

The Tower was a hub of activity.

Workers passed me with quick nods and murmured greetings, their arms full of various items—sealed orders, supply manifests, weapons for distribution.



"Beta," a guard acknowledged, rifle slung across his shoulder as he headed toward the armory.

"Evening, Beta Kael," a servant called, pushing a cart stacked with what looked like meal trays for the night-shift workers.

"Beta," another security officer nodded sharply, radio crackling at his hip as he coordinated patrol rotations.

I returned each greeting absently, my mind still running calculations about the east quadrant stadium. Four weeks to rebuild critical infrastructure. Fifty engineers. Emergency supply requisitions. The composite material...

I shook my head, forcing myself to focus on something other than collapsing domes and impossible deadlines. The kids. I should check on Elliot and Micah, see how they were settling in. With Hades and Eve still out dealing with whatever Cain had been hiding, someone needed to make sure the children were okay.

I made my way through the Tower's corridors toward the family quarters, the sounds of activity fading as I moved into the more residential areas. Lady Lucinda had volunteered to watch them—probably the only person in the



pack with enough authority and patience to handle Elliot's premature shifting and Micah's trauma from the Silverpine rescue.

It was strange that a Lycan woman who'd called Eve a mutt not too long ago had changed. But after all that had been revealed—after everything I'd heard she'd been through—if she hadn't changed, nothing in the world could.

As I rounded the corner to the hallway leading to the children's room, I stopped short.

Thea stood by the door, her posture strange—hunched slightly, one hand braced against the doorframe. She was peeking through the crack, her body language tense in a way that immediately set off alarm bells in my head.

That earthy musk and soft jasmine hit me like a physical force, and Ajax stirred—restless and agitated. The tug came back—sharp, insistent, more painful than before. It felt like a hook behind my sternum, pulling me toward her.

I approached quietly, my footsteps barely audible on the carpet. But something was wrong. I could see it in the tremor of her shoulders, hear it in the too-quick rhythm of her breathing.

"Thea?" I said softly, reaching out to touch her



shoulder.

She whirled around, her hand flying up to fling mine away with surprising force. "Don't—"

The words died in her throat as our eyes met, and I froze.

Tears streaked down her face, her blue eyes red-rimmed and swimming with more unshed moisture. Her chest heaved with barely controlled sobs, and her hands were shaking as she pressed them against her mouth, trying to muffle the sound.

"Thea," I said again, keeping my voice gentle, non-threatening. "What's wrong?"

She shook her head violently, backing away from me until her spine hit the wall. A broken sound escaped her—half sob, half gasp—and she squeezed her eyes shut as if trying to block out the world. 1

Through the crack in the door, I could hear children's laughter—Elliot's bright voice, Micah's quieter responses, and Lady Lucinda's warm tone as she read them a story.

Thea's hands flew to her face, roughly wiping at the tears with the sleeves of her lab coat. The



white fabric showed damp spots where the moisture soaked through.

"Did you get the memo?" she asked, her voice strained but trying for professional. "About the presentation? Dr. Maya scheduled it for later this everything. We need to record our findings before you, the Alpha, the Luna, and the council members—concerning our development of the Lunar Cataclysm-resistant composite for the domes."

She moved to step around me, but I shifted to block her path. "Thea, wait—"

"Excuse me, Beta," she said, already moving in the opposite direction. But I noticed the slight hitch in her gait—she was limping.

"You're hurt," I said, following her down the corridor. "Let me—"

"I'm fine." She picked up her pace despite the obvious pain, her lab coat billowing behind her as she navigated the hallways with the familiarity of someone who'd been studying her escape routes.

I matched her stride easily, my longer legs giving me the advantage even as she tried to lose me.

"Thea, please. I need to talk to you. About



Silverpine, about what I said—"

"The composite bonding has exceeded our initial projections," she cut in, her voice taking on that formal, detached quality I was learning to hate.

"The vampire blood's immortal properties are maintaining the Fenrir marker's structural integrity even under extreme heat conditions. Once we receive authorization this afternoon, we should have a full working prototype within three days."

"Dammit, Thea, I'm not talking about the composite!" My frustration leaked through despite my attempt to stay calm. "I'm trying to thank you. You saved my life. You saved me when you could barely balance yourself, and I—the things I said to you, about being ignorant—"

She whirled on me, eyes flashing. "You were right, weren't you? I was ignorant, clueless—"

"No." The word came out harder than I intended. "You were brave. You were brilliant. You found solutions when the rest of us were ready to give up. And back then I was an ass who couldn't see past his own frustrations and fear—"

But she was already moving again, practically running now despite the limp. We'd reached the



elevators, and she jabbed the call button repeatedly, her breath coming in short gasps that had nothing to do with exertion.

The elevator dinged, doors sliding open. Thea practically threw herself inside, immediately reaching for the close-door button.

I didn't think—I just moved.

My hand shot out, catching the door before it could close. I stepped into the elevator, and Thea backed up until she hit the far wall, eyes wide. 1

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