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Eve **1**

Hades' breath was warm against my temple, but his words were ice. Cutting. Peeling me apart layer by layer.

"The nightmares," he murmured, his lips brushing my skin as if to soften the blow. "They aren't just memories. They're echoes, aren't they? The past replaying itself over and over in your mind, trapping you there every time you close your eyes." **2**

A shudder ripped through me, violent and uncontrollable. My hands clenched into fists, nails biting into my palms. The air in the room thickened, pressing down on me.

Hades felt it. He felt me. And he did not stop.

"I remember when we first met, you flinched a lot even before you realized who i was. Your eyes were darting around the room," he continued, his voice dropping lower. "You were afraid."

I gasped, my body jerking beneath him as a sharp, blinding memory tore through me.



The cold bite of metal restraints around my ankle.

A rough hand grabbed my jaw, forcing me to look up.

The sting of something slicing my skin, followed by the laughter of a gamma.

Rhea buckled inside me, a whimper vibrating through my bones. She felt it too. The pain echoed in our shared vessel.

Hades' grip tightened—not cruelly.

"You always check for exits," he pressed, his breath measured, his touch firm but reverent. "Every room, every space, even in places where you should feel safe." His fingers brushed over my pulse point, feeling it hammer beneath my skin. "Because there was a time when you had none."

I couldn't breathe. I never even noticed I did that. 6

A thick, choking darkness clawed at the edges of my mind.

The cell had no windows.

No doors I could open. No way out.

Hades was still speaking, still weaving his way through my fractures.

"And the blood..." His voice faltered just slightly. "It terrifies you. Not just because you've seen it spill. But because you've drowned in it."

A cry wrenched from my throat, raw and broken.

Flashes of red filled my vision.

The scent. The taste.

The feeling of it drying on my skin, soaking into the stone beneath me, no matter how much I tried to scrub it away.

The screams, the anguished faces that I could never seem to place. The stickiness on my hands. There were memories that remained disembodied till today.

The dreams that seemed to evade me, slivers of them remaining with me when I woke up but not enough to paint a full picture, but maybe it was for the best. Maybe my mind was still trying to protect me.

Yet, it was all too much, the way he spoke the truth that had been buried into the air around us.



I thrashed against him, desperate to escape the suffocating tide of memories, but Hades only held me closer.

"Eve." His voice was no longer cold, no longer demanding.

It was gentle.

Steady.

Real.

He pressed his forehead to mine, his breath mingling with mine, grounding me. "You are safe.

I whimpered, my body shaking uncontrollably.

"I-I can't," I choked out.

Blood.

Screams.

"*Don't hurt my baby!*" A desperate voice suddenly resonated in my head, my skull buzzing. 2

This was new.

"*Please, my baby!*" The same voice.

Then the flashes began, horrid after horrid image of new memories that I had never known existed in the dark crevices of my fractured

mind. 2

I was unraveling.

The images wouldn't stop.

They crashed into me, one after another—  
scattered bodies, the glint of fire reflecting off  
broken glass, the metallic scent of blood mixing  
with burning oil. And then—the voice.

*"Please, my baby!"* 2

My breath hitched violently, the desperation in  
the words clawing into me. I felt my head  
splitting, like something had been locked away  
for so long that forcing it open was fracturing  
me from the inside out.

I trembled beneath Hades, my body barely  
holding itself together. My hands clutched at his  
shoulders as if he were the only thing keeping  
me tethered to reality.

But he was still talking. Still unearthing truths I  
wasn't ready to face.

"You have to remember," Rhea's voice wove  
through my mind, soft but insistent. "Even if it is  
hard, dear."

I choked on a sob, my chest heaving as I shook



my head furiously. "No," I gasped. "No more."

But Hades wasn't stopping. His voice was calm, steady, unraveling everything.

"You never sleep on the bed unless you have no choice."

I flinched, my fingers twitching against his skin.

"Because for years, there wasn't one."

I couldn't breathe.

He continued, his voice lowering. "You used to freeze when someone raises their voice. Even when it's not directed at you. Because you learned that shouting always came before pain. You tried to hide it with defiance but i saw it, Eve." 1

The room spun violently.

I clapped my hands over my ears, squeezing my eyes shut as I rocked beneath him. "Stop," I whispered.

But he didn't.

"You were thin when i brought you here, pale, barely eating not because you're not hungry, but because someone once controlled when you were allowed to." 2

A sharp cry tore from my throat. The phantom sensation of gnawing hunger, of waiting for the little food I was always offered.

The walls inside me cracked.

Hades saw too much. Knew too much.

He wasn't supposed to understand.

He was supposed to be angry.

I sucked in a ragged breath, and before I could stop myself, I reached up and grabbed his face, my fingers pressing into his skin. My eyes burned with desperation as I forced him to look at me, my tears falling freely.

