Hand of God

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King of Tartarus

“Kill him!” “Break his bones!” “Show him who runs this place!” Chaos erupted inside Tartarus, the most dangerous prison in Asheville. A concrete graveyard built to contain the worst monsters humanity had ever produced. Today, a new one had arrived. A hulking inmate stood in the center of the yard, veins bulging beneath tattooed skin. His prison uniform was already soaked in blood. “RAAAH!” he roared, lifting a battered inmate above his head before hurling him across the corridor. The man crashed violently against the steel bars of Cell 001 and crumpled to the floor. “I’m the new King of Tartarus!” His name was Giovani Moretti. Convicted of massacring over three hundred people. Sentenced to one thousand years without parole. He had arrived five hours ago. Fourteen inmates were already in the infirmary. The rest watched in silence. Even in a prison filled with murderers, traffickers, war criminals, and psychopaths... Giovani was something else. “Who else wants to challenge me?!” he bellowed, kicking over a metal bench. It skidded across the floor and slammed against Cell 001’s door. The corridor fell quiet. Then... The steel door of Cell 001 clicked. It opened slowly. A young man stepped out. Early twenties. Tall. Lean. Messy black hair falling over tired steel-blue eyes. He looked like someone who had just been dragged from a dream he wasn’t ready to leave. He yawned. This was Kade Hollow. Inmate 001. He stretched slightly, rolling his shoulders. “Hey, bulldog,” Kade said calmly. “I’m trying to take a nap.” The entire block froze. Giovani’s smile vanished. “Kid... are you talking to me?” Kade yawned and rubbed his eyes. “Who else has been barking? Keep it down before I pull out your throat.” Several inmates instinctively stepped back. Not because of Giovani. Because of Kade. Giovani’s jaw tightened. “You’ve got a death wish.” He had crushed fourteen men without effort. No one had even looked him in the eye. And this brat dared insult him? “I’ll grant it.” He lunged. The concrete cracked beneath his step as he drove a full-force punch toward Kade’s head. Bam. The punch stopped. Giovani blinked. Kade had raised one hand. One finger. That single finger pressed against Giovani’s fist and halted it completely. Giovani’s eyes widened. He pushed harder. The finger didn’t move. “You could’ve behaved like a good dog,” Kade said lightly. “But you chose not to.” He removed his finger from Giovani’s knuckles and casually pointed at his forehead. “I’ll fix that. So you don’t go biting people around.” He flicked his finger. Boom. A shockwave tore through the corridor. Giovani’s head detonated instantly, a violent burst of force ripping through the air. Blood mist and wind blasted outward, rattling the cell bars. The body collapsed. Silence swallowed Tartarus. Kade glanced around, eyes half-closed again. “Finally,” he muttered. “Now I can sleep.” The inmates stood frozen. Kade’s gaze sharpened slightly. He pointed at one of them. “You. Clean this up.” Then he looked at the rest. “Back to your cells. I’m taking a nap. I don’t want to hear a single sound.” “Yes, Master Kade!” they all shouted in unison Tartarus had been lawless long before Kade Hollow stepped inside its walls. From the day it was built, it was nothing more than a cage for monsters too dangerous for ordinary prisons. Murderers. Cartel

leaders. War criminals. Human traffickers. Men whose names had once dominated headlines before they vanished behind concrete and steel. Even the police department had lost control over it years ago. Guards didn't patrol the inner blocks alone. Sirens and lockdown alarms were daily occurrences. Blood on the floor was routine. Until Kade arrived. He was only Sixteen when he entered Tartarus. Within three years, the riots stopped. Within five, gang leaders bowed. Within eight... Tartarus had a king. Kade didn't rule with speeches or alliances. He ruled with overwhelming force and absolute precision. Men twice his size had tested him. Some left the infirmary. Others left in body bags. But brute strength wasn't the only reason the prison feared him. Kade healed. Broken ribs. Dislocated shoulders. Internal bleeding the prison doctors overlooked. He treated them all with techniques no one understood. His hands could cripple... and they could restore. He was nicknamed The Hand of God. The inmates feared him. They respected him. And strangely... They trusted him. Even the guards moved differently around Cell 001. Even the Warden addressed him carefully. Without Kade Hollow, Tartarus would have devoured itself years ago. The steel corridor grew quiet as Kade stepped toward his cell. He rolled his shoulder slightly, as if irritated the fight had interrupted his rest. Just as he reached the door— "Mr. Hollow." Kade stopped. He turned slowly. Standing at the end of the corridor was a man in his early fifties, posture straight despite the exhaustion in his eyes. Two officers stood stiffly behind him. Warden Jeffrey Sky. The most powerful authority inside Tartarus. "I need a minute with you," Jeffrey said, voice unusually polite. Kade frowned faintly. "Whatever you have to say can wait," he replied calmly. "I haven't finished my nap." He pushed the cell door open. Then... A heavy sound echoed through the corridor. Thud. Kade paused. He turned back. Jeffrey Sky was on his knees. The two officers behind him froze in shock. Even some of the inmates couldn't believe their eyes. "Please..." the Warden said, lowering his head. "My daughter has been diagnosed with a rare neurological disorder. Seizures. Organ failure. No hospital in Asheville can figure out what's wrong." His voice trembled, but he forced himself to continue. "I know what they say about you. I've seen it myself. You've saved men who were already declared dead. If there's anyone who can save her..." He clenched his fists against the concrete. "It's you. The Hand of God" Silence filled the hallway. The inmates watching from their cells didn't dare breathe. The most powerful man in Tartarus was kneeling. Kade's eyes hardened slightly. "Why," he asked quietly, "should I help you... after everything you've done?" Jeffrey's shoulders stiffened.