



## 247 In Rhea's Plane

Eve <sup>1</sup>

My eyes snapped open in an instant and all I saw was...

Black.

Pitch black that seemed to seep into my skin, fueling my panic and utter confusion. I got on my feet, feeling light despite the dread that was weighing my gut down.

I surveyed my environment blindly, unable to make sense of where I now found myself. I walked around, sensing a presence in the void that I instinctively began to run away from.

As I kept moving, ensuring I stayed alert, I found myself trying to recall how I could have ended up here.

Where was Hades...

Then it dawned on me, hitting harder than the anvil in my gut—what exactly had happened.

"You should have kept running."



His voice was like a drop of ink in clear water—  
corrupting and spreading until it tainted  
everything. 1

"You should have kept running."

Hades' voice echoed through the void again,  
laced with betrayal, venom, and something  
worse—finality.

I clutched my head as the weight of it bore down  
on me. Images flickered behind my closed  
eyelids—Amelia's convulsing body, the guards  
storming in, the syringe, the sting in my neck,  
his arms... the warmth that turned to ice.

"No," I whispered, backing away from nothing  
and everything. "No—he wouldn't—he wouldn't  
do that to me."

But he had. 1

And suddenly, the darkness wasn't empty  
anymore.

It trembled.

It breathed.

A low growl rippled through the void, like



thunder pulled through teeth. A shape moved—massive, burning with spectral fire beneath its skin. Not terrifying.

Familiar.

"Rhea?" I choked out, taking a step toward her.

From the darkness, she emerged—not as a shadow behind my mind, but fully formed. Towering. Trembling. Her fur shimmered with stardust, but her eyes were dim, as though she had been fighting something... and losing.

"You're not supposed to be here," she rasped. Her voice was hoarse, like she'd been screaming for hours. "This isn't your domain."

I stepped closer. "Where am I?"

She turned her head, ears flicking as though listening for something I couldn't hear. "You're in mine. The plane between body and spirit. You were pulled here after the injection. This is where I reside."

"Nerexylin," I breathed, understanding dawning. "It was supposed to drag me into my worst memories—"





"And it tried," she snapped, her canines bared—not at me, but at the air itself. "It tried to devour you. Tear open every scar. Every scream. Every death." 3

I looked around again. "Then why am I not seeing anything?" 1

Rhea's massive shoulders rose and fell with every breath, her muscles twitching beneath the shimmering veil of her coat. She was fighting—constantly. I hadn't realized it until now, how much tension coiled through her posture, how violently the shadows around us buckled and strained with every second she held them back.

"Because I'm holding them," she growled, her voice tight with effort. "Barely."

I took another step forward, and that's when it happened.

The blackness around us cracked.

Just a sliver. Like glass fracturing under pressure.

And through it—

A flash of red. Blood on marble. A woman's



scream. Chains clanging in the dark.

I gasped, stumbling back.

Rhea snarled, lunging sideways with unnatural speed, her claws slashing through the light like a curtain being ripped closed.

The crack vanished.

Her head jerked toward me. Her breathing was harsher now. "Don't get close to the edges. They're pushing in harder."

"What are they?"

"Your memories," she said, her tone gone flat.

"Twisted, weaponized. The drug doesn't just replay them—it amplifies them. Turns fear into agony. Guilt into a blade."

How could I forget? Another tremor rolled through the space. Rhea staggered.

"Rhea!"

"I'm fine," she snapped, but her legs were trembling now, her claws skidding against the unseen floor as she held the darkness at bay.

"I've done this before, but not for this long. The



dosage was heavy. They wanted you broken." 4

A new crack split to my left—this time wider.

I turned and saw myself in it.

Chained, filthy, eighteen, and sobbing as I clawed at the floor of my cell. Screaming for Ellen. For someone. For anyone as they dragged me to that facility whose name I could never forget. I knew what came next.

"Oh no," I whispered, the ache in my chest blooming sharp and deep. "How do I make it stop?"

Rhea struck again, roaring this time—a raw, pained sound as she slammed the memory shut.

"You think I don't want to?" she rasped. "But every second you linger, it gets harder. You have to wake up, Eve."

"But you're hurting—"

She shook her head violently. "I'm not your priority. You are."

I stared at her, tears threatening. "I don't want to leave you alone in this."





Her eyes softened then. For the first time, her voice wavered—not from exhaustion, but from love. "I will be fine. I am centuries old. This is nothing." She tried to assure me. "You have to go now before it is too late. The narrative has already been tainted against you, and with more manipulation and lies, there will be no going back to the way you were."

Hades.

She was speaking about Hades.

"He loves me. He will... listen," but then I felt the prickle again, and conviction leaked out of my voice.

"You were betrayed by your blood, my dear. You should learn by now that treachery birthed from distrust and anger by those that you love the most is as common as rain in the storm season—unpredictable, relentless, and always soaking deepest where you thought you were safe."

Another crack. Another pulse of red.

But this time, Rhea didn't flinch.

She stood tall and turned her head toward me,



her voice quieter now—firm, resolute. "But we have each other. And the goddess forbid I let you suffer again." 8

I choked on my breath as the shadows pulsed again, pushing harder.

Rhea lowered her head until our eyes met. "Go and speak. He is waiting."

"Will he listen?"

Her silence was answer enough. 4

But she nuzzled my shoulder anyway, like a farewell. "Speak anyway."

The void cracked again—

And light swallowed me whole.