

Chapter 76

Eziah

Cold gusts of air pierce through me, sending shivers down my spine. The stone castle seems endless, and we trudge along continuously. The weight of why we are here becomes increasingly palpable with every step. After what feels like hours, we finally find ourselves standing before The Mnemosyne.

Kyan pauses and turns to Dominic and me, an uneasy look on his face. “The Mnemosyne is Hades's realm's reservoir of memories,” he begins. “Through it, we can access any of Hades's memories.”

I'm not sure what unsettles me more: the thought of stepping into someone's memories or the general feeling of unease that emanates from the waters of the Mnemosyne.

The darkness surrounding us is a physical, imposing presence, the only respite being the dim, otherworldly glow of distant phosphorescent flora.

“Do you know of Mnemosyne, Eziah?” Kaif's voice cuts through the quiet, resonating with an age-old wisdom, showing Kaif's true age. Looking at Kyan I see Kaif is now in control, and now Kyan is in the back seat.

“I've heard the tales,” I answer cautiously. “It's a pool that allows the dead to recall their memories, isn't it?”

Kaif nods, “Exactly. It's where memories are preserved, while the river Lethe makes the souls forget.”

Kaif's gaze grows distant. "Memories are a potent force. They shape us, and there's a belief that water holds memories, retaining the energy and emotions from times long past."

"Ancient civilizations believed so. And this pool," he says, gesturing to the shimmering expanse ahead, "is the epitome of that belief."

"But how can we access Hades's memories if the dead can only access theirs? How are we to access Hades?" I ask, skepticism creeping into my voice.

"It's not simple," Kaif admits. "It requires a merging of sorts. Kyan's blood, intertwined with Celeste and Hades, is the key."

"But I have no lineage tied to Hades," I point out.

"That's why you need to drink my blood," Kaif clarifies. "By drinking my blood, it will serve as a conduit, letting us step into the pool where Dominic will stop our heartbeats, rendering us dead, so we can access its memories."

I stagger back, realization dawning. "Hold on! Are you saying our hearts need to stop to unveil the past? Are you nuts?!"

Kaif holds my gaze steadily. "Not stop, but find stillness. Dominic, will assist. He'll immerse us, pausing our heartbeats for a mere moment. But fear not, with him as our anchor you'll be safe."

My mind races. "So, to uncover Hades's secrets, I have to dance with death? Ever heard the saying curiosity killed the cat? I think it is referring to this damn death pool! Kaif, I'm a werewolf, not a cat. I won't let curiosity be my end!"

Kaif chuckles. "It's not death, Eziah, but a journey through the Shadows of Hades."

"By drinking your blood?!" I gape at him, and he raises an eyebrow at me. Kaif turns to Dominic, who pulls a knife from his pocket and passes it to

Kaif who cuts his palm deeply when he fists the blade, the blood pooling and running down the blade.

“How much do I have to drink again?” I ask, still in disbelief we’re even having this conversation.

“Until I say stop,” Kaif tells me, holding his hand above my face. I squeeze my eyes shut, sticking my tongue out. A drop falls on my tongue and I shake my head at the taste. “Well, this is new. I've heard of sharing a drink, but this is a bit... iron-rich for my taste.” I gag at the taste of his blood when Kaif, using his other hand, grabs my face, squeezing it as he tilts my head back.

As Kaif squeezes his palm above my mouth, I smirk, “Man I've heard of some kinky stuff, but this is next level. Instead of a money shot, I get a blood drop?” Kaif rolls his eyes.

“You need to drink more, a couple of drops won't be enough!” Kaif tells me. “On your knees and open your mouth.”

“This feels so wrong! I know she is my twin, but I never thought I would have to share the experience of being on my knees before you.”

I snarl as Kaif grabs my shoulder, shoving me to my knees.

“Do you order and push my sister around like that? I am starting to feel like your bitch,” I tell him as I'm forced to my knees.

“Your sister loves getting on her knees for me,” Kaif laughs, and I glare at him. He reslices his hand.

“This is now starting to feel like a bad porno, but instead of you spraying your jizz over my face, you're dripping your blood on it.”

