

468 Mami's Garden

Eve 1

But he's not mean to me!" Micah added quickly. "He's nice. He showed me his toy soldiers and let me arrange them. He draws well too. And Sophie..." He paused, a small smile tugging at his mouth. "Sophie has no pointy teeth, but she teases a lot."

"Hey!" Sophie protested from where she'd settled on her bed.

Thea laughed—a genuine sound that seemed to surprise even her. "It sounds like you're all taking care of each other."

"We are," Micah confirmed solemnly. "Like a pack."

"Like a pack," Thea repeated, and I saw her swallow hard. "That's good, Mickey. That's really good."

They talked for a few more minutes—Micah showing her the drawings on the wall, telling her about the rocking horse and the books and all the colors. Thea listened to every word, her attention wholly focused on her brother despite



whatever crucial work awaited her in the lab.

Finally, Kael gently touched Micah's shoulder. "Your sister needs to get back to work, buddy. But she'll see you in the morning."

Micah nodded, reluctant but understanding. "Goodnight, Thea I love you."

"I love you too, Mickey. So much." Thea blew him a kiss through the screen. "Sweet dreams."

The call ended, and Micah handed the tablet back to Kael. For a moment, I thought he might cry, but instead, he straightened his shoulders and nodded—trying to be brave like Thea had said.

Kael stayed crouched at his level. "She's working on something that's going to help a lot of people," he said quietly. "Including you. That's why she can't be here right now." He ruffled his hair, eyes kind.

"I know." Micah's voice was small but steady. "She's always helping people. Like daddy did."

Kael's jaw tightened, and I saw something pass over his expression, grief, recognition. "Yeah. Like your dad did."

He stood, meeting my eyes briefly before



nodding to Hades and me. His shoulders slumped again, his whole frame weighed down by heart ache. Hades' clapped his shoulders. "Go sleep. Tommorrow is a long day."

He dis not respond, he just walked out.

"Alright," I said, clapping my hands together gently. "It's getting late. Who wants a story before bed?"

Just in case, we never again have the chance.

"Me!" Elliot and Sophie said in unison.

Micah nodded quietly.

"Everyone pick a bed," I instructed. "We're making a nest."

They scrambled to gather blankets and pillows, creating a massive pile in the center of the room between all three beds. Hades helped, adding extra cushions and arranging everything until it looked like a proper wolf den.

I settled into the middle of the nest, and the children curled around me. Elliot on my left, Sophie on my right, and Micah tucked against my side, still clutching the stuffed wolf someone had given him.



Hades sat at the edge of the nest, his back against Sophie's bed, watching us with an expression I couldn't quite name.

Freddie watched, but his expression had softened.

"What story do you want to hear?" I asked.

"Tell us about the moon," Sophie said immediately. "But not the scary moon. The good one."

So I did. I told them about the silver moon that watched over all wolves, about how it guided lost pups home and gave strength to the weak. I told them about moon festivals and celebrations, about howling songs passed down through generations.

I didn't tell them about Blood Moons or prophecies or wars. Tonight, they could have the gentle version. The world where moons were benevolent and wolves were safe.

One by one, they drifted off, Micah first, exhausted from his emotional day with Sophie, I was sure. I could relate. Then Elliot, fighting sleep until the very end just like always. And finally Sophie, her small hand still tangled in Hades's sleeve.

When their breathing had evened out into the deep rhythm of sleep, I carefully extracted myself from the nest. Hades helped me tuck blankets around them, making sure each one was warm and secure.

Sophie stirred as we were turning to leave, her eyes fluttering open briefly. "Uncle Luci?"

Hades knelt beside her bed. "I'm here, little star."

"Tomorrow... in the tunnels..." Her voice was drowsy, slurred with sleep. "Are you gonna see Mami's garden?"

I froze. Beside me, I felt Hades go still as well.

"What garden, Sophie?" he asked gently.

But she'd already drifted back to sleep, her breathing evening out once more.

Hades and I exchanged looks over the sleeping children. Mami's garden. In the tunnels.

Freddie the speaking statue spoke finally. "It will all be clear tomorrow. You have to see it yourselves.."

Me and Hades shared a long looked, before nodding, exhausted.

Lucinda appeared. "Mr Freddie, I will show you



to your room."

His gaze lingered on Sophie in response before he yielded and headed towards her.

Hades pulled me into his arms, and I let myself lean into him, drawing strength from his solid presence. "We'll find out tomorrow," he murmured into my hair. "The tunnels, the garden, whatever Cain's been hiding.

"And then?"

"And then we save everyone we can."

It was the same answer as always. The only answer we had.

I bit my lips. "The war... the kids too, will we..."

"We can't let them lose anyone else." He read my mind.

Hades cupped my face in his hands, his thumbs brushing away tears I hadn't realized were falling. "We won't. That's a promise, Eve. We're coming back to them once it is all over. We are not going anywhere."

I nodded, wanting desperately to believe him. To believe that we could fight this war and win.

That we could save eight thousand people from Silverpine. That we could protect three traumatized children who'd already lost so much.

That hope was enough.

"Tomorrow," I said.

"Tomorrow," he agreed. "We see what secrets the tunnels hold."

We stood there a moment longer, holding each other in the hallway outside a room full of sleeping children, before finally turning back toward the war room.

There were still plans to finalize. Evacuations to coordinate. A war to prepare for.

But tonight, we'd given three children a moment of peace. A story about gentle moons and safe wolves. A promise that someone would fight for them.

It would have to be enough.

Even if it felt like far too little.