

## 479 Fenrir's Balls

Hades 1

His words were still ringing in my ear as we zoomed off to the location. My pulse skittering, every single nerve and cell on fire. I was too hot and cold, too heavy and light.

Breathing took conscious effort. I could still see Sophie's confused face as I told her that I needed to go. My panic had woken Eve up, even though I had not raised my voice as the world seemed to implode.

She had felt it through the bond and was up like she had not just been violently roused from her sleep. She had been the one to assure Sophie and tuck her back into bed.

I told her what had happened and sent the memo by a few minutes past three in the morning. The clock had seemed to taunt me. But Eve, Kael and I were in the car within minutes of the call.

Outwardly, I regained my composure, but inside, the creeping, crawling dread encroaching my heart was a waking nightmare. But Eve saw through me, like I was made of glass, her hand never leaving mine. Stroking me, trying to keep



me grounded and calm.

But I could see the apprehension that she too tried to hide, in the way that sweat beaded her brow, the way her knuckles had gone white, and the way she was obsessively biting her bottom lip.

Kael sat by the chauffeur, back straight and unmoving, like moving too much would make it realer than it already was.

Behind us was a convoy of multiple cars, all at the ready for what we would meet. All armed to the teeth.

The path became narrow like I remembered, the violent brushing of the foliage against the car, a distant ruckus. We were close. Very close.

I stopped breathing. Completely. Just as we took what I knew would be the final turn before we got to the tunnels.

The path opened up finally into the flower field at night. Even now, as we didn't have time to sightsee, I could notice the colours even in the darkness. That was just how vibrant they were. Cain had kept them that way. What would this paradise be without him?



Would Sophie have to come here to leave flowers for two of her parents? Would she truly be left with no one? Would she ever smile the same? How would she look at me when I could not keep my promise? Her uncle Luci would have betrayed her.

My chest was close to bursting from the pressure, the overwhelming dread of it all.

We came to a stop.

I wouldn't be able to recall the motion if I tried. All I remember was that Eve's hand was in mine as we sprinted to the hatch in the ground.

All around us were Cain's men, already there after the memo had been sent. They all had no faces. I only recognised the person who opened the hatch for us as Freddie. When he spoke.

"Come in, Alpha," he mumbled, doing the same for Eve and Kael as we all entered. He followed after us, unlocking the second barrier as we entered the garden.

Still as serene and beautiful and breathtaking as the last time that we had been here, but the difference was that now, there was a rumble in the distance.





My gammas surrounded us, weapons at the ready, the smaller gammas shifting, hackles already raised as we waited.

The rumble grew louder. Closer.

Eve's hand tightened in mine. I could feel her preparing to shift, her wolf rising to the surface. Around us, triggers clicked as safeties were released. The air thrummed with tension, thick enough to choke on.

And then—

A massive wolf burst through the treeline.

I knew him instantly. Even in the darkness, even with my vision tunneling from panic, I would know that wolf anywhere.

Cain. 2

My heart stuttered. Relief and confusion crashed through me in equal measure as I watched him slow, three figures clinging to his back. He was limping slightly—injured, but alive. Alive.

Maera dismounted first, helping Sage down. And then—

My breath caught.

Ellen. 1



Eve's twin sister slid from Cain's back, pale and shaking but whole. Behind me, I heard Eve's sharp inhale, felt the shock ripple through our bond.

Cain shifted. The transformation was slower than usual, his movements careful as he returned to his human form. And then he looked directly at me.

And laughed.

"Fenrir's balls, you should see your face right now!" He doubled over, clutching his ribs. "I got you so good. That Darius impression? Chef's kiss. I've been practicing." 4

The world stopped.

Everyone stared.

No one moved. No one breathed.

Guns stayed raised. Claws stayed extended. But every single person was frozen, trying to process what he'd just said.

"You—" My voice came out strangled. "The call was—"

"A prank!" Cain spread his arms wide, grinning like a madman. "Come on, Luci, you know me.



Did you really think I'd let Darius catch me? I wanted to make an entrance. And bringing Ellen back? That deserves a little drama, don't you think? We gathered an three townships in the night, so we have then still coming in, they needed a grand entrance." 2

Something inside me snapped.

I crossed the distance between us in two strides and punched him square in the face. 1

The crack echoed through the garden. Cain's head snapped back, and he staggered, hand flying to his jaw.

"You bloody bastard!" The words ripped out of me, raw and ragged. "You made me think—Sophie was—I thought you were—"

I couldn't finish. Couldn't articulate the hell he'd just put me through. So I grabbed him instead, pulling him into a crushing embrace.

For a moment, Cain went rigid with shock. Then, slowly, his arms came up and wrapped around me. 7

"It's good to see you too, brother," he murmured, and I could hear the smile in his voice even as blood dripped from his split lip.





I held him tighter, my composure finally cracking. "Don't you ever do that to me again."

"No promises," he said. But his grip was just as fierce as mine. "Now are you going to let me say hello to my daughter, should I expect another punch first?"

He glanced behind me probably at Freddie.

Despite everything—the terror, the rage, the overwhelming relief—I laughed. It came out broken and half-choked, but it was real.

"She's going to be thrilled," I managed. "Right before she kills you herself for scaring her uncle."

"Looking forward to it." Cain pulled back, his grin softening into something genuine. "I missed you, Luci. Missed all of you."

Behind him, Ellen stood trembling, Maera supporting her, Eve already moving toward her then. Maera looked like she had seen a ghost, her mouth going slack. Ellen unsure where to even stand. Around us, weapons slowly lowered as Cain's men and mine began to relax.

"You have a ton of explaining to do," I growled under my breath watching more civilians come



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out of the shadows. "But for now, we gotta get these people somewhere warm and some food."

He nodded. "It's going to be a long night." 4

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