Kaif laughs, the sound echoing around the place as he grabs my face, forcing my mouth open. “Ever wonder why Marabella's skin glows so radiantly? Remember that next time you peck her on the cheek,” Kaif tells

me. However, before I can say anything, he squeezes the knife in his fist over my open mouth, I choke and gag on the taste of it.

The moment Kaif's blood slides down my throat, an overwhelming coldness invades me. I've never known a feeling so cold, as if the very shadows from which Kaif was born have wrapped around my core. Each drop felt like a weight, pulling me deeper into an abyss I couldn't see.

Being a light Gemini, there's a brightness in me, a glow that I've always felt. But as I swallow, that light flickers, almost threatening to go out. It is as if the two forces – the light and the darkness – are at war inside me. Every inch the blood travels sends waves of icy cold through my veins, making my breath cloud in front of me, a misty contrast in the still, warm air of the underworld.

For a brief moment, panic grips me, and I'm worried that something irreversible has happened. Will my light be swallowed whole? The sensation of that darkness coursing through me, that chilling shadow, is so terrifyingly alien. It feels like an eternity, even if it's just been a few heartbeats. Once the panic subsides, a strange mix of vulnerability and newfound strength settles in. It's as though I'd touched a forbidden realm, a place where light and dark don't just coexist but merge.

When he's satisfied I've drunk enough, he lets me go, and he pulls me to my feet. The room spins violently, and Dominic grabs me as I sway, unsteady on my feet. "Are you good?" Dominic asks just as everything starts to settle around, remaining still. I nod, turning to see Kaif enter the pool.

The pool of Mnemosyne. To me, it's a paradox. While everything around me in this room seems tainted by shadows and sorrow, the pool gleams with an inexplicable luminosity.

The water is clearer than any I've ever seen, as if made from pure crystal rather than liquid. It is strangely expansive, spreading out wider than I would expect, but it is also unnaturally still, not even a single ripple to

mar its smooth surface. The pool's edges are not defined by rocks or earthen banks but seem to simply fade into the ground, giving it the illusion of being infinite, or maybe it is.

As I approach, I feel a cold draft emanating from it, a chill that speaks more of metaphysical unease than temperature. It beckons, but it also repels, like a siren's song that promises knowledge at the cost of one's soul.

Looking closer, the depths of the pool seem boundless. Despite its clarity, I cannot see its bottom, only an endless abyss that stretches down into the heart of the underworld. Yet, within this chasm, there are flashes of memories, mere fragments of a time gone by, dancing just beyond my grasp. They shimmer like fish under a sunlit surface, teasingly unreachable.

Drawing nearer, I feel an invisible pull, a gentle tug at the very core of my being. There's an energy here, an ancient power that resonates with the flow of time and memory. It feels both welcoming and warning, like a guardian that stands between the world of the living and the recollections of the dead.

As I touch the water, a jolt runs through me. It's cold, colder than the deepest winter's night, and it feels thick, almost viscous, as if I'm touching liquid history. There's an icky sensation, something that feels wrong, unnatural. It clashes with my essence, reminding me that I am the light side of the Gemini, and this place, with all its dark allure, is not meant for me.

Yet, as my fingers skim the surface, the memories become more vivid, drawing me in, urging me to dive deeper into Hades's past and uncover the truth that lies submerged within the pool of Mnemosyne.

The cool touch of the Mnemosyne pool's water meets my feet first, a gentle caress that sends shivers up my spine. As Dominic guides Kaif and

me further into the shimmering expanse. I take a deep breath, trying to brace myself for the sensation that was about to engulf me.

As we become fully submerged, a deafening silence fills my ears — the kind of silence that precedes a storm. It's as if the world has muted itself, leaving only my heartbeat to punctuate the stillness. With each passing second, the sensation intensifies, as though I am plunging deeper into an abyss of memory and time.

Suddenly, memories that do not belong to me start flooding my consciousness. Images, sounds, and emotions overwhelm me, swirling and merging like a tumultuous storm. Before me, I see the birth of the universe, the forging of the stars, the creation of worlds. There are fleeting glimpses of gods, titans, and celestial beings, their might and fury on full display.

