

190 The Breaking Point

Eve 1

I had fought this. Fought him.

With words sharp as daggers. With glares that could cut through steel. With a wall built so high, I had sworn—sworn—that no one, not even him, could breach it.

But he had.

Not with kindness. Not with pretty promises or whispered reassurances.

He had torn through my defenses with rage and hunger. With the way he stood between me and the things that threatened to devour her whole from the inside. With the way he met my fire with his own, clashing, searing, consuming—until I could no longer tell where the hate ended and where the hunger began. 3

And now... now I had nothing left to fight with.

No strength to wield against the grief suffocating me. No walls to hold up against the shadows trying to pull me under.

All I had was him. 2



His heat, pressing against the cold that had settled into my bones. His voice, a blade cutting through the suffocating silence of my despair. His touch, grounding her in a world that had never done anything but take, and take, and take. 1

My family was enemy and still the only person that stood between them and me was him.

I had spent so long convincing herself that loving him was wrong. 2

But if this was wrong—if clinging to him, to this, was a sin—then why did it feel like the only thing keeping me alive? 2

So I let myself fall.

Not into the abyss waiting to swallow me whole.

But into him.

If loving him made me a sinner, then I would bear that sin like I bore my scars—etched into my skin, a testament to all that I had survived. 1

But... I did not know for just how long I could hold so I let the words spill out of me, however detrimental they would be.

"Hades..."



The name spilled from my lips like a prayer, fragile and desperate, yet it held the weight of a thousand battles fought—most of them against myself.

I didn't know if I had the strength to hold onto this. To hold onto him.

But gods, I wanted to.

I lifted my gaze, searching his face for something—anything—that would ground me before I slipped further into the abyss.

And there he was.

A storm carved into flesh, his presence all-consuming, his eyes dark with something unspoken, something violent and reverent all at once.

Hades.

The man who had become my shield and my sword. The man I had once sworn to loathe, yet now, standing in front of me, he was the only thing keeping me from disappearing entirely. 4

I felt his grip tighten on me, his warmth pressing into the cold that had long since settled in my bones.

I pulled away, putting space between us, afraid of his reaction. "I know..." I wrapped my arms around myself, trying to shake away the chill that has returned. "I know this... what I feel... it shouldn't exist," I whispered, my arms tightening around myself as if I could hold together the pieces that threatened to break apart. "Not in this world. Not in the war we were born into. Not between us."

My breath hitched as the truth unfurled from my lips, raw and trembling.

I lifted my gaze, expecting something—anger, rejection, anything that would make this easier. But instead, I found him—still, silent, watching me.

Hades didn't speak. Didn't move. 1

And that silence—his silence—unraveled something deep inside me.

The weight of it all crashed over me, drowning me in the impossible cruelty of what I had just confessed.

A choked sob left me before I could stop it. My body trembled as the tears came, hot and merciless, slipping down my cheeks in betraying



streams.

I wanted to take it back. To swallow the words
and pretend this never happened. 2

Because in the brutal, unforgiving world we lived
in, love was not a luxury we could afford.

Love could break kingdoms. Love could start
wars.

Love could destroy us. 1

And yet, despite all of this—despite everything—I
had fallen for him anyway.

"I'm sorry," I gasped, my vision blurred as I tried
to step back. "I should have never—I should have
—"

A sudden rush of movement.

A flash of red—his eyes, burning, alive, furious.

I barely had time to startle before he moved—so
fast that my heart lurched, my body locked in
place as he closed the distance between us in an
instant.

I braced for it. For the worst. For the rage, for
the rejection, for the agony of being cast aside
like this love meant nothing.

But instead—

His mouth slammed into mine. 1

A collision. A claim. A devastation.

The air between us ignited as his lips crushed against mine, as if this—this—was the breaking point, the moment he could no longer keep himself from me.

His hands were everywhere—cupping my face, threading into my hair, pulling me closer, deeper, harder—as though he needed to feel every inch of me to believe I was real.

The kiss was not gentle. It was desperation and fury wrapped into one, a battle fought in the space between our lips, in the clash of breath and hunger.

I gasped against his mouth, and he took it, swallowing the sound as his hands tightened against me.

My knees buckled, but he didn't let me fall.

He wouldn't let me.

A sharp growl rumbled in his chest as he pressed me flush against him, his body heat and tension and pure, unyielding possession.



I felt the war inside him, the battle between restraint and the raw, untamed need that threatened to consume him whole.

And gods help me, but I wanted to be consumed.

His lips slanted over mine, his grip shifting to tilt my chin, deepen the kiss, steal whatever air was left between us—until the only thing that existed was him.

Hades.

A man I had once called my enemy.

A man who now kissed me like he would die without me.

When he finally pulled back, just an inch, his breath was ragged, his forehead pressing against mine.

"I will never hear you apologize for this again," he whispered, his voice dark, wrecked, unchained.

I was shaking.

Not from fear. Not from doubt.

But because something inside me had finally snapped, and there was no turning back now.

