



## 480 Refugees

Eve 1

Maera held on to me, her whole body shaking but holding on to the child she still held in her arms. "It's you, it's really you," she whispered, trembling into my hair. Her scarred face was jarring, but Hades had warned me. The last thing I wanted was for her to feel ashamed.

"It's me, Maeve," I assured her.

I tried not to even glance at the person standing awkwardly behind us, twisting her hands together, her eyes boring into the ground. 6

Seeing her like this was another kind of whiplash. Nothing could have prepared me for the woman before me—older, hollow-eyed, almost unrecognizable.

The lump in my throat hardened, but I kept my wits about me.

This was no time for emotional speeches. I watched as more and more people emerged from the shadows, exhausted, terrified, clutching what few belongings they'd managed to carry.



I pulled back gently from Maera, pressing a quick kiss to the top of the child's head. Then I turned, scanning the crowd of gammas until I spotted Commander Reese.

"Commander," I called out, my voice cutting through the murmurs. She was at my side in seconds. "I need you to escort Miss Valmont to the Tower immediately. Private quarters. Medical examination by first light—full body, psychological assessment included. She's not a prisoner—but she's not to be left alone. Understood?"

"Yes, Luna." Reese's eyes flicked to Ellen with recognition, confusion crossing for only a fraction of a second before professionalism reasserted itself.

Behind me, Ellen shifted. "Eve, I—"

I turned to face her properly for the first time. Up close, the years showed even more starkly. The Ellen I remembered had been radiant, golden, untouchable. This Ellen was hollow-eyed and gaunt, her skin sallow, her hair dull. Whatever Darius had done to her had stolen more than just time.

"You'll be safe," I said quietly, forcing my voice to



remain steady. "I promise you that. But right now, I need to get these people to safety. We'll talk. Soon."

Ellen's lips trembled. She looked like she wanted to say a thousand things, beg forgiveness, explain—something. But she just nodded, wrapping her arms around herself as Commander Reese gently guided her toward one of the waiting vehicles. 1

More and more people were spilling from the tunnels now, blinking in the dim light, confused and afraid. I heard the whispers ripple through them.

"Is that Ellen Valmont?"

"The Blessed Twin—"

"I thought Alpha Darius said she was being abused—"

"Why is she here, like this?"

It wasn't judgment, only shock. I wasn't surprised they had been fed lies. He couldn't provide food or safety, but his propaganda always arrived on time.

They didn't know. Couldn't know. Whatever lies Darius had fed Silverpine about his perfect





daughter, these people believed them. My jaw tightened.

The fucker...

Gamma units were already in motion. Convoy lights cut through the fog as buses rolled in and out in timed rotations, each one tagged with an Obsidian crest and manifest sheet stamped under Hades's seal. Kael's voice crackled through the comms, confirming the first group's arrival at Safehouse Iota while Maera relayed headcounts from the tunnels below. The air smelled of fuel and damp earth, laced with the sound of engines and names being called off clipboards. It wasn't chaos—it was choreography. The kind that only Obsidian's chain of command could pull off in a single night.

"Listen up!" My voice cut through the noise like a blade. The murmurs died down. "You are all safe now. You're in Obsidian territory, under Alpha Hades Stavros's protection. These are our gammas—they will not harm you. They're here to help you."

Some of the people flinched as gammas approached, their hackles still raised from the earlier tension. But I saw the moment they registered my words, the way some of the fear



bled out of their expressions.

"There are buses waiting to take you to safe houses," I continued. "You'll have warm beds, hot food, and medical care. Follow the gammas' instructions and you will be safe. I give you my word as Luna."

A few nods. A woman clutching two children began to cry with relief. An older man straightened his shoulders and started herding his family toward the nearest gamma.

I watched them begin to move, a slow but steady stream of humanity heading toward salvation.

And then I turned and found Cain standing a few feet away, watching me with an expression I couldn't quite read.

I crossed to him in three strides and threw my arms around him.

"Welcome home," I said into his shoulder.

