



356 Incomplete

Eve **1**

My heart has morphed into a drum in my chest as all the implications sank in, Vassir had returned but now in the hands of the last person who should wield him. **2**

I drew in air through my nose and let it out through my mouth; the last thing I needed was hyperventilating in the dire situation. We needed to find a solution, a fast one.

I envisioned my father's dreadful eyes against my own will, dread clouding my calm and reason, I saw those wicked depths fill with power that he should never have been able to wield. And I felt...

Lost...

Unable to even dredge bravery out of the usual places in me. I found myself deflated by the fear and apprehension of what was to come.

If he won, got what he wanted, whatever twisted goal that was...



What would happen to everyone? The family I now had? Whoever had not been involved in his schemes but that I had left behind?

How many would suffer as they stood in the way of his mission?

My limbs felt like they were held down by anvils, my head spinning, my veins filling with ice, horror snaking up my spine, leaving me paralysed. My air ways close, my eyes twirling...

>"Evie..." Rhea's voice tore through my panic, "you have to stay calm. I understand you are afraid but this... will only let him win."

Her voice was soothing as it always was but the flood only became a tsunami. I tried to conjure up hope, some positivity but I was becoming buried in my fears.

And then...

Two heavy hands, rested on my shoulders, warm breath ghosting past my ear.

"Red..."

I snapped out of my spiralling thoughts, the ones so close to engulfing me. I twisted towards him,



our eyes meeting in the bright lights of the bathroom, my grip on the sink loosened.

In the storm of gray and specks of blue that I had never noticed before, was an expression that made my heart stop for an entirely new reason.

His eyes flickered with concern and another that I did not want to acknowledge; yearning. He rubbed my tense shoulders, his fingers eliciting jolts of electricity through my skin and I found myself leaning into his warmth, his body.

"Hades," His name left my lips in a breathless murmur. My lids grew heavy, my eyes darting to his lips.

His eyes flickered again but this time with an intensity that sent a pleasurable chill through me; it was a hunger, one that he quickly snuffed out.

His lips tilted into a smile, remnants of dimples making an appearance. A mischievous lilt seeping into his voice. "You remember the first time you kicked me in the nuts?" 1

I blinked, taken aback by the words out of his mouth. "What?"



He ignored my surprise, his hands kneading the knotted muscles of my shoulders. "It was not even the last thing I thought you would do. It was not even on my list. You knocked the wind out of me with a single move," His voice grew soft. "You were powerless against me, at any time you knew... I could've crushed you. And still, you stood your ground. You didn't flinch." His voice dipped low, almost reverent. "You didn't cower. You fought."

I swallowed thickly, my breath catching in my throat.

"I wasn't brave," I whispered. "I was terrified."

He leaned in, his forehead brushing mine.

"Bravery isn't about not being scared, Red. It's about kicking your enemy in the balls while you're shaking."

A reluctant laugh slipped out of me. It cracked something—just a little—through the storm still howling in my chest.

His thumb traced a gentle arc across my shoulder. "You are still that girl. Still the one who'll swing first, even when the odds are stacked and everything in you is screaming to



run."

I closed my eyes. Let the warmth of his presence anchor me.

"You make me sound like some war goddess," I murmured.

He tilted his head, eyes narrowing playfully. "No. You are a war goddess. Just one who occasionally panics in bathrooms."

I snorted. "Occasionally?"

"Okay," he conceded, lips twitching. "Frequently. But with impeccable timing."

I looked up at him again, steadier now. His touch hadn't erased the fear, but it had cleared the fog around it. I could see again—feel the weight of the threat, yes, but also the path through it.

"I don't know how to fight him," I admitted. "Not like this. Not with shadows and stolen pieces of a dead god."

"We'll figure it out," he said, firm now. "We always do."

"But what if we're too late?"



His eyes darkened—not with anger, but with the same dread I carried. And then he pulled me close, just enough for our foreheads to touch again.

"Then we make sure the last thing he sees," Hades whispered, "is you standing in his way."

My breath caught.

For a moment, all I could hear was the thundering in my chest, his words ringing in my ears like a war cry wrapped in devotion.

His hands slid from my shoulders to my waist, tentative but sure, like he was asking for permission without needing to speak it. My body answered before I could think—leaning in, curling toward him like instinct, like gravity.

"Red..." he murmured again, voice rough, reverent.

I didn't stop him.

Didn't want to.

