



118 Cursed

Eve 1

"It was Eve!" I screamed, tearing myself away from him. "She did this to me!" Bile burned the back of my throat, tears prickling my eyes as I prepared for the horrible things I was going to say... against myself.

I wrapped my arms around myself, fighting the chill of self-hatred. "She cursed me—she cursed us all!"

Hades stilled, his gaze sharpening with predatory interest as I broke. "What did you say?" he demanded, his voice low, dangerous.

I sucked in a shuddering breath, tears prickling my eyes as I forced myself to continue, every word slashing deeper into my own heart. "She cursed me right before she died—right before they executed her. She screamed it for all to hear. They thought she was mad, but she wasn't. She was vindictive." I lifted my gaze to his, my expression trembling and hollow. "And the curse took root. Everything went to hell after that."

Hades' stare bore into me, searching for cracks in my story. I pressed on, desperation clawing at



me as I spun the web tighter.

"After she died, the pack fell apart. At first, no one wanted to believe it was because of her. But I knew. I felt it." My voice broke, my hands trembling as I gripped my arms tighter. "The threat of war grew worse. Your pack, the Obsidian Pack started tearing into us, pressuring us with every passing month. We couldn't fight back. We couldn't!"

Hades tilted his head, his suspicion laced with a flicker of intrigue. "Why not?"

"The economy crumbled," I whispered. "Our trade routes failed, and our ambassadors got greedy. There was so much corruption. You saw the slums. It was like the pack itself turned its back on itself. The curse was everywhere, like rot spreading through everything we touched."

My voice shook as I pushed through the memories I was twisting into a believable lie. "And me..." I laughed bitterly, the sound hollow. "I wasn't spared either. I lost everything. The man I loved—he was torn away from me. Because of her. I was forced to marry you." I spat the last words like they tasted of ash, though my eyes betrayed the grief I couldn't fully fake. "To the king of the very pack destroying mine. It's the



curse, Hades. The curse she left behind—and I've carried it with me ever since." 2

A silence as heavy as stone fell between us. Hades watched me, his dark eyes glinting with thought, his expression unreadable. "So what you're saying," he began slowly, his voice smooth and dangerous, "is that you believe you brought the curse with you... to me."

I froze, my heart skipping a beat. This was the edge of the cliff, the moment where the lie could shatter or solidify.

"You don't know what you're doing to me," I echoed his words back to him. "You said it when the black veins twisted through your body and turned you into something wrong. Something cursed."

I swallowed hard, lowering my gaze as if in shame. "Yes," I whispered, my voice barely audible. "So I... I think I did. I think I brought it to you. I didn't mean to. But every step I take seems to leave ruin behind. I don't know how to stop it."

Hades moved then, sudden and swift, and I flinched as his fingers caught my chin, forcing me to look up into his searing gaze. His eyes burned with fury, but deeper than that,



something darker—something almost vulnerable.

"You think you did this to me," he said, his tone a razor's edge. "You think your curse touched me?"

Tears welled in my eyes as I nodded, my voice trembling. "You were fine before I came. Weren't you? Before me, you were strong, untouchable. But now..." My throat tightened as I thought of his violent transformations, the black veins spreading like cracks across him. "Now you're suffering. You're breaking, just like everything else around me. Just like I did. It's her. It's the curse she left behind."

Hades stared at me, his expression a storm of rage and uncertainty. His fingers loosened on my chin, sliding to the side of my face, the touch as infuriatingly tender as it was possessive.

"Is that what you think?" he whispered, his voice a low growl. "That you've ruined me?"

I swallowed thickly, tears finally spilling down my cheeks. "I don't want to believe it. But it's the only thing that makes sense. I thought I could run from her, from what she did to me. But curses don't die with the dead, Hades. They cling to the living."

His thumb brushed away a tear, his touch almost



gentle, and for a moment, I thought I saw the cracks in him. The beast who had tormented me now looked at me with something raw, something I didn't want to name.

