



## 291 His Biggest Mistake

Eve <sup>1</sup>

A man stepped into view from the hallway's shadow—tall, midnight hair swept back in sharp, deliberate strands, the same dark as Hades'. But the resemblance ended there.

Because where Hades was fire forged into control, this one was ice laced with poison.

His suit was pressed to perfection, deep navy against skin the color of polished onyx, but the collar open just enough to reveal the curling tips of tattoos—arcane, intricate—snaking up from beneath like something alive.

The inky lines on his face did nothing to distract from the striking insidious aura his face exuded.

His steps were soundless on the concrete.

But I heard them.

I felt them.

Like a warning bell beneath my skin.



"What the hell is this?" I barked, my voice low and brittle. My spine straightened despite the pulse kicking in my throat. "Why is he here?"

Cain didn't answer.

He didn't need to.

That smile—Gods, that smile—was enough.

The same one he wore at the Obsidian dinner table months ago when I was still bound and clueless. Despite his warning.

I hadn't known then.

I hadn't known anything.

But now?

Now, the air seemed to tilt when he entered. Like the room bent to accommodate him. Like it braced.

"Princess," Cain said, voice smooth as black velvet and twice as suffocating. "We finally meet. Again."

His smile didn't reach his eyes.

Rook shifted beside me, but not to intercept.



To yield.

I looked between them, stomach knotting.

"You've got to be kidding me."

Cain stopped a few paces away—too close for comfort, not close enough to strike. But the tension between us could've been strung into wire.

He looked me over with lazy precision, as if reading a dossier only he had the clearance to see.

Rhea.

Wake up.

The call in my mind was quiet at first, a desperate murmur clawing past the fog of my fear. I reached inward, deeper than before, until the echo of her stirred—soft, sleepy, confused.

Eve?

I need you. My fingers curled into fists. Please... just wake up.

A flicker. The faintest rumble of power beneath my skin. Slow. Sluggish. But there.





Good. She was waking up.

I shifted, subtly glancing around the room, noting the angle of the bolted table, the distance to the door, the lack of weapons—unless I counted the tea tray—and took a step back.

Just one.

But Cain noticed.

His eyes followed every twitch of my muscles like he was charting a map of escape routes I hadn't even fully formed yet.

"You found out everything, didn't you?" he said softly.

I paused.

Not because I wanted to.

But because I knew what he meant.

"I'm not listening to this," I growled, backing further away, toward the door.

"You are," he said, voice just above a whisper, the weight of it heavier than any shout. "His lies. His secrets. His manipulations. The ones that had been festering long before you ever walked into



his war room."

My chest heaved.

"Let me guess," he continued, circling slowly.

"You found out the hard way. Piece by piece. Cut by cut. Until the truth bled out in front of you."

My heart clenched.

Cain's smile faded. "And now you're on the streets, aren't you? Wandering. Sleeping in places you never imagined you'd survive. Because the life you thought you built—" he gestured around us, at the air, the silence, "—was a house of cards."

"Shut up," I said, voice sharp, ragged. "Shut the fuck up."

"Was any of it real?" he pressed, his tone almost pitying. "Or was it fabricated around you? Built like a stage, designed to trap you—softly, slowly—until you belonged to him without ever saying yes?"

I screamed then. "Stop!"

The air trembled. Rhea growled faintly from deep inside my chest.



"Let me out," I spat. "Or I swear to the gods, I will fight my way through both of you."

To my surprise, Cain... stepped aside.

Clean. Calm. Deliberate.

"You're very free to leave," he said, hand brushing over his chest in a theatrical mockery of reverence. "I don't put princesses in gilded cages."

My breath caught.

He knew exactly what that meant to me.

A slap to Hades' memory. A knife in the shape of a truth I hadn't been able to say aloud.

I started toward the door, refusing to let him see the tremble in my legs.

But Cain kept talking. Of course he did.

"Tell me something, princess."

I didn't stop walking.

"Did you ever wonder if Jules' suicide was really what they said it was?"





My steps faltered.

My stomach twisted into a knot that would never be loosened. One that had not been loosened since I watched her end her life in front of me, her blood splattering on my face, warm and wet.

Cain's voice softened to a venomous hum. "Or did he order his own spy to die in front of you? To break you. To strip away your resolve. Just enough... so you'd fall into his arms." 5

I turned slowly.

Cain smiled again.

"To let him into your heart."

It boiled over in that singular second, my blood sizzling too hot my my fragile skin to handle as I twisted fully towards him and erased the distance between us in a single stride.

My open palm descended on his face before reasoning or Rhea stopped me.

For the first time, surprise flared briefly in the dark void he called eyes as I grabbed him by the lapels of his suit.



I pulled him to me, our lashes almost connecting. "Keep her name out of your fucking mouth." I growled, in a voice I never thought I could muster, yet all I saw was red. All I saw was the resignation in her eyes as she pulled that trigger. It was something no one could feign, a pain too poignant to play. I had been there before, on the precipice, because life knew nothing but to chip at you until you had nothing left but the craving of the nothingness that death had to offer. 2

"I saw her die, held her until she breathed her last," she called me her sister, her blessed friend. "Yet you dare---" I drawled, ripping the words from the depths of soul that I tried not to reach into. "To attempt to manipulate me with her demise. Turn me against your enemy because you think I am that dense."