

## 534 It Ends With You

*Dawnstrike* 1

"She should be dead," The delta healing the Luna croaked, tears slipping free. "Her body has been through so much trauma, any other person would have died ten times over," She continued her spiel, her brows crinkled as she concentrated. "But her soul is tethered tight to the goddess knows what. She is a tank. But she has gone through so much. Her body will give in if this goes on."

Gallinti could tell that after all the hours of healing and having to pull Eve again and again from the brink, it was getting to her. There was an edge of panic in her voice and fragile hope as the battle carried on just outside the tent.

Darius who had pronounced himself as Malrik, though Gallinti was not sure just how much he wanted to believe from the tyrannical bastard, had regrouped his forces and the battle had commenced minutes after the light of the fiery woman had gone out.

Even with the deltas from the other divisions now concentrated here, Gallinti's optimism was

dwindling and it would not be long until it would snuffed out like the bright, burning light of the woman who had come to save them.

The Luna was still as the deltas worked their magic on her body. Gallinti could see bones jutting out from her wolf form at odd angles, her legs having needed to be righted after the fall, and still—from what the deltas had checked—her pups remained protected.

According to them, if the pups had been bigger it would have been a different issue altogether, but their size had ensured that Eve was able to keep them cushioned.

Small mercies in a sea of horror.

Gallinti turned away from the makeshift medical station, his jaw tight, and surveyed what remained of his forces. Exhaustion lined every face. Blood soaked through bandages that should have been changed hours ago but couldn't be, not with supplies running this low. Wolves who should have been resting were being dragged back to the front lines because there was no one else left to hold them.

They were losing ground.

Slowly. Inevitably. Despite everything they'd

fought for, despite the sacrifices already made, they were losing, and even if they won it would be a pyrrhic victory. Malrik was alive and well with the Chalyx backing him. Even when obviously afraid and mortally injured, his army would rise at this command.

**Obsidian did not have that, injured gammas could not simply ignore the pain and force their body into motion. It was not possible.**

**Even the ones still scorched but still had arms enough to drag themselves would move to attack, bite an ankle or two.**

**At the other side of the medic tent, the charred figure had been laid there, her chest still moving just half an inch at a time. It made no sense then again, prime feral, mutant plants and awakened vampires, nothing in this war had made any sense to begin with so why would they decide to follow the laws of logic now.**

**The delta with her, tried and failed to make any progress even as she still breathed.**

**A commotion outside the tent made him turn as Kael ran in again to check on Eve, Gallinti supposed.**

**He entered panting, looking between the two**

unconscious figures in the tent. "How the hell did she get here," He whispered, facing the blackened form now.

Gallinti glanced at the dying figure. "Do you know her?"

Kael pressed his comm, "We are about to find out if I am right,"

He spoke when the connection was made, blood dripping down his brow. "Cain, is Ellem—"

He did not get to complete his question, his brow snapping up into his hairline as Gallinti could hear Cain's voice even from the distance he stood. He was being loud, panicking, Gallinti suspected.

"What do you mean she just vanished?" Kael demanded.

He let Cain speak before he let out a sigh and swallowed, running his hand over his face. "What was her condition before—no listen—I said fucking listen—I SAID FUCKING LISTEN TO ME!" He growled. "She was holding back the bloodmoon's radiation, that was the plan, what happened to her, Cain. What condition was she in?"

A loaded pause.

Gallinto caught the muffled reply and Kael's eyes went wide. "What the hell do you mean that Ellen absorbed the bloodmoon's radiation?"

Gallinti straightened instantly, his eyes darting to the incinerated body.

When Cain was done speaking, he too looked at the body. "It looks like we found her or more so Ellen found us. She is Dawnstrike in bad—shape." He gulped, pity filtering into his expression.

The silence on the other end was deafening.

Then Cain's voice came through, raw and broken. "Is she alive?"

Gallinti heard it fully now.

Kael looked at the charred figure, at the barely perceptible rise and fall of what remained of her chest. "Barely."

"I'm coming—"

"No." Kael's voice was hard. "You stay at Aegis with the civvies. That's an order. We don't know if—"

The connection cut.

Kael stared at the comm for a moment, then let out a string of curses. "Fuck. He's going to—" He shook his head, then looked at Gallinti. "Doesn't matter. He can't get here fast enough anyway."

Gallinti moved closer to the blackened form. No skin. Barely any flesh. Just charred bone and the impossible reality of a heart still beating somewhere inside that ruined chest. "The fiery woman. Ellen Valmont."

"She burned herself alive to save us." Kael's voice was hollow.

A delta approached, hands already glowing with healing magic. She stopped when she saw the damage. Her face went pale. "I don't—where do I even—" Her voice cracked. "There's nothing left to heal." 7

Outside, the battle continued. Screams. Claws tearing through flesh. Ferals snarling. The ground shook with Prime Feral footfalls.

Then something shifted. 2

Kael's head snapped up. His hand went to his comm. Static. Voices flooding in, overlapping, panicked.

"—forces just stopped—"

"—Prime Feral shifted mid-attack—"

"—running everywhere, no formation—"

"—what's happening, what do we—"

Kael looked at Gallinti. "The horn. Hades must have gotten the horn."