A scene from an old saloon that looks to be in the viking era, maybe even earlier, unfurls before us. People chatter and move about, the air filled with tobacco smoke, and the tang of whiskey. Celeste, a striking woman, stands at the bar, exchanging herbs with another woman behind it. But my eyes are drawn to another figure — a man, seemingly trying to blend in. Even though he appears human, there's an undeniable aura about him. It takes me a few moments to recognize him as Hades.

I watch as his heart visibly races as if it were my beating heart in my chest when his gaze finds Celeste. Despite his attempts to appear casual, she seems to sense something amiss. The energy between them is palpable.

“Why would Hades come to the human realm?” I murmur, more to myself than to anyone else.

Kaif ponders for a moment before replying, “Maybe he was searching for something... or someone.” I am shocked when I hear Kaif's voice clear as a bell, making me realize we are both watching the same thing thanks to his father playing anchor.

Celeste's movements are hesitant as she tries to walk past Hades, yet she keeps stopping, like she can feel him but can't locate him. She comes to an abrupt halt, scanning her surroundings. Trying to shake off the unease, she continues on her way. Hades, however, cloaked in invisibility, trails her. For the next few moments we watch the next few days unfold, this eerie dance continues. He stalks, she senses, yet remains unaware of his proximity.

Yet at the saloon, their paths intersect again. She's handing over tinctures to the woman at the bar when Hades approaches. Through Hades's memory, we come to learn that the humans think Celeste is just a crazy medicine woman. If only they knew how powerful the small woman truly is.

Hades stops next to her, and Celeste glances at him, turning her attention back to the woman. Suddenly, she gasps and stumbles back, her voice barely a whisper, "That is not possible!" she gasps when she takes him in. "Witches don't have mates!" she blurts in her shock.

"But you're no normal witch are you, Celeste?" Hades replies, his voice dripping with irony.

"Who are you?" Her eyes search his, trying to decipher what the man is before her.

It's so weird being in Hades's memories. We don't get to just watch here, we also feel what he feels. I can sense Hades's hesitation, the fear of rejection looming over him. "Luca Octavian," he finally responds.

Time seems to rush forward, and we're suddenly at their wedding. Celeste's joy is palpable, but a shadow of doubt creeps in when she remarks on the absence of Hades' family. "They're dead," he tells her. I can't help but think of the truth he withholds, knowing how their love story ends.

The memory morphs again, revealing the majestic Octavian Manor, back before it became the cemetery for the Octavian bloodline. Their family settles in, with the birth of Luna adding to their happiness. The grounds, which I can sense are sacred, radiate an aura of protection. Celeste, surrounded by her coven, finally feels at home.

However, their happiness is fleeting. Celeste's trust in Hades begins to waver, growing paranoid about his mysterious nocturnal disappearances. I watch as she confides in Kaif, who suggests that perhaps Hades is visiting other villages. Taking his advice, she leaves Luna in his care and decides to follow her husband one evening.

She turned to Kaif, her voice filled with urgency. “Do you think Luca is visiting other villages?”

Kaif nodded slowly. “It's possible. Perhaps you could follow him one evening and find out where he goes.”

“Yes, of course.” She bites her lip, not knowing what she would do if she finds out that Luca is cheating on her. But she has to know. “Luna can stay here while I'm gone,” she says determinedly.

Kaif hesitates before nodding in agreement, his face solemn.

Taking a deep breath, she gives Luna one last hug goodbye and leaves with determination coursing through her veins.

I feel my heart race as Hades leaves, telling Celeste he is going hunting. She follows and witnesses Hades opening a portal. After a moment of hesitation, she steps in after him. The scene that awaits her is beyond her wildest imagination. A dark, stone castle, the cries of children echoing through its halls. As she edges closer, a confrontation unfolds before her.

“She is my mate, what do you expect, Persephone? We have a daughter together,” Hades, or rather *Luca* as Celeste knows him, argues.

The name 'Persephone' sends a shiver down my spine. Celeste hiding witnesses the drama as Persephone yells back, “You just abandoned us for some woman!”

