



476 Fate Devours Will

Hades 1

"Nothing has changed in the Blood Moon's trajectory. By our calculations, it still remains five weeks away."

That was the information Kael and I received in the first hour from the Lunar Observer on duty.

My hammering heart held on to its beat—about to skip—as I allowed myself one relieved breath.

Cerberus's voice wove through my thoughts, wary but calm. *"It is still early in the day. Ellen will still be resisting by now."*

I dragged a hand through my already wildly tousled hair. This would be the thousandth time since the update that I'd assaulted it. I was starting to expect strands would come off from the stress and pressure alone.

With my head pounding like a war drum and Kael by my side—having just come from an all-day assignment of his own—we were informed that Eve and Lucinda had already begun getting the kids ready for bed.

We were on our way there now.



I turned to Kael and saw his gaze was distant, brows knitted with worry carved into every line of his face. Dark circles had been forming since full-scale preparations started, but on the face of a man with blindingly bright eyes and an even brighter aura, the contrast was like night and day.

My Beta looked half dead.

Pale and miserable, but still working at his highest efficiency like our lives depended on it.

But I was certain it wasn't only the Blood Moon that haunted his mind.

It was a particular, brilliant blue-eyed laboratory specialist. She clearly occupied most of his thoughts.

He had a longing look in his eyes that was impossible to miss.

At first, I'd been flabbergasted at the twist of fate. But I was the last person to speak on the way we found mates.

So I understood. And unlike me, he'd been quick to reach for the bond—only to be rejected. Somewhat. According to what he'd confided in me.



If anyone deserved true love, it sure as hell wasn't me. It was Kael.

I'd just been too stubborn to let go of what I wanted. He needed to do the same, but take a different, less intimidating approach.

"She feels it too," I muttered quietly, snapping him out of whatever utopia he'd been imagining with Thea in his head. "Resistance is futile. Fate devours will. She'll come to see it. She'll come to see you. And everything she sees as keeping you apart will dissolve."

He looked at me, something vulnerable flickering across his exhausted features.

"You think so?"

I nodded. "I know so. You're not me, Kael. You don't have decades of sins to atone for. You don't have to fight for every inch of good against some ancient darkness eating your soul, like I did." I paused. "She'll come around. Just... don't give up."

His throat worked as he swallowed. "And if she doesn't?"

"Then fate is crueler than even I believed." I clapped a hand on his shoulder. "But I don't think



it is. Not for you."

We walked in silence for a moment, two men carrying impossible weights, finding brief solidarity in shared exhaustion and shared hope.

Then Kael spoke again, his voice quieter. "Thank you. For that."

"Don't thank me yet. Wait until you're mated and she's driving you insane."

A ghost of a smile touched his lips. "Like Eve drives you insane?"

"Exactly like that." I felt my own tired smile. "And I wouldn't change a damn thing."

We reached the children's quarters, and I heard laughter from inside—Elliot's bright giggle, Sophie's gentler one, Micah's shy chuckle. Eve's voice, warm and patient as she read them a story.

The sound was like a balm to the raw edges of my nerves.

"Come on," I said. "Let's see what chaos our children have caused today."

"Our children?" Kael raised an eyebrow.

"They're ours now. All of them." I pushed open



the door. "That's what family means."

And for the first time all day, that felt like the truest thing I'd said.

I braced myself to lie to my wife, and pretend like the sky was not falling.

Her body had weakened, and unshifted, she was pale—almost translucent in the soft light of our quarters. I fed her food with careful deliberation, bringing each spoonful to her lips while she discussed the first thing on her mind: war. The logistics, the contingencies, the refugee integration.

Always working. Always planning. Even exhausted from blood donation, she couldn't stop.

"The western quadrant needs more medical supplies," she said between bites. "The refugees arriving soon might have injuries we didn't anticipate. Malnutrition, untreated wounds, some showing signs of—"

I interrupted gently, offering another spoonful of soup. "I'll authorize additional resources tomorrow."



She took it, swallowed, then continued. "And the children—we need to establish schooling for them. They can't just sit idle for weeks. Their minds need—"

"Eve." I set the bowl down. "You need to rest."

"I'm fine."

"You're pale as a ghost and can barely lift your arm."

"I said I'm fine."

Stubborn woman.

Then suddenly—without warning—she leaned forward and kissed me.

Not a gentle peck. A full, deep kiss that tasted of soup and desperation and something fierce I couldn't name. Her arms wrapped around my neck, pulling me close, and I melted into it despite myself.

When she pulled back, she cradled my face in both hands, her turquoise eyes searching mine with an intensity that made my breath catch.

"I love you," she said softly.

My heart stuttered.

"More than I ever loved before."



The words hit me like a physical blow—warmth spreading through my chest, thawing parts of me I'd thought permanently frozen. I opened my mouth to respond, to tell her I felt the same, that she was everything—

Her face hardened.

Her turquoise eyes darkened to something dangerous.

"But if you don't tell me what you're hiding," she said, her voice dropping to something lethal as she tilted my head slightly—just enough to show she meant business, "I will snap your neck." 1

I froze.

"Eve, I don't—"

"Don't." Her grip on my face tightened. "Don't you dare lie to me right now."

"I'm not—"

"Your eye has been twitching for the last ten minutes." Her gaze was unflinching. "Your left leg won't stop tapping. You've clenched and unclenched your fists at least thirty times since you sat down. Your hair is unkempt." She leaned closer. "You think I don't notice?" 2

