



## 133 Mental Breakdown

### Hades 1

I stared at her, stunned into silence.

A onesie.

Ellen was gripping a damn onesie like it was the only thing tethering her to some semblance of a convoluted mix of both pain and safety. I was used to having her at loggerheads with my that I was coming clueless as to what to do in this situation. I did not torture or mock her so I could not help her by simply stopping. I did not know fully what triggered her and I was at odds on what to do not. 1

Her sobs shook through me, violent and raw. She wasn't just crying—she was breaking apart in my arms, and I had no idea how to stop it.

Cerberus stilled beneath my skin, watching, waiting. Even he didn't know how to handle this.

I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. I couldn't form the words, couldn't move.

I had faced enemies with guns at my head, torn through men with nothing but claws and rage. But this—this—left me paralyzed.



All I could do was hold her tighter, anchoring myself with the weight of her against me.

"Promise me, Hades."

Her words rattled around my head, louder than my pulse, louder than the storm of thoughts swirling in my mind.

I should've asked why. I should've pushed. But the way she looked at me... like I was inches away from shattering her completely—

I couldn't.

I brushed my thumb against her cheek, wiping away the tears that wouldn't stop falling.

"I promise," I said, my voice barely louder than a whisper.

Her fingers tightened in the fabric of my shirt, and I felt her breath hitch against my neck.

"I swear it, Red," I murmured, pressing my forehead to hers. "I won't take it off. I won't leave you. I--I won't---betray you." 3

She let out a soft, broken sound—a mixture of relief and exhaustion. Her body sagged in my arms, the fight draining out of her.

I barely caught her as she slipped into

unconsciousness.

"Red?"

I cupped her face, panic slamming into me like a hammer. Her breathing was shallow, but steady.

Still, it wasn't enough to calm the fire burning beneath my skin.

Cerberus growled low, rippling through me. I could feel his rage rising, a dark undercurrent simmering just beneath the surface.

Who had done this to her?

I wasn't letting it go.

Not this time.

Hurried footsteps tore me out of my thoughts. Kael stormed in first, the physician close behind. Two guards trailed after them, their gazes flicking to Jules' crumpled body against the far wall.

"She's unconscious," I said, keeping my focus on Ellen as I gently laid her on the bed. My hands lingered on her, unwilling to pull away.

The physician rushed to her side, already muttering under his breath as she checked her pulse.



"Find out what the hell happened," I growled without looking up. "And get her out of here."

The guards hesitated for half a second before moving toward Jules. One of them crouched, feeling for a pulse.

"She's still alive," he muttered.

She wouldn't be for long if I didn't get answers.

Kael shifted closer, his voice low. "You sure you want them taking her?"

I glanced at Jules, the flash of guilt on her face still burned into my mind. She knew something. 1

But Ellen came first.

"Lock her up. I'll deal with her later."

Kael nodded and motioned to the guards. They hauled Jules to her feet, dragging her out of the room.

I finally exhaled, dropping onto the edge of the bed, my gaze never leaving Ellen's face.

I brushed damp strands of hair from her forehead, leaning closer until I could feel the faint warmth of her breath against my lips.

"I swear it, Red," I whispered again, even though she couldn't hear me.



I wasn't going anywhere.

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**Eve**

**The bed was cold.**

**My breath caught, and I jolted upright, my fingers clenching at the sheets beneath me. My heart thundered in my chest as my eyes darted around the room.**

**Darkness. Just darkness.**

**"Hades?" My voice wavered, cracking in the oppressive quiet.**

**No answer.**

**Panic clawed its way up my throat, tight and unrelenting. My pulse thudded loud in my ears, drowning out rational thought.**

**I wasn't alone.**

**I felt it—something. Someone.**

**The faintest glint of light caught my attention, pulling my gaze to the corner of the room.**

**Eyes.**

**They stared back at me, unblinking and sharp.**

**My breath hitched. My chest tightened. Fear**



**gripping me like iron chains. I tried to move, but my limbs felt like lead, my body frozen in place.**

**The figure shifted slightly, the sound so subtle I almost missed it.**

**"Who's there?" My voice cracked, trembling as I pressed myself back against the headboard.**

**The eyes stayed steady, unflinching.**

**A sound broke the silence—a deep, familiar rumble.**

**"It's me, Red."**

**My breath caught, the panic wavering just for a moment.**

**"Hades?"**

**The figure stepped closer, the soft glow from a distant lamp brushing over his face. Relief swept through me like a crashing wave.**

**He was there.**

**I didn't realize I'd been holding my breath until it rushed out of me in a shuddering exhale.**

**"You scared me," I whispered, my voice barely audible.**

**"I didn't mean to." His voice was low, steady,**

calming. "I didn't want to wake you."

My hands unclenched from the sheets as the tension began to ebb, replaced by exhaustion.

He moved closer, sitting on the edge of the bed.

His eyes never left mine, a softness in them I didn't know how to handle.

"You're safe," he said, his voice firm, like he was willing the words into existence.

I nodded, even though the lingering fear still clung to me. "What happen?" 1

A heavy pause.

Ice filled my veins. That was not a good sign.

"Hades..."

"You suffered from mental breakdown." He informed me, his voice suddenly monotone.

I shook my head. "That...can't be...true."

"It's true." He stalked closer. "And now I want to know why?" 4