



340 Back Home

Eve ¹

Light filtered into the darkness, my limbs too heavy to block the illuminating assault on my senses. Slowly, I lifted my head even as my neck felt like it was being held down with an anvil.

Every surface and corner of white I found myself was a single colour; white. Instantly panic rose in my throat, suffocating me. What was I doing in the white room, after just leaving the black room. Had I somehow got trapped in Hades' psyche, even though everything around me had fallen apart because of the Fenrir's marker's onslaught. Had I gotten lost just like Hades?

Horror clawed it's way up my spine as I shot up fully in bed than was strangely softer than I recalled. As I grabbed the edge of the thin blanket, pain lanced through my hand, a wire pulling at my flesh.

I yanked on it, pulling out the needle, blood instantly bubbling up to the surface, but I had no time to let the pain register. My legs hit the

ground and holstered myself up.

The floor rushed up to meet me—but not because I had lunged.

Because I was falling.

My legs gave out before I could fully stand, my knees buckling as my weight crumpled like paper. A sharp gasp tore from my throat, panic surging higher than reason. I threw my hand out for something—anything—but the pristine white room offered no anchor.

And then—

Blaring.

A high-pitched wall split the air like a knife through silk. Red light bathed the ceiling. A siren? No—an alarm. And it was screaming for me.

My breath hitched. My body tensed. What did I do? What had I triggered?

Footsteps thundered beyond the walls. The sound of boots. Voices. Orders.

A click echoed from the door ahead—metal on

metal—before it whooshed open with mechanical precision.

I scrambled back, heart pounding. My body remembered too much. Pain. Restraints. Betrayal. My hands curled into fists, my bloodied palm shaking.

Let them come.

I would fight.

But instead of needles and restraints, two figures in white stepped in—not with malice, but with awe.

"Your Highness," one of them breathed.

Before I could respond, they were kneeling.

Kneeling.

"Careful!" another voice barked behind them.

"She's disoriented. She is still just adapting after the Rite—get the bind off her wrist."

Hands reached for me—not to harm, but to steady. To help.

I froze.

"What—?"

Then the third shadow filled the doorway.

Towering. Regal but with the slight hunch of a
old man. Familiar

Montegue.

He stepped in like he belonged here, his eyes
sharp and unreadable—but not unkind. In his
arms was a bundle wrapped in soft navy wool, a
tiny hand gripping his lapel.

Elliot.

My lips parted, a sob caught between disbelief
and relief.

And just behind them—

Lucinda.

Her eyes locked with mine—and something
inside her shattered.

"Eve!" she gasped, rushing forward. No
hesitation. Her arms closed around me before I
could decide if I was dreaming. What the hell
was she doing?

"I'm sorry," she whispered against my hair. "I'm so sorry I wasn't there—I didn't know—you weren't supposed to—" I had never been so confused in my life. Her body was warm, but her frame bony.

I couldn't breathe.

Not from fear.

But from something dangerously close to safety.

To being held.

I didn't relax.

Not fully.

But I stopped shaking.

Just enough to whisper, "Where... where am I?"

Lucinda pulled back, her hand cupping my cheek with trembling care.

"You're in the infirmary," she said. "You are safe. Elliot is safe, Hades is safe."

I blinked, the words foreign and impossible.

"You are fine," Montegue confirmed quietly.

stepping forward, Elliot still clutching his collar.
"You made it through the purge. You won, Eve."

My vision swam. "No," I whispered. "We did." 1

And Elliot reached out a small hand toward me—
his touch light.

Steady.

Warm.

He glanced around, opening his mouth but his
hesitation was palpable.

"Ellie," I whispered, reaching out even as my
arms shook from my body being heavier than I
recalled. After floating around, Hades realm for
a time had made the physical one too dense, too
real, too loud.

I reached out for him anyway.

Elliot let go of Montegue's lapel, his little arms
coming to surround me as lightly as he could
manage as though he sensed every bruise that I
could not feel. His scent filled my senses, my feet
truly touching the ground now. I felt grounded in
this reality. I had not failed, because of him.

He buried his face in my shoulders, gently, as though I was the most delicate thing.

I buried my face in his shoulder, letting my tears fall, silently, hot and raw. He held me like he could hold me together.

"You came," I whispered, my voice so fragile that it could have broken as it hit the air. "You saved him."

"You made it easy," Montague said, "He said you cleared the way. He knew that if he found you, he would find Hades."

"You were gone for two days in the Sanctum." Lucinda supplied, shocking me. She shifted closer, her presence soft, in contrast to the hard ended woman I had come to dread. "The rite continued and even when Elliot slept, we were afraid it was already too late."

I could not form words as she continued.

"You died for a moment." She told me, her voice calming as though not to startle me. "The purge took a lot out of you."

My breath caught. Not because I didn't believe

her—but because some part of me remembered it. The silence. The weightlessness. The aching pull of something ancient unraveling inside me.

Lucinda nodded solemnly. "You nearly didn't come back."

"But she did," Montegue said firmly, and for the first time, I heard it—not command, not formality.

Pride.

A strange thing, coming from a man like him. But it settled in my chest, warm and unsettling all the same.

"I want to see Hades,"

Lucinda and Montegue exchanged a glance. Not the kind that dismissed me—but the kind that held unspoken weight. The kind that came just before saying no.

Montegue was the first to speak. "He's in containment."

My pulse stuttered.

"To ensure the Flux is truly gone," he added



carefully. "There are protocols, Eve. Even with the results we've seen—what happened in the Sanctum—it's still too soon to be certain."

"You're wrong," I said quietly.

Montegue's brows lifted.

I tightened my grip around Elliot, then let go gently, handing him back into Lucinda's arms. She took him without protest, holding him close as his gaze clung to me, wide and watchful.

"I know it's gone," I said, rising shakily to my feet. "I felt it leave him. I watched it unravel. I spoke to what was left. I want to be with Hades right now." Elliot snuggled closer to me, melting into me. He wanted to be there too. 5