



134 Eve Is Dead

Eve **1**

I swallowed, my hoarse throat working painfully. Had I cried that hard? A mental breakdown?

"I don't know what you are talking about, Hades," I muttered.

My stomach flipped when he replied with a frustrated growl. Then silence.

I held my breath as I waited for him to speak in the darkness again.

"I just want to help, Red." The softness of his voice caught me unawares. "Just tell me. I can't stand not knowing what could have sent you into such a spiral."

I was stunned into silence by his words. The quiet was wrought with tension so tangible that I could feel its uneasy buzz along my skin. I braced myself.

"Hades..."

"No lies, Red," he warned, but his voice was void of its usual harshness. "I want the truth."

Another silence held us captive in the darkness



as I battled with two choices: to continue to lie or tell the truth, the doctored one.

"It was my sister," I finally blurted. "The onesie brought back some memories that I, for the life of me, have been trying to suppress. I guess... I guess," tears were already gathering in my eyes, "I guess it made my reality hit harder than it had before. I see just how far we have come from being sisters because now we..." I sniffled, "we are... What are we, Hades?"

Could I call her my enemy? Because according to the accounts, 'Eve' was dead. Could my 'dead' sister be called my enemy?

"You are here, and she is not. You are alive, and Eve Valmont is dead." 1

I tried not to flinch at the way he spat my name, but I flinched anyway.

"She is dead," I murmured, feeling drained and fractured. These mind games that I was playing with not only Hades but myself would have dire consequences. I felt it in my bones. In more ways than one, I was slipping. I was losing myself to whatever lies I told. If this went on, Eve would indeed die, and when that happened, who would I become? 3

"The mental breakdown was triggered by the onesie," he said.

"Yes... and I just found it in the wardrobe. I did not get it for myself—"

"I got it for you," he revealed. "I was not aware of the effects that it would have on you. It was the way you held on to it in the boutique. I thought that you wanted it." 1

"But that I was too embarrassed to let you know that I wanted one for myself." I took the words out of his mouth.

Silence.

"Shit!" he snapped, jolting me. "If I had known..."

"No, no," I quickly said. My fingers found his hand in the dark, clutching it tightly as if the contact could anchor me to reality. "No, Hades. This isn't your fault."

His grip on my hand tightened in return, but I could feel the tension rippling off him like a storm barely restrained.

"I should have seen it, Red. I should have known."

I shook my head, even though I knew he couldn't see me.



"How could you? I barely understand it myself."

The weight of his stare pressed against me, even in the absence of light.

"I should have understood."

The vulnerability in his voice cracked something inside me. I had tried so hard to hide the fractures, to keep him from seeing just how fragile I actually was. But now the pieces lay scattered between us, too obvious to ignore.

My defiance and stubbornness were a front. The girl that broke down and cried from the sight of a piece of clothing was who I actually was. It was a fact that I tried to shove away because it was easier to pretend to be strong than to actually be.

Maybe that was why I gravitated towards Hades. The tragedies of my life had become a torrent that threatened to drown me, but Hades was an inferno—one that I craved because anything was better than the cold. Anything was better than drowning in sorrow. Hades was... chaos, but he was warm in a way that stung and soothed.

His fire didn't burn me the way I feared it would. If anything, it kept the shadows at bay, even if only for a fleeting moment.



I let out a shaky breath, realizing I had been holding it for too long. My fingers curled tighter around his, and for once, I allowed myself to lean into that warmth.

"Hades..." I hesitated, my voice barely above a whisper.

"I'm listening," he said softly, as if speaking louder would shatter the fragile space we had created between us.

I swallowed hard, forcing myself to give life to the words that had been clawing at my chest for too long.

"I keep telling myself that Eve Valmont is dead because... but to me, she is alive and watching me. She is a ghost that refuses to let me be. An entity that haunts me. She is in every step that I take, she is the air that I breathe. She suffocates me..." 3

The confession tasted bitter, like ash on my tongue. But at the same time, there was relief in letting it out.

His thumb brushed over the back of my hand, steady and grounding.

"And she is in your reflection."



I froze. Ice filled my veins.

Hades pushed.

"You refuse to look in the mirror because you see her face," he murmured. "You see her staring back at you." 1

I tried to pull away from Hades, my pulse thundering, but his grip tightened.

"Eve is dead," he told me. "Dead for what she did to you," his words hit me like a bullet. "Dead for the chaos she sought on your pack. She is—"

I could not take another bout of slander against myself, so I did the only thing that would shut him up. I grabbed blindly for his collar and pulled him to me.

My lips slammed against his.



135 His Red

Eve **1**

Hades' words felt like a dagger to the chest, each syllable twisting deeper.

Eve is dead.