"Why won't you scream at me?" I sobbed. "Why don't you hate me?"

His silver eyes flickered, but he said nothing.

"You should be furious!" My voice cracked, hoarse and raw. "I lied to you for months. I let you believe I was someone else. I deceived you. So why aren't you yelling? Why aren't you throwing me out?" I was shaking, my grip on his face tightening. "Hit me, call me a liar, say I disgust you! Do anything—just don't say these things. Don't make them real. I can't take it."



A hiccuping sob wrenched through me. "It hurts too much," I whispered brokenly. "I am bleeding on the inside, Hades. I have already been broken enough."

I searched his face wildly, my vision swimming. "You should hate me for this. You were duped. Manipulated." My voice dropped to a whisper, the words tasting like ash. "You should want nothing to do with me." 4

But Hades never looked away. He never wavered.

His silence was heavy, suffocating.

I had braced for rejection. For anger.

But not this.

Not the way he looked at me—as if he had known, even before I had spoken the words aloud. As if he had already made his decision.

"Don't do this to me, please," I whispered. "Don't give me hope only for..."

"For what, Eve?" He asked softly, his real name on his lips sending a pleasant shiver through me.

"Hades..."

Eve





"For what, Eve?" His voice was impossibly soft, yet it carried the weight of something unshakable.

I trembled, my breath shuddering as I held onto him, my grip on his face tightening as if I could force him to say the words I needed. The words that would end this torment. The words that would cut me clean.

"To hurt me," I whispered brokenly. "To abandon me. To do what everyone else has done."

Hades inhaled deeply, his silver eyes steady, unwavering. "Is that what you think I will do?"

"I don't know," I choked, my voice raw. "I don't know what to believe anymore."

My body was a battlefield of past wounds, old and new, some still bleeding, some stitched together in jagged scars. My soul felt just as torn, fragmented between the life I had stolen and the one I had survived. And Hades—Hades had seen through it all, peeled back the layers I had so carefully stitched together, revealing the truth I had buried so deeply, even from myself.

"You're waiting for me to push you away," he murmured, brushing a stray tear from my cheek.



"You think I will turn from you now that I know."

A broken laugh escaped me, my chest heaving. "Wouldn't you? Shouldn't you?" I shook my head, my vision blurred with tears. "You fell in love with a lie. You loved someone who never existed."

Hades' eyes darkened, his grip tightening just enough to remind me he was still holding me, still here.

"I didn't fall in love with a lie," he said, his voice low, firm. "I fell in love with you."

I sucked in a sharp breath, my stomach twisting.

"No, you—"

"I did," he interrupted, his thumb stroking along my jaw, grounding me. "You may have worn a different name, but you were always you. The fire in your spirit, the way you fought even when you were afraid, the way you looked at me like you wanted to hate me but couldn't—none of that was a lie."

I shook my head, my hands fisting against his chest. "You don't understand—"

"Then make me understand," he urged, his voice



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calm but unyielding. "Tell me what they did to you, Eve." He kissed the top of my head. "Bleed out the horror you faced into me. I will take it."

I looked away.

But he took my chin. "They linger, haunting the crevices of your mind. I know that all too well."

He got up, that he was kneeling between my legs, "Even, I, a heartless man knows that."

I froze.

My breath hitched as the weight of his words sank in, but something wasn't right.

The air thickened, pressing down on me like a vice. A strange energy crackled around us, tangible, electric, wrong.

Hades' grip on me loosened as he pulled back slightly, his expression shifting into something I couldn't define. His silver eyes—those beautiful, piercing eyes—darkened.

No.

Not darkened.

Turned black.

A deep, endless void swallowed his irises, the

whites of his eyes vanishing until there was nothing but darkness.

My stomach lurched.

Black veins surged up his neck, crawling beneath his skin like living shadows, twisting and writhing up his arms, his hands, disappearing beneath his chest.

I recoiled, but my body refused to move.

"Hades?" My voice was barely a whisper, shaking, uncertain.

He didn't answer.

His lips parted slightly, his breathing still steady—too steady. His hands curled into fists at his sides as if bracing himself, his entire body tensing.

Then—his chest split open. 2

A sickening crack echoed through the room as his skin and ribs separated on their own, parting like the slow, deliberate unfurling of a monstrous wound.

I sucked in a sharp breath, horror clawing its way up my throat.

Where his heart should have been, there was no

flesh, no beating muscle. 1

There was only a swirling, pulsing mass of black energy, writhing and churning like a living void.

It bled shadow. It pulsed with something ancient, something wrong. The very sight of it sent a wave of nausea rolling through me.

I had seen monstrous things before. Had suffered horrors I couldn't even name.

But this?

This was something else entirely.

My hands trembled as I reached for him instinctively—then stopped. 1

"What—" I gasped.

"We are the same you and I, your father called for your torture and mine ripped out my heart." 7