At that exact moment, Eve stirred.

Just her leg. A twitch. But the deltas saw it and surged forward.

"Luna, no—don't move—"

Eve shifted.

Bones ground. Popped. Realigned from wolf to human with sounds that made Gallinti's stomach turn. When it finished, Eve lay there—blood-soaked, bones jutting out beneath her skin at angles that weren't right—and her eyes opened.

Clear. Aware. Furious.

"No—Luna, you can't—your body—" The delta was nearly sobbing.

Eve pushed herself up.

Her arms shook. Threatened to collapse. Blood poured from reopened wounds across her torso,

down her sides, pooling on the ground beneath her. But she got her legs underneath her. Stood.

"Someone get her down! She's going to—"

"Help me." Eve's voice was barely audible, thick with pain. But the command in it was absolute. Her expression was carved in ice, her jaw tight like she bit on a bullet. There was a cold certainty in her unstable movement. Her soul was locked in on a target even if her body was still too weak to catch up.

Kael and Gallinti moved. Each took an arm over their shoulders, supporting most of her weight. Her legs threatened to give out with every step. She didn't thank them. Just pointed toward the tent entrance with one trembling hand.

"Take me to him."

Outside, the battlefield had shattered.

A feral crashed past them, foam dripping from its jaws, eyes wild and unfocused. It didn't attack. Just ran. Another followed, then three more. A Prime Feral bellowed somewhere to the left—the sound cutting off mid-roar as it shifted back to human and collapsed, sobbing. Silverpine wolves scattered in every direction. Some still fighting. Some running. Some just

standing there, staring at their hands like they'd never seen them before.

No coordination. No formation. Just panic.

And in the center of it all, surrounded by the bodies of wolves who'd burned to protect him, Malik was aging.

His face collapsed inward. Skin hung loose over shrinking bones. His hair—completely white now—grew thin and wispy. His hands gnarled, fingers curling into claws as joints swelled with arthritis that was catching up decades at a time.

He screamed.

High-pitched. Terrified. The sound of a man watching two centuries collapse into seconds.  
"James! Come here. They got the horn from Lyra. The bitch— Felicia, we need to get to the city— WE CAN'T LET HIM GET IT!" He yelled, clawing at the ground, trying to rise. "WE can get to Silverpine, we have to be fast. WE HAVE TO GO NOW!"

James and Felicia stood near him. Saw what was happening. Looked at each other.

Shifted.

Ran. Didn't look back.

Malrik saw them go. "NO, YOU HAVE TO TAKE ME WITH YOU. I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN GET IT BACK. IT ONLY ANSWERS TO ME!" His voice cracked, failed, came out as a wheeze. "You can—leave me here—with them. I will—we will all be doomed. I need my horn. Call Orion, get the other, Thaddeus—What was her name—Rielle? Rielle!" He stumbled over his words, growing more and more desperate as each moment went

He was alone.

Kael and Gallinti dragged Eve forward. Her feet barely touched the ground. Her weight sagged more with every step. But she kept her eyes locked on Malrik.

When they reached him, she pushed away from their support and dropped to her knees beside his withered form.

Malrik's eyes—cloudy, filmed over—found her face. Recognition flickered. Then hope.

"Eve." His voice was a rasp, barely audible. One shaking hand reached for her. "Eve, please—help me—you have to—I can still—we can still—"

Dark stains spread across the front of his pants. The smell of urine mixed with copper and smoke. He didn't notice. Just kept reaching,

fingers scrabbling weakly at her arm.

"Please—I'm begging—I don't want to—I can't—please—" His voice had gone shaky and faint with the aging he was succumbing to. The same one he had avoided, averted for centuries. Now, it was fully upon him, ripping through the stolen youth and pilfered skin he had clad himself within.

Eve looked down at him.

The monster who'd stolen her mother. Enslaved her sister. Marked hundreds of wolves and used them like tools. Tried to kill her unborn children.

She felt nothing.

No satisfaction. No triumph. Just empty, cold exhaustion.

She drove her hand into his chest. 3

Ribs cracked under her knuckles. Skin tore like wet paper, peeling back in ragged strips. Her fingers punched through muscle—stringy, thin, barely there—and the bones of his ribcage splintered as she forced her way deeper. Blood welled up, hot and sticky, coating her hand to the wrist.

Malrik's scream cut off. Choked. His body went

rigid.

Eve's fingers closed around his heart.

It beat against her palm. Fast. Frantic. Fluttering like a trapped bird trying to escape. She could feel every desperate contraction, every failed attempt to keep this ancient body alive just a few seconds longer.

She leaned close. Her lips almost touched his ear.

"It ends here, Malrik. With you." 1

She squeezed.

The heart ruptured. Burst between her fingers like overripe fruit, hot blood flooding her palm. Malrik's mouth opened wide—silent scream, no air left to give it sound—and his eyes went wide with the terrible understanding that this was it. This was the end he'd spent two centuries running from.

The light went out.

Eve pulled her hand free. Malrik's blood dripped from her fingers, thick and dark. His body collapsed, folding in on itself like a puppet with cut strings. 4