I couldn't take it. I couldn't take another second of him speaking about me as if I were some distant memory, some ghost that haunted him through me. Like he hated me as much as Ellen had. It was too much to bare.

I was afraid that it would unravel me and that in the anger and hurt that those words of his incited I would snap and blurt out the truth of my identity. That the floodgates would open and not only engulf me but the Silverpine and the innocents who had no hand in this conspiracy. **1**

Before I could think—before I could stop myself—I grabbed blindly for his collar, fingers curling into the fabric with a desperation that burned hotter than shame.

My lips crashed against his, hard and pleading but demanding all in the same breath.

Hades stiffened beneath me, shock rippling

through him like a crack of lightning. His breath hitched, and for a single, stretched-out heartbeat, I thought he'd pull away.

But he didn't.

Instead, his hands snapped to my waist with a hunger so fierce it stole the air from my lungs. He hauled me against him with such force I swore I could feel the heat radiating from beneath his skin—searing, and delectably agonizing.

His mouth moved against mine, rough and demanding, like he was trying to imprint himself into me, to burn away whatever ghosts lingered between us.

And gods, I let him.

My fingers twisted tighter in his shirt, tugging him closer, but it wasn't enough. His grip tightened, fingers pressing into the small of my back as if he thought I might shatter if he let go.

Hades kissed me like he was starving—like I was the only thing that could satisfy whatever fire burned inside him. His lips traced the shape of mine, deepening with each tilt of his head, leaving me breathless and dizzy.



I felt the sharp edge of his teeth graze my bottom lip, a fleeting warning of the hunger coiled just beneath the surface.

A soft sound escaped me—somewhere between a gasp and a plea—and that was all it took.

Hades growled low in his throat, the sound vibrating through my entire body. He lifted me effortlessly, making me straddle him, his hips slotting between mine as if he couldn't bear the space between us.

The kiss turned feral—scalding and feverish. His tongue invaded my mouth with such ferocity that I stood no chance. His hand slid up my spine, fingers tangling in my hair as he tilted my head back, exposing more of my neck to him.

"He's going to consume me," I thought, heart hammering in my chest. And yet, I couldn't bring myself to care.

His lips left mine just long enough to drag along the curve of my jaw, his breath scorching against my skin. I could feel the restraint trembling in his muscles, like he was holding himself back by the thinnest thread.

But his touch—his mouth—told a different story.



It wasn't just hunger. It was something deeper.
Something raw and unspoken.

Hades wasn't just kissing me.

He was *holding me together*.

As if he knew—*he must have known*—that I was
barely keeping myself from unraveling at his feet.

My hands slid up to his neck, threading through
the dark strands of his hair as I tugged him
closer, silently begging him not to stop.

I wanted more.

I wanted to drown in his fire until there was
nothing left of the cold that had taken root inside
me.

When he pulled back, just enough to rest his
forehead against mine, his breath was ragged, his
grip still firm around my waist as if he didn't trust
himself to let go.

"Ellen..." His voice was rough, almost broken, but
the way he said my name felt like he was holding
something back—something fragile.

I couldn't breathe.

His thumb brushed over my lower lip, and I felt



the ghost of a smirk tug at the corner of his mouth. "Ellen..." He murmured again and I could feel the tantalizing heat receding, the cold encroaching faster. Her name on her lips suddenly destroyed what ever relief his touch had given. In a way, she was taking hi from me. The thought made bile rise in my throat

"I..."

But I cut him off with my lips, shocking him into silence again. He kissed me back, grabbing my hips tighter and grinding me against him. I pulled away, our mouths separating with a pop.

"Don't call me Ellen," I told him.

I felt his confusion, thick and palpable in the silence between us. His breathing slowed, but his grip on me never faltered, as if he feared I might slip through his fingers if he let go.

"Ellen..." he began, voice hesitant, but I pressed a finger to his lips, silencing him before he could say it again.

"That name..." I swallowed hard, feeling the bitter weight of it on my tongue. "It was never really mine. It was given to me because I was born with her—Eve. Two halves of the same whole." 7



Hades' brow furrowed, his hands shifting slightly at my waist as if he was trying to piece together what I wasn't fully saying.

"Ellen wasn't just a name," I continued, my voice softer now, but trembling under the weight of the truth I was skirting around. "It tethered me to her. Always in her shadow. Always the lesser half."

His gaze sharpened, and I felt the shift in him—the realization beginning to dawn, even if he couldn't grasp the full picture.

"You're not lesser," he said quietly, his hand sliding from my waist to cradle my jaw, forcing me to look at him even in the suffocating darkness. "You never were."

A weak, bitter smile tugged at the corner of my mouth. *If only you knew.* I bit my lip, steeling myself. 1