Cain's laugh rumbled through his chest as he hugged me back. "Ow—still sore from your mate's punch—but I'll take it." He pulled back, pouting theatrically. "You almost forgot about me. I'm wounded, Eve. Truly wounded." 4

I could feel the fugitive gazes on us, me



especially.

Despite everything, I laughed. "How could I forget the man who just gave me and my mate simultaneous heart attacks?"

"It's a gift." His grin turned genuine. "It's good to be back, Luna."

"It's good to have you back." I squeezed his hand once, then turned back to survey the scene. More buses were pulling up, gammas directing the flow of people. It was organized chaos, but it was working.

Maera appeared at my side, still holding the now sleeping child. "I can help," she said quietly. "With coordination. They're scared of the gammas, but they know me. They'll trust a familiar face."

"And I will take her in the meantime," Cain said, carrying the girl from Maera's arms tenderly. She stirred from sleep, but he rocked her gently. 1

I glanced at Hades. He was watching me, and I could feel his concern through the bond. But he nodded.

"We'll need you," he said to Maera. Then his eyes found mine. "Be careful."

I went to him, rising on my toes to press a quick





kiss to his lips. "I love you."

"I love you," he murmured against my mouth, his hand cupping my jaw for just a moment. "Come back to me."

"Always."

With Maera at my side and Kael coordinating with the gammas, I made my way back up through the underground hatch. The flower field was now illuminated by vehicle headlights, casting everything in harsh white light.

Buses lined the narrow path, engines rumbling. Gammas stood at attention, guiding the refugees with surprising gentleness. I watched as an older gamma helped a limping man onto a bus. Watched as another crouched down to speak softly to a frightened child.

This was what we were fighting for.

Not just territory or power or vengeance.

This.

These people—scared and scarred and still alive, still choosing to hope.

I climbed onto the first bus, standing at the front as it filled. Frightened faces looked up at me—all



werewolves. All of them, refugees from Silverpine's tyranny.

"We are not your foes. You are safe," I said clearly. "Some of you may know me as Ellen Valmont, but that was yet another lie by Silverpine's monarchy. I'm the Luna of Obsidian Pack, Eve Stravos and I was born in Silverpine just like you. I know what it's like to live under Darius Valmont's rule. I know what it's like to be afraid."

The gasps that rippled through the bus were as thunderous as I had expected. If I hadn't lived it, I would have found it just as outlandish.

But what they believed didn't matter now. Our first priority was their safety and comfort.

A few heads lifted. A woman in the back straightened.

"But you're not in Silverpine anymore," I continued. "You're free. And we're going to keep you that way. So rest. Eat. Heal. And when you're ready—if you want to fight back—we'll teach you how."

Silence. Then, from somewhere in the middle of the bus, a man's voice: "Thank you, Luna."





Others echoed him. Quiet murmurs of gratitude, of disbelief, of fragile hope.

I nodded once and stepped off the bus.

I expected more doubt and friction from the fugitives, people fighting back and protesting that they were not sure if we were to be trusted. Questions and accusations and mildly concealed gossip about me being a traitor to Silverpine. In times and situations like this, with tensions running high, multitudes of people squashed together there would always be some sort of set back. People were unpredictable, especially scared people.

And just to boot, they were in a place where in a normal situation referred to as enemy territory. But this was nowhere near an ideal situation and I could only assume that fear and suffering within where they called their pack under tyrannical rules had made them more receptive to a place they would have never willingly stepped into before.

And our alliance and coordination with familiar faces such as the Eclipse rebellion had put whatever other doubt they might have had to rest.

This was as good as it could get.



Each of the quadrant safe houses had been fractioned to allow only minimal contact between werewolves and lycans. The very last thing we needed was for fights to break out in a place that should be a safe haven during the war.

More buses were pulling in, ready for more waves of people.

There were five more to fill.

It was going to be a very long day. 1

But as I watched the first bus pull away, Maera waving from the window, I felt something settle in my chest.

We were making a difference.

One refugee at a time.

I raised my head. From the horizon, pink had begun to spread, a kaleidoscope of orange retreating the blues. The first light had arrived.