Peeking into what seems to be a futuristic kitchen to Celeste, Celeste's world shatters as she overhears their conversation. When Persephone storms off, and Hades notices her, the realization is earth-shattering.

“Celeste?!” he murmurs, panic evident in his voice.

“How did you get here?” Hades asks her, hands out to her in a gesture revealing his utter panic.

She steps back, confusion and betrayal evident in her eyes. “Who are you?”

However, before he can answer, Persephone's return intensifies the confrontation. “How did she get in here? You bring your whore back here!” Persephone yells at Hades. Celeste becomes enraged at the insult. “You dare bring her here to flaunt in my face? I'm your wife, yet you choose a mortal over me, Hades!”

“I can explain,” Hades tries to tell her, but her anger rises, he betrayed her, lied for all those years. She wants to hurt him, hurt him like he hurt her, and she lets her magic loose, only instead of aiming at him, she aims her magic at Persephone.

“I'll kill you! Kill all of you!” Celeste rages. Hades blocks her magic when Persephone screams.

Hades attempts to mediate are futile. Celeste's anger and magic flare up. In her rage, a spell meant for Persephone goes astray, striking his son instead.

“What have you done?!” Hades gasps, staggering toward his son.

Celeste cups her face when Persephone, who clutches her son, glares at her, lifting her hand when Hades notices her rage.

“No! Persephone...” He turns, opening a portal and blasting Celeste with his magic. She is shoved through the portal back to the realm we call earth before Persephone could destroy her.

The memories continue, painting a tale of pain and longing. Hades saved his son by taking him to Earth. He tries to reconcile with Celeste, but when she rejects him, his wrath knows no bounds. He annihilates the village around the manor, sparing only her coven. Celeste flees, ever on the move, fearing Hades's vengeance.

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From the depths of memory, I watch the past unravel.

The village is cast in a deep and mysterious hue, illuminated by the twinkling stars of an inky-black night sky.

But the serene imagery is about to be disrupted.

At the edge of the village stands Hades looking tall and imposing, wreathed in shadows and the red glow of his angry eyes. He looks at the village that harbors his nemesis, Celeste. A protective ward shields it, visible to his divine eyes. A shimmering barrier only he could sense. Frustrated, he directed his gaze to a neighboring village, untouched by Celeste's magic.

Initially, it seems his intent is to destroy it as a mere statement, a show of power to taunt and beckon Celeste from the safety of the wards.

But as Hades approaches, something catches his eye: a lone wolf silver-furred, stalking sheep on the village outskirts. Its predatory grace fascinates him for a moment. I feel an icy chill, as I watch him watch the wolf with an unnerving excitement.

The wolf lunges, and the poor lamb never stood a chance. The baby lamb's whine echoes, short-lived and abruptly cut. Hades pauses, observing the predator's raw power, its eyes shining with an insatiable hunger. The god of the underworld somehow looks contemplative.

But that moment of reflection is broken by an unexpected event. The sky itself seems to revolt against him. Thunder rumbles angrily, an atmospheric expression of rage that rivaled that of Hades. Lightning dances across the vast expanse, painting it in streaks of furious white.

Hades's head snaps up to the tumultuous heavens. "If the fates won't protect my children, I will! I warned you all!" His shout is deafening,

infused with a divine fury that threatens to tear the very fabric of the world apart. Another bolt of lightning descends, this one striking dangerously close to him, setting a hut aflame.

The sight of the burning hut brings him back to his present surroundings. His eyes now rest on the wolf once more. With an unnatural speed, Hades is upon the creature. The beast barely has time to register the god's approach before it is slain, its blood staining Hades's hands a dark crimson.

“She may not fear the reaper,” Hades growls, voice dripping with venom, “but she shall fear my reaper wolves. And reap they will.”

The very ground trembles with his anger. The sky mirrors his rage with relentless lightning and thunder. It feels as though the universe is bending to his will, resonating with his emotions.

The village plunges into chaos. Screams pierce the night. Men, women, and children try to flee, their figures silhouetted against the fiery backdrop of their burning homes. Hades moves through them like a shadow, every touch, every glance spelling doom.