"You thought you were the one hurting me?" He asked.

I nodded feebly.

Hades stared at me for what felt like an eternity, his dark gaze unrelenting, as though he were peeling back every layer of my soul to find the truth. Then, abruptly, he laughed—a deep, sharp sound that sent shivers crawling over my skin.

"That," he said, his voice dripping with amusement, "is ridiculous, Red." 1

My heart stuttered, and my breath caught as I watched him. He leaned in closer, his hands sliding from my face to my jaw, his grip deceptively soft as his eyes glittered with a mix of amusement and condescension.

"You truly believe that?" he continued, his lips curling into a smirk. "You, bringing ruin to me? You, cursing me? You're so far in over your head, my darling." Hades' thumb lingered on my cheek, his touch disarmingly gentle despite the sharpness of his words. "You're so far in over



your head, my darling," he murmured, shaking his head with mock disbelief. "You truly think this curse nonsense holds weight?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but he cut me off with a chuckle—soft, almost teasing—as if the very idea amused him to no end. "You?" he repeated, his voice dipping into something far smoother, almost coaxing. "The storm that brought me to my knees?" He leaned closer, his lips hovering just inches from mine, his dark gaze still locked onto me. "Darling, I've fought wars, killed kings, and tamed beasts far worse than curses whispered by dead girls."

My lips trembled, but before I could say anything, he brushed a stray tear from my cheek with his knuckle, the motion careful, as if afraid I might break. "Red, listen to me," he said softly, his voice losing that edge of mockery, replaced by something quieter. Something almost sympathetic. "I don't know what twisted stories you've convinced yourself of, but this... this curse you're carrying like a cross? It's not real."

"You don't understand," I whispered, forcing my voice to break, hoping he would hear the rawness as sincerity. "This is why I didn't tell you. This is why I couldn't tell you. You think I'm



crazy—"

"You're not crazy," Hades interrupted, his voice gentle now, a stark contrast to the storm that had roared in him just moments ago. His grip on my jaw softened, his thumb tracing an idle path along my skin as though soothing me. "You're tired. You're hurting. And you're too damn stubborn to let anyone shoulder it for you."

His words struck somewhere deep, where my lies blended too easily with truths I didn't want to confront. I pulled away slightly, wrapping my arms around myself again as I looked at him, frustration etched across my features.

"You do think I'm crazy," I muttered, my voice trembling with effort. "You're just humoring me. You think I'm clinging to ghosts, but you don't know what I've seen. What I've lived."

Hades arched an eyebrow, clearly entertained, but he didn't interrupt me this time. "I saw what happened after she died," I pushed on, my voice rising. "I saw everything collapse—everything. And you think it's a coincidence? That war came? That ruin followed? You weren't there, Hades." I jabbed a finger at his chest, my anger fueled by desperation. "You didn't watch it unravel piece by piece while everyone you loved turned on



you. You didn't lose everything because of her."

For a moment, I thought I saw something flicker in his eyes—a faint softening, as if my words stirred something in him he hadn't expected.

"I know what curses look like," I said, quieter now, fighting to hold my ground. "I've lived with one. And I don't care if you believe me. It's real."

Hades exhaled a slow breath, studying me as though he were staring at a riddle he couldn't solve. Then, to my surprise, he smiled—not his usual sharp, mocking smirk, but something softer. Almost... fond. His dimples peeked through my like mischievous little boys.

"You really are something else, Red," he murmured. "All fire and fury, even when you're drowning."

"I'm not drowning," I shot back quickly, though the crack in my voice betrayed me.

He tilted his head, his gaze never leaving mine.

"Aren't you?"

I opened my mouth to argue again, but his hands found my shoulders, his touch grounding me despite myself. "You're right about one thing," he said, his voice low, steady. "I wasn't there. I



didn't see what you saw. And maybe you're right —maybe there's more to this than I understand. But curses or not..." He leaned in slightly, his eyes dark and unrelenting, "I don't believe you bring ruin. And you don't have to carry it alone." 1

I blinked up at him, startled by the sudden softness in his tone, by the way his words seemed to slip through my carefully constructed walls like cracks in a dam. No. Don't let him get to you.

"You don't understand," I whispered again, shaking my head. "I do bring ruin. And if you can't see that, then you're the one fooling yourself."

Hades' thumb brushed my jaw one last time before he pulled back slightly, his expression unreadable. "And if I'm wrong?" he asked softly, almost as if testing me.

I swallowed hard, the weight of my lie pressing down on me like stone. "Then you'll burn like everyone else."

He stilled, watching me closely. Then, slowly, his lips curled into a faint, wry smile. "Oh, Red," he murmured, his head coming down, his nose brushing against mine. "I burn for you already." 4



I blinked, a blush crawling up my neck, the unexpected intimacy throwing me off balance. My breath hitched, the heat of his words brushing over my skin like a match striking against kindling.

"You—" I began, but my voice faltered, betraying me.

Hades tilted his head, his lips curling into a wicked, knowing smirk as though he could feel the effect his words had on me. "Caught you off guard, did I?" he murmured, his voice dropping to that low, dangerous rumble that made my pulse race. "Don't look so shocked, darling. You claim to bring ruin, but all you're doing is igniting me." 1

I shoved at his chest instinctively, trying to put distance between us. "Stop it," I muttered, the heat in my face only intensifying as I glared up at him. "You're just trying to distract me."

"And it's working," he said smoothly, his dimples making another appearance—mischief and darkness personified.

I clenched my jaw, hating the way his words both infuriated and unsteadied me. "You're impossible," I grumbled, turning my face away.



"You think this is a joke, but it's not. I'm trying to warn you—"

"To warn me?" he interrupted, amusement lacing his tone. "Red, you've spent all this time convincing yourself you're cursed, and now you think you're my savior?" He leaned in again, his lips close to my ear, his voice a dark whisper.

"Tell me, darling—if you're as dangerous as you claim, why do I want to do anything other than run from you?"

My heart lurched. "Eve is---"

"Is in the hell she deserves to be." 1

His words hit me like a blow to the chest. In the hell she deserves to be.

For a moment, the world tilted, and the breath I'd been holding turned jagged in my lungs. It was like every carefully placed brick of my facade cracked and splintered under the weight of his words. He didn't know. He couldn't know. And yet, it felt as though he'd reached inside me and torn something raw and bleeding straight to the surface.

"I..." My voice faltered, breaking in a way I couldn't control.



Hades stilled, his dark gaze sharpening as he studied me, sensing the shift even if he couldn't name it. "What's wrong, Red? Don't tell me you pity her." His tone was mocking, light with amusement, but there was an edge beneath it, a warning not to tread too close.

I clenched my fists at my sides, forcing myself to breathe through the storm raging inside me. Pity her? If only he knew. If only he understood that the girl he damned so easily was standing right in front of him, wearing the face of someone else. That I was both the villain and the victim of this story, and every lie I spun was a noose tightening around my neck. 1

"I don't pity her," I said hoarsely, my voice trembling. "I hate her. I hate everything she did to me."

The words tasted like ash, bitter and sharp on my tongue, because they were meant for me. *I hate you, Eve.*


Hades' gaze hardened slightly. He tilted his head slightly, the amusement fading, replaced by something more calculating. "Hate is good," he murmured, his voice dangerously soft. "Hate will keep you alive. But don't let it consume you, Red. She's gone. Dead. And whatever curse you think



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she left behind—" He stepped closer, his presence suffocating, his hand reaching up to brush my cheek again. "—you are stronger than her ghost."

His touch burned through me, a cruel juxtaposition of tenderness and finality. Stronger than her ghost? I was the ghost. I was the curse. And now here he was, soothing the wounds I'd torn open, not knowing that the blade was still inside me. 

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