



474 96 Hours



474 96 Hours

Hades 1

"No. No, no, no."

They'd been discovered.

Darius knew.

The squad—twenty of my best Gammas, veterans, trained and equipped—had walked into a trap. Gas deployment meant it was deliberate. Planned. The Underspine was compromised, possibly heavily guarded, possibly—

I slammed my fist on the desk, sending documents scattering. The holographic map flickered.

Think. Don't panic. Think.

But my mind was racing through worst-case scenarios:

The squad was captured. Tortured for information about Obsidian's plans, about the tunnels, about—

The squad was dead. Gassed and killed before they could even fight back.



474 96 Hours



Cain was exposed. If they'd been discovered entering the Underspine, Darius would increase security, would start hunting for whoever they were meeting.

The Eclipse Rebellion was in danger.

The maps... would lead them straight to innocent survivors.

The entire evacuation plan was compromised.

I grabbed my personal comm, fingers shaking as I pulled up Kael's frequency.

He answered on the first ring. "Hades? What—"

"The tunnel squad. They've gone dark. The last transmission indicated a trap—gas deployment, Underspine entrance." My voice was steady only through sheer force of will. "We have to assume they've been discovered or captured."

Silence on the other end. Then: "Fuck."

"Get everyone to the war room on call. They don't need to come over, not yet. Now. Montague, Silas, Gallinti. We need contingency plans immediately."

"On it." Kael's voice was grim. "What about Cain?"

Cain could die.



Sophie...

My brother. Still in Silverpine, coordinating with the Eclipse Rebellion, completely unaware that our attempted infiltration and rescue much less that it had just been blown.

"We have to wait," I said, hating the words even as I spoke them. "If they've captured anyone from the squad and are monitoring communications—"

"We'd led Darius right to him."

"Exactly."

Another pause. Then Kael said quietly, "He's on his own with everyone there." Sage, Maera flashed through my mind. Ellen would never get to tell her sister her full story. She would be in Darius' grasp again. He could force her to pull the bloodmoon even closer, cut out time even shorter.

If six weeks felt like we were running on a time bomb, what would three weeks be like, a week, a day...

I was spiralling, I knew that.

This was supposed not to happen. This was everything I feared. The very end.



474 96 Hours



Eve was still giving blood...

I stilled, taking a deep breath that felt like razors in my lungs. If the Alpha was losing his head, what would the people looking to me for leadership do?

"For now." I refused to accept anything else. "But first, we need to know what we're dealing with. War room. Ten minutes. Everybody available."

I cut the connection and stood there, staring at the dead comm unit on my desk.

Twenty Gammas. Twenty lives I'd sent into enemy territory.

And now they were gone.

Or captured, I told myself. Captured means they're still alive. Captured means we can get them back.

But the hollow feeling in my chest knew better.

Darius didn't take prisoners to show mercy. He took them to extract information, to break them, to use them.

And my people—my Gammas—were now in his hands. Cain's men...

Oh goddess



I grabbed my jacket and headed for the door, jaw set with grim determination.

By the time the briefing was over, the entire chat had been drenched in a dreary silence that told me they shared my fear.

My glasses were not so rose-colored that I couldn't tell they cared minimally for the people of Silverpine I planned to help cross the border. A few weeks of revelations would never be able to erase inherited and instilled animosity toward the race. They could never see them the way I did.

They didn't carry memories of centuries ago. The mind that had witnessed it all burn. The soul that had been victim to the machinations and manipulation of a man whose descendants still stood in the way of peace—not only for my pack and my race, but for our supposed enemies as well.

So I couldn't expect them to care like I did.

But it was Ellen they were worried about. Her power to wield the Blood Moon had already put us in this countdown. If she was recaptured, Darius would only shorten the timeline, dooming



all of us. Just when we thought we had it all in order.

I couldn't even inform Eve. Not when she was still donating and needed to be kept calm. The last thing she needed was this horrible news delivered while she was weakened and vulnerable.

Montague's voice cut through the silence first. His face on the holographic screen was grim, scarred features cast in harsh shadows.

"We need to monitor the Blood Moon's trajectory," he said flatly. "If Ellen has been captured with the Eclipse Rebellion and is being forced to pull it closer, we'll see evidence within hours."

Silas leaned forward on his screen. "How would we detect that?"

"My analysts have been tracking the Blood Moon's approach since Ellen escaped," I said, pulling up the astronomical data on my tablet. "It's been moving at a consistent rate—accelerated from its natural cycle, but stable. If that changes—if it suddenly jumps closer—we'll know."

"And if it does?" Gallintl asked, his young face



tight with tension.

I met his eyes through the screen. "Then we know Ellen's been captured and is being forced to wield again."

"Which means we're out of time," Kael added quietly.

"Exactly." Montague's expression was like stone. "Which is why I propose we establish clear parameters now. No panic, no scrambling when it happens—if it happens. We decide our response protocol immediately."

"Go on," I said.

Montague straightened, and I recognized the look on his face—the cold tactical mind that had made him one of my most valuable commanders despite his personal grief over Felicia's betrayal.

"If the Blood Moon moves even a single measurable increment beyond its current projected acceleration—any manipulation detected at all—we strike Silverpine. Hard. Immediately."

The screens went silent.

"Where?" Silas asked carefully.

"The Cauterium itself."



474 96 Hours



Gallinti's eyes widened. "That's suicide. The fortifications, the guards—"

"I'm aware of the risks," Montague cut him off. "But think strategically. If Ellen's been captured, that's where they'll take her. Not just to torture information out of our people, but to resume their experiments. To force her to pull the Blood Moon even closer while they extract whatever other horrors they can from her abilities." ²

My jaw clenched. He was right. Of course, he was right.

Comment ²

View All >



Leave the first comment for this chapter.



Vote



Fandom



Send Gift

Book Badge