"I should walk away," I breathed, even as my



hands fisted into his shirt, refusing to let go.

His answering smirk was all teeth, all danger, all ruin.

"Red," he murmured, his lips brushing mine again, slower this time, savoring. "Say it again."

His voice was low, rough, as though he barely trusted himself to speak. As though those words—three simple words—had somehow cracked him open.

I swallowed, the weight of everything pressing down on me, yet with him here, I could breathe.

"I love you." 1

A sharp breath left him, his fingers trembling against my skin, and I felt it then—the way the world shifted, the way his control shattered around me.

He cupped my face, his touch both reverent and possessive, like he was trying to memorize me, like he was afraid I would slip away if he didn't hold on tight enough.

"Red," he murmured, his voice an exhale of something raw, something dangerous. "You—" He stopped, shaking his head, his jaw clenched



like he was fighting something inside him.

Like he was trying to rein himself in.

I reached up, fingers brushing his wrist, grounding him the way he had grounded me countless times before. "I meant it," I whispered. "I love you."

Something inside him broke.

His lips crashed against mine in a kiss that felt like a war, a battle fought between fire and desperation, between love and all the ruin that came with it.

I should have been afraid of this.

Of us.

But when his arms wrapped around me, when I felt him pour every unspoken promise, every unrestrained emotion into that kiss—I knew.

I had already fallen.

And I wasn't coming back. "I know you don't feel the way I do." My voice wavered.

He stilled.

For a moment, there was only silence between us, only the sound of our ragged breaths



intertwining in the space we refused to break.

Then—

A sharp, bitter laugh left him, rough and guttural, as if he couldn't believe what I'd just said.

His hands tightened on me, not enough to hurt, but enough—enough to remind me that he was there, that he was real, that his body was as solid and unyielding as the force of his presence crashing over me like a tidal wave.

His grip shifted, his fingers tilting my chin up, forcing me to meet the full force of his gaze—blazing, devouring, his irises burning in molten red, as though the words I had spoken had shattered something inside him.

"You think I don't feel this?" His voice was rough, wrecked, barely controlled.

I blinked up at him, my throat constricting, my heart slamming against my ribs.

Something inside him snapped.

"I have fought you, Red." His thumb brushed my bottom lip, his voice shaking with something dark, something desperate.



I shivered.

"I have fought against you, against this—against the way you burn under my skin and carve yourself into my ribs like you're something that has always belonged there."

My breath hitched.

His grip tightened on my waist.

"Do you know what you've done to me?" he growled, his forehead pressing against mine, his voice sharp, unhinged, aching. "I used to think I held your chains, that I had you on a leash, but gods—"

His voice broke, and my stomach dropped.

"You were rattling them the entire time, weren't you?"

My breath faltered.

"*You—" he exhaled sharply, his hands shaking against me. "You are fire, Red. You are a storm. And I am the fool who thought he could control the hurricane when all I've ever done is be caught in it."

My chest caved in at his words.

He wasn't done.



"You think I don't feel this?" His voice was dangerous, dripping with something undeniable, something raw. "You think I don't see you?"

My lips parted, but no words came out.

"You are reckless and brave, kind to a fault—" He exhaled sharply, shaking his head, his fingers tangling into my hair. "You fight like you were born to defy the gods themselves, and yet you are selfless enough to put yourself in the fire for people who do not deserve you." 1

My throat closed.

"You think I don't see the way you stand before your demons, unyielding, even when they've tried to break you a thousand times over?" His fingers trailed down my spine, his breath hot against my skin. "You are everything I never thought I could have, and I have spent every waking moment trying to convince myself I do not want you." 1

I let out a sharp inhale, my body trembling, his words coiling around me like a vice.

"But I do."

His voice was a low growl, a confession laced with something brutal.



"I want you in ways that should not exist." His breath ghosted over my lips, his eyes ravenous.

"I want you when I shouldn't, when I have no right to, when it is the last thing this world would ever allow."

A shuddering breath left me, my fingers clenching against his chest.

"You have undone me, Red." His hands cradled my face, his thumb brushing my cheek, smearing away a tear I hadn't realized had fallen.

I trembled.

"You were never meant to be mine," he whispered, his lips barely brushing mine. "And yet I will ruin whatever is left of me before I lose you." 2

I felt it before I even heard it—the sharp, shuddering breath, the way his fingers curled against me, his entire body tensed, on edge, stripped bare.

And then—

"I love you." 3

It wasn't soft.

It wasn't sweet.



It was razor-sharp, guttural, violently raw, as if the words had been ripped from his chest—as if they had always been there, waiting to break free.

"I love you, Red...I love you in ways that will ruin me. In ways I already have." His voice was low, fierce, reverent. "I love you in ways I cannot control, cannot suppress, can only succumb to."

My lips parted, my breath shallow, my pulse erratic.

"You are my greatest war, Red." His voice broke, raw and guttural. "My greatest obsession. My greatest sin, my only salvation." 3