His forehead was still against mine, our noses brushing, the heat between us no longer just comfort—it was something deeper. Older.



Hungrier.

His lips hovered near mine. Just a breath away.

"Tell me to stop," he whispered.

I didn't.

I couldn't.

My fingers curled into the fabric of his shirt. "I should."

"I know," he murmured.

But neither of us moved. The space between us shattered. His lips brushed mine once—soft, searching, a question dressed as a kiss.

I answered it.

And then, the door slammed open---

A tiny, startled voice cut through the air like a lightning strike.

"What are my mummy and daddy doing?" 2

We froze.

I blinked, heart still thudding from the kiss, and turned.



There he was.

Elliot.

Standing in the doorway with his oversized pajama top slipping off one shoulder, rubbing one eye with the back of his hand, his curly hair a halo of bed-wild fluff.

Hades straightened like he'd been caught breaking a sacred law. I nearly stumbled backward, heat blooming in my cheeks like wildfire.

> "Elliot," I croaked, voice too high, too sudden. "You—uh—you're awake!"

He tilted his head, utterly unbothered, eyes wide with sleepy confusion.

> "Were you fighting?" he asked, peering between us like a tiny detective. "Or doing face-squishing?" 1

Hades coughed into his fist.

"I—uh..." I glanced at Hades for help.

"Training," he blurted.

Elliot's brows furrowed. "You kiss when you



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train?" 1

"Only the advanced level," Hades said solemnly. 1

I shot him a glare. He just shrugged like what else was I supposed to say?

Elliot yawned dramatically and padded into the room, reaching up. "Can I sleep with you?"

That tiny, innocent voice broke me.

I bent down, scooping him into my arms. "Of course, baby."

He nestled into my neck immediately, murmuring something incoherent, and I felt his little body go heavy with sleep again.

Hades reached out, brushing a finger across Elliot's hair. His eyes met mine, soft and burning all at once.

"Rain check?" he murmured.

My cheeks burned hotter. I buried my face in Elliot's curls, mostly to hide the stupid smile tugging at my lips.

"Rain check," I whispered back, and the smirk that spread across Hades' face made my heart



stutter all over again.

Without another word, he took a step forward and gently lifted Elliot from my arms. Our son barely stirred, just curled tighter into Hades' chest like he belonged there—and he did.

Hades glanced at me, one brow raised. "Bed?"

I nodded, a lump forming in my throat at the sight of them. My boys.

We padded quietly through the room. The moment Hades laid Elliot in the middle of the bed, the child rolled instinctively toward the pillows and let out a deep sigh, like the world couldn't touch him here.

I slipped under the covers beside him, brushing his hair back as he settled. A second later, Hades joined us on the other side, the mattress dipping under his weight.

For a few moments, none of us spoke. The silence wasn't awkward—it was sacred.

Elliot's hand found mine under the blanket, and I held on like it was the only tether keeping me from spinning apart again.



Ellen

My eyes snapped open—but only darkness greeted me.

Thick, impenetrable, suffocating darkness.

For a moment, I thought I was blind. My breath hitched, shallow and panicked, and I tried to move—

But my body felt... wrong.

Heavy.

No. Unbalanced.

The cold hit me first. A cruel, metallic chill seeping into my skin like I'd been lying on stone. I flexed my fingers instinctively, trying to feel the surface beneath me—except only one hand responded.

The other—

I couldn't feel it.

I couldn't feel anything.



I turned my head, slow and stiff, and winced at the sharp pull at the base of my skull. The smell of antiseptic and something burnt clogged my nostrils. My tongue felt like ash.

Where was I?

I shifted again, this time managing to lift my right arm. My palm met cloth—blankets, maybe—but when I tried to mirror the movement on my left—

Nothing.

No resistance.

No weight.

No limb.

I stilled completely.

My breath shuddered.

Then, heart racing, I forced my eyes to adjust. Gradually, shapes began to form—dim outlines, blurry against the black. A soft light flickered from somewhere behind me, casting a pale glow across the edge of a silver tray... tools. Scalpels. Tubes. A monitor blinking in steady green.

And beside me—

My breath caught.

A stump.

Wrapped in gauze.

Neat. Clinical. Fresh.

Where my arm should've been.

My brain screamed, No. No. No. No. 1

A sound tore out of me. A strangled, broken sob
that barely passed my lips.

I wasn't dreaming.

I wasn't injured.

I was changed.

Incomplete.