I can barely breathe, watching the horror unfold. Each life is snuffed out, a story ended, a dream shattered. The sheer magnitude of his wrath is incomprehensible.

Then, as the last scream echoes into silence, Hades stands amidst the devastation. The only sound is the crackling of the flames, consuming what remained of the village.

At his feet lay the wreckage of what had once been a thriving village. The charred remains of huts and homes are scattered as far as the eye can see, and everywhere he looks, he sees death and destruction. He is in the midst of his own personal vision of hell.

And yet, amidst all this chaos and carnage, a single thought returns to him: This could have been prevented, if she had just heard him out. Gave him a chance to explain.

Hades, standing amidst the devastation, looks around at the lifeless bodies that litter the village grounds. The air is thick with the scent of blood and fire, and the night is only broken by the distant wailing of those who have been badly injured and teetering on the veil between life and death. The air turns heavy with the scent of burnt flesh and hellfire, death and decay.

He kneels, placing a hand on the ground, feeling the very life force of the earth pulse beneath his fingers. With a deep breath, Hades starts channeling his divine power. The ground vibrates in response, and a dark, ethereal mist rises, enveloping the village.

Drawing upon the souls of those he'd just slain, Hades weaves a spell, older than time itself. It is a forbidden ritual that taps into the very essence of life and death. He channels the anguish, the fear, and the raw primal instincts of the dead villagers, using their very essence as the foundation for his creation.

His creation takes the form of mist, looking as if it has been formed by all the stars in the universe, and yet, it is as thick as smoke and inky black. It's as if a force of gravity has taken over, moving through the village and absorbing something dark and unknown from all the corpses scattered around.

As soon as it makes contact with the bodies, the essence sinks into them. The people, all of them, lay motionless as the darkness creeps towards their bodies.

At first, they are still, utterly still. And then, their bodies begin to shake. They look, for a brief moment, as if they are puppets controlled by an invisible hand.

The dark mist takes shape, solidifying into the forms of massive wolves. Their fur, as black as the night, shimmers with an otherworldly glow. Their eyes, a haunting shade of silver, bore the torment of the souls that now inhabit them. These are not ordinary wolves; they are larger, more muscular, and radiate an aura of menace and power. Each soul is transformed, stripped of its humanity, and reforged into a beast that will serve Hades's will.

Hades then imbues them with a piece of his essence, granting them abilities beyond any mortal creature. These creatures are faster, stronger, and their senses are heightened to supernatural levels. Their very presence would instill terror in the hearts of men, and their howls would be the messenger of the doom to come.

But more importantly, they are unflinchingly loyal servants to Hades. With a mere thought, he can command them to hunt, to kill, or to protect. They are an extension of his will, creatures born from death and bound to serve the god of the underworld, or so he believes.

As the last of the reaper wolves takes form, Hades stands, admiring his creation. They circle him, their muzzles low, acknowledging their master. With a satisfied nod, Hades knows that he has created the perfect instruments of revenge. The reaper wolves are born and with them, a new era of terror is set to begin.

His voice reverberates with authority, echoing across the lake and through the trees, dark and powerful. And with this power, the souls of the dead rise.

They are no longer human; the human side to them was merely a shell, the humanity stripped away as they became something else entirely. A spark of life has been breathed back into their corpses, and the reaper wolves circle, snarling. Hades watches with a sense of satisfaction as his army takes shape before him. These creatures will be his loyal subjects, bound by the essence of death and destruction.

The reaper wolves are unlike anything the mortal realm had ever seen before. With speed and agility that surpassed that of any animal, they moved through the shadows with an uncanny grace. They are fierce predators, their teeth sharp as knives, and their claws deadly weapons.

Hades watches as his creatures move, their silhouettes disappearing into the darkness. He knows that the village will never recover from this night, that he had brought about a level of destruction that would echo through the centuries. But he does not care; his goal is not to be merciful or kind.

Hades is a God, and he exists to hand out punishment to those who dare cross him. Celeste has made a grave mistake in crossing him, and now she will pay the ultimate price.

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As the reaper wolves move through the village, their howls echoing across the countryside. Hades smiles with satisfaction. His wrath has been unleashed, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it.

The God of the Underworld looks over his new army with satisfaction. “Reap they will,” he whispers, sealing the fate of many more to come.

I blink, trying to shake off the lingering dread. The Mnemosyne's waters pull me back, but the images, the screams, and the birth of the reaper wolves will forever be etched in my memory. And so will the sight of what they become as the vision moves to the invasion of Celeste's Village.

Darkness hangs in the air as the newly created reaper wolves following Hades's unspoken command, race towards the distant glow of Celeste's village. From where I stand in the vision, the winds carry a foreboding sense of danger.

Celeste's village is fortified with shimmering wards, erected to shield her people and, more importantly, her daughter from Hades's wrath. These wards are renowned for their strength, designed specifically to repel the God of the Underworld. However, they haven't accounted for the reaper wolves, creatures of both the mortal and the divine, birthed from the souls of the fallen, yet stripped of humanity. They only know how to destroy, rape, and kill.

As the wolves approach, the wards vibrate with a resonant hum, casting arcs of bright, ethereal light into the night.

Men, women, and children scramble in panic, gathering weapons, preparing defenses, and seeking refuge. Celeste, her form radiating a calm yet powerful aura, emerges at the village center. Her eyes, full of determination and a hint of desperation, scans the horizons for signs of

Hades. Yet, it is not him but his monstrous creations that she sees descending upon her sanctuary.

“These aren't ordinary wolves,” she whispers to Kaif. “They are extensions of Hades himself.”

“What are they?” Kaif asks. Yet, Celeste doesn't have a name for them. However, she can sense Hades's power all over them.

But Celeste, drawing upon her immense power, fights back. With every wave of her hand, bursts of energy repel the beasts, turning some to ash and sending others retreating with scorched fur. Yet, there are too many, and for each that fall, two more seem to take its place.

After a while, the reaper wolves grow bored. Her village has been destroyed and her human half-brother has been killed.

However, after the first week of his reaper wolves' continued attacks on Celeste, Hades begins to see the error of his creation. When they are killed, they rise again. Clawing at the earth in which they were buried, they are never truly dead. And no matter how many times Celeste kills them, they always return.

Hades realizes he messed up, and that the people he turned into the reaper wolves are an abomination, one not even he can fathom. He tries killing them himself yet finds the more he tries, the stronger they get, the more savage and the smarter they become.

The silver lining in the dark cloud of reaper wolves becomes increasingly thin as the beasts' persistent revivals become evident.

The scene morphes, showing Celeste's failed attempt at creating her Lycans. However, when it doesn't work, and she too makes the mistake of creating yet another monster, her face is taken over with hopelessness. Her desperation leads her to order Bain to search for Hades's twins — her potential leverage against the God of the Underworld.

Unbeknownst to Hades, who has been working tirelessly trying to find a way to destroy his own creation and correct the balance, he follows his reaper wolves across the country. Yet nothing he does can stop them, nothing he tries works until he stumbled across a village deep in the forest.

It is a cruel irony — a God trying to undo his own creation, only to see it defy him in the most horrific way possible.

What shocks me even more is realizing that the origin of the werewolf myth was not as I'd believed. Celeste, whom I had always considered the creator of the Lycan lineage, was not the true creator. Before her Lycans, Hades's reaper wolves roamed the earth, setting the stage for a legacy of blood and carnage.

Even Gods have their regrets, it seems, and the reaper wolves are his. Struggling to cope with the havoc wrought by his creation, I watch as Hades's steps lead him to a secluded village deep within the forests, its atmosphere laden with the scent of fear and anticipation.

The villagers, desperate, have put out a call for help, looking for a hunter to help slaughter the feral wolves. Little do they know that the hunter that would come to help them, is no hunter but a God. Hades knows if he can't stop the Reaper Wolves, the Fates will come down hard on him. So in a desperate attempt to kill the very monsters he created, he makes another.

The village elder, an aged man with lines of worry etched into his brow, approaches Hades, hope glinting in his eyes. They are desperate. Their pleas for help against the thieving feral wolves have summoned not a mortal hunter, but a deity. And in their darkest hour, this god makes them an offer.

Yet, Hades is not willing to make the same mistake this time, so he gives them the power to kill the reaper wolved. But it comes at a price.

“To rid your lands of these beasts, I will give you the strength, and might, you need? But remember, with great power comes a cage. Once you

accept my gift, you cannot leave these woods until every last reaper wolf is annihilated.”

The desperation is palpable. The elder, speaking for his terrified people, consents, sealing their fate. And at that very moment, I witness the birth of the were-bears — immense, powerful creatures with a singular purpose. They are Hades's new weapons, designed specifically to tackle the reaper wolves. Their fearsome appearance was complemented by a venomous bite, lethal only to the reaper wolves.

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Temperance

Yet, once again, Hades fails. The fail-safe he put in place to ensure they couldn't leave the forest backfires. While the creatures can kill the reaper wolves, they're still locked in a cage of forest. As the bears begin their hunt, another cruel twist of fate reveals itself. Their confinement to the forest means that the reaper wolves, once they move out of this terrain, are simply beyond reach, leaving the were-bears trapped in their prison.

From where I stand, the tragedies unfolding provide a revelatory stream of new information coming to light. For so long, I believed the were-bears were of Celeste's creation. Yet, it makes me think of my mother's words when they begged for her help, convinced she could save them. Her reply: "*Not my circus, not my monkeys.*" Maybe some part of her knew they weren't for a Moon Goddess to fix, but that of another God.

Hades, in trying to rectify his previous mistakes, has only layered on another. The burden of playing God has become evident in his visage, and I can't help but feel a small pang of sympathy.

The vision starts to wane, the edges blurring. But the implications of what I'd witnessed are firmly imprinted in my mind. The webs of creation, each action and reaction, paints a picture of gods and mortals trapped in an intricate dance, driven by desires and consequences.

So while Hades tries to correct his mistakes, Celeste ensures he pays for them. I soon realize why demi gods are actually more dangerous. That mortal part of them is led by emotion, emotion, and power, which serves as a deadly combination. Once again, the vision moves, and I watch the scenes I witnessed in the fountain of life play out once more, only now we are getting the missing puzzle pieces.

Bain, having left and run off with Seline after he failed to catch Stellara, to Celeste trying to steal the power of Hades's twins. I can understand why Hades tried so hard to kill her and take Luna; she was unhinged, just as the next memory shows.

The edges of the previous memories dissolve, giving way to a new, stark setting. A dimly lit chamber, filled with the scent of old incense and cold stone, becomes clear. Celeste, in her usual confident demeanor, stands at the center, her attention focused intently on two figures: the twins, Stellara and her brother.

Their faces are a mirror image of one another, but it's their eyes that captivate me. They hold a depth, a connection, as if they see beyond the physical realm, connecting their souls. Celeste's voice breaks the tense silence, her incantation resonating through the chamber:

“By the power of the moon and stars, From realms both near and far, Grant me the essence of the twins two, To wield their strength and start anew.”

She holds an ornate dagger, its blade gleaming ominously. As she approaches the brother, she mutters, *“For power to be birthed, a sacrifice must be made.”* With a swift, decisive motion, she plunges the dagger into his heart. His gasp is sharp, echoing in the chamber, and then he falls, lifeless, at her feet.

“Upon the crescent moon's bright shine, in shadow's heart, a plan divine. A maiden's life, to alter fate, a bloodline pure, to consecrate.

The God's essence in innocent guise, her sacrifice the immortal's demise. A bond of blood, a secret kept, in the heart of Hades, long it slept.”

“Bathed in blood of divine sire. Shadows cast and secrets spoken, by God's blood, the eternal is broken.” Stellara laughs despite her grief, and Celeste stops. It takes her a few moments to realize that by sacrificing one, she wasn't obtaining his power at all like she'd hoped. In fact, she felt nothing.

But as the life drains from him, the unexpected occurs. A brilliant light emanates from Stellara, enveloping her brother's body. It's mesmerizing and intense, and I can barely keep my eyes on it. The very air seems to pulsate, charged with raw energy. And then, in a breathtaking moment, I see it: the soul of the brother, a luminous entity, being absorbed into Stellara. It's as if they were always meant to be one, two halves of a whole. Only then did she realize how Hades managed to save his son that night.

He tethered his son to his daughter, and that explains why they can't survive in the underworld now. Their souls are linked, so was their magic, and now she is realizing why. To save one, he also has to sacrifice the other, removing half her power to give to the other, Hades's children are no longer gods and goddesses. Stellara had sacrificed her goddess life force for her brother, splitting it in two, creating two Demi-Gods.

“No!” Celeste screams just as Stellara collapses, having absorbed her brother's power. She glares up at Celeste, who stops and smiles cruelly. “I needed one sacrifice, but I suppose two will do, your father is a cunning man, ensuring your brothers' power went to you, but he forgot one thing, I only need to kill you both to take it!”

Stellara, though filled with grief and anger, stares at her dead brother, her other half, her twin, yet his power now runs through her veins, and she now has her full power back.

Celeste stumbles back, her eyes wide in shock, unprepared for this twist. Her spell, meant to harness their power, has gone horribly wrong. The chamber is filled with an overwhelming surge of energy. Cracks appear on the walls, and the very foundation seems to shake.

“*What have you done?!*” Celeste screams at Stellara, her voice echoing with fury and fear. But Stellara, now empowered with her brother's essence, stands tall. Her gaze is unwavering, filled with sorrow and newfound strength.

“You may have taken him from this world, but he lives within me. We are bound eternally,” she declares, her voice steady.

The consequences of Celeste's actions become apparent as the chamber continues to destabilize. I can feel the weight of her regret, but also Stellara's immense grief and power.

The vision fades, but the emotions linger. I'm left with a heavy heart, pondering the depths of the bond between the twins and the unpredictable nature of magic. Celeste, for all her might and knowledge, can not foresee the soul bond between siblings, a bond that transcends life and death. Celeste's quest to obtain power unknowingly created the first Gemini Twin.

Chapter 80

Rose

The stillness of the night is too much. The quiet that should bring comfort only fills me with a dread that tightens in my chest. Every creak of the house, every soft rustle of the leaves outside feels amplified. I used to wish for nights like these, free from the looming threat of Vince's unpredictable temper. But now that I have it, the peace feels unnatural, like the silence before a storm.

Turning restlessly in bed, I try to close my eyes and find sleep. But my mind won't quieten. I hear a soft sound coming from the other room. It's just Casen. I know that. Although sometimes, just sometimes, his movements or the way he says something is eerily reminiscent of Vince. It's hard to forget, even if I desperately want to.

The sun isn't even up yet, and today we're heading to the city. Marabella had invited us ages ago, and I had so happily agreed back then. But now, thinking of mingling with people and pretending that all is fine sends my heart into a frenzy. It's too soon, it feels wrong. How can I pretend we aren't in danger from Vince?

I hear footsteps approaching the bedroom. I pretended to be asleep when he got up earlier; he does this every morning around the same time. He thinks I don't know, but I've always been a light sleeper, so I hear him checking to make sure the house remains secure through the night. Casen leans against the doorway, watching me with soft eyes. "Can't sleep?" he asks. I lay there for a moment without answering.

"I know you're awake, Rose. I can feel your worry," he murmurs, and I open an eye. He smiles and shakes his head.

“Why do you do that? If you're scared, just say so, there is no shame in it,” he tells me.

I shake my head, pulling myself to sit up. “It just... feels too soon, you know? Going out, acting like everything's okay.”

Casen moves closer, sitting on the edge of the bed. “You can't keep waiting for the sky to fall, Rose. It's a school event. There'll be so many people... Vince wouldn't dare do anything.”

Sighing heavily, I nod, thinking of Casey's excited eyes at the mention of the festival. “I just want her to be happy. I don't want my fears to hold her back.”

A soft smile appears on Casen's lips. “We'll be there with you. And it might be good for you to get a dose of normalcy. So get dressed, we have to leave in a couple of hours anyway, traffic is horrendous this morning, