



## 355 Darius's Secret Weapon

Hades 1

My blood ran cold at the implications of her words. I knew as well as her what it meant. I knew what black veins meant. Mind fracturing just to manipulate the subject into ensuring they didn't remember, I knew what it all meant because...

I had attempted to do the same to Eve, to make her forget what I had done to her but she had been alert and Rhea had not made it possible. So I knew instantly that this pointed to none other than the entity that had just been purged from me. There was no other explanation. But how could it be possible.

Eve's voice was croak, as she spoke again. "Do you feel tendrils in your mind?" Her eyes were flared and I could feel her hairs raising from where I stood beside her, my body mirrored the reaction.

Her question made the woman on the screen freeze.



Not just still—but petrified.

Eve hadn't raised her voice. She hadn't even leaned in. But the weight of her words landed like thunder in a stormless room.

Do you feel tendrils in your mind?

Lady Morrison's fingers curled against her blouse like she was trying to hold herself together.

"I... I don't know what that means," she whispered.

"You do," Eve said softly. "You just never had the words for it."

I knew she was right.

Because I'd lived with those tendrils.

I'd let them curl around me in my weakest moments, whispering doubts and promises in the same breath. I'd let them in willingly. But they were not meant to be housed in flesh.

They were something else entirely.

The woman on screen trembled. "Sometimes... when I'm alone... I feel like I'm not. Like



something is... watching through me."

I stepped forward.

"Do you ever speak aloud," I asked, voice low,  
"but don't remember what you said?"

She nodded.

"Do you lose time?" Eve added. "Wake up in a  
room you don't remember walking into?"

Another nod. This time frantic.

"Do you ever catch your reflection," I said, eyes  
narrowing, "and swear it blinked before you  
did?"

Tears slipped down her face. "Yes. Yes. Oh God—  
what is happening to me?"

"It's not you," Eve whispered, her voice now  
trembling, "it's what he left inside you."

Her.

It.

Vassir.

Not just a god.



A parasite. A legacy. A stain that didn't die when his body did.

The truth twisted in my gut.

He'd known. The bastard had known we would purge him.

And in his final days, he'd sown seeds elsewhere.

Lady Morrison was just one.

I glanced at Kael. He looked shaken, lips pressed tight, one hand ghosting toward his weapon—not in aggression, but instinct. As if ready to fight something none of us could see.

Cain's voice was soft but iron-edged. "If what she's saying is true, we're not just fighting a god. We're fighting a contagion."

A soul-borne virus. One that didn't need blood to spread. Just a look. A whisper. A breath shared in the wrong room.

Eve was staring at the screen like she wanted to reach through it.

"Do you dream?" she asked quietly.

Lady Morrison blinked. "All the time. But they're





not mine."

"What do you mean?" I asked, jaw clenched.

"They feel... borrowed," she said. "Like I'm watching memories that never belonged to me. Blood. Fire. Screaming. And a face—his face. Not my husband's. His. The one with the black veins."

Her voice dropped to a whisper. "He smiles in every one of them."

A chill crawled up my spine.

The Flux. Even without Vassir's full presence, the aftershock of his mind was echoing through her.

Residual contamination. Like fumes after an explosion.

I turned to Kael. "We need the Deltas to screen her immediately."

"She's miles away," he said darkly. "Our Deltas won't get access without Morrison's clearance."

"Then burn through the red tape," I snapped.

"We're out of time."

Cain stepped beside me, voice thoughtful. "If Vassir fragmented himself—spread pieces of his



will into others before the Rite—then he may have more than one host."

But Eve's eyes were darting, like she was trying to calculate something in her head, I could hear her thoughts mumbles as she sorted through what she knew and what we had discovered, including those we were yet to discover.

Eve's lips moved, barely audible. "No. No, it doesn't make sense."

I turned toward her.

Her eyes were distant but burning—like she was looking at the world through a kaleidoscope of shattered truths.

"He said goodbye," she murmured.

"What?" Cain asked, brows drawing together.

"Vassir. In the Rite," Eve said, louder now. "He said goodbye. He told me the truth, showed me what he was, and then—he let me go. That was the end of him."

I frowned. "Eve—"

"No, listen," she said, spinning toward us with



urgency. "This can't be the Flux. Not what we're seeing in her. It's something else."

Cain exhaled through his nose, the sound sharp and unconvinced. "Or he lied."

"He didn't." Her voice cracked, but her eyes stayed firm. "He wanted to stay. To take over. But he didn't. He let go. I felt it. That thing inside Hades—it died. The Vein was destroyed. The connection severed."

"Then how do you explain this?" Kael asked grimly, gesturing to the still-frightened Lady Morrison frozen on the holoscreen. "This woman is infected with something."

Eve went still.

Like a blade held perfectly upright.

And then—her head tilted, eyes narrowing like she was chasing something in the dark.

She whispered, "Unless it's not about the soul."

Cain raised a brow. "Then what?"

She met my gaze. "The body."

The room froze with her words.





"What do you mean?" I asked.

Eve moved to the center of the room like the storm was gathering under her feet. "The Vein... Vassir's Vein... it was extracted from Vassir's body, yes. It was originally came from Vassir's physical remains. That's how it began—his flesh. His corrupted flesh."

"And?" Cain prompted.

"And," Eve said slowly, like a horror dawning, "just because our samples are gone, doesn't mean all of his remains are. The horn is still out there, like Vassir said."

A silence fell.

And then Cain whispered it.

"Darius."

"My father has the horn," Eve whispered. "At least that's what we know. But I'm sure..."

Her voice trailed off, but my thoughts surged forward.

I stepped in, voice low, grave. "Then it's not just worship. It's manipulation."





Everyone looked at me.

I kept my gaze on the flickering holoscreen, though I was no longer seeing Lady Morrison. I was seeing him. Darius Valmont. The ghost behind all this. The one shadow that refused to vanish.

"He's not trying to summon Vassir," I said. "He's trying to wield him. Bend what's left of his essence. Vassir's power drove Morrison insane before—but now that same madness has been repurposed, redirected."

Kael's jaw locked. "Are you saying he reversed the Flux's effect on Morrison?"

I nodded. "If Darius has access to the horn, to even a shred of Vassir's decayed physicality, then yes. It wouldn't take a full soul—just residue. Echoes. The right fragments soaked in suffering. He could refine it. Alter it."

Cain exhaled sharply, the full horror dawning in his eyes. "Turn it from a corruptive force into a controlling one."

"Exactly." I turned toward the others. "It explains everything. The healing. The sudden lucidity.



The devotion. Morrison wasn't just saved. He was overwritten. Bent to Darius' will. The Flux once drove him mad—and now it's being used to make him obedient."

Eve's face was pale, but her expression was sharpened with understanding—and fear.

"Vassir destroyed himself in the Rite," she said. "But Darius salvaged the pieces. Like recycling a god."

Cain cursed under his breath. "He's building a pantheon of puppets."

"And Morrison's just the beginning," Kael muttered.

Eve exhaled like something in her ribs had finally cracked open. Her voice was steady, but it carried that eerie weight—the kind that came when instinct and dread fused into certainty.

"We need to find the horn. Now."

All eyes shifted to her.

Kael blinked. "You think Darius still has it?"

She nodded. "I know he does. Or he's close to



getting it. Either way, this entire spectacle—Morrison, the broadcast, the council upheaval—it's not the endgame. It's a diversion."

Cain folded his arms, leaning forward slightly. "A diversion from what?"

"From the real target," Eve said, gaze flicking to me. "That's what he's cloaking in chaos."

I felt a chill trace my spine.

Eve stepped toward the holoscreen, where Lady Morrison was still frozen in confusion, her image flickering gently.

"It all makes sense now. Darius didn't care if Morrison burned every bridge he had. He just needed him to hold attention long enough. Keep the Obsidian Tower scrambling, fractured, consumed with damage control. He wants had distracted, he is on the move now but we don't know what the move is."

Kael cursed under his breath. "We've been chasing shadows while he's moving pieces on the board."

I stepped forward, my fists clenched. "Then we





need to flip the board."

But Eve's hand shot out, palm open. "No. That's what he wants—reaction, chaos, heat. That's how he controls the tempo. If we overreach, we'll walk right into whatever trap he's laid."

Her voice was calm, but the fire in her eyes belied it. Her mind was racing ahead of us all.

Cain leaned back slowly, eyes narrowing. "Then what do we do?"

Eve turned away from the screen, finally—like Morrison no longer mattered. She was a flare, not the fire. A single, painful clue in a much deeper web.

"We go cold," Eve said. "Let him think we're splintered, reeling. Let him think his distraction worked. While we figure out what he is doing? Or we will be caught unawares, despite all that we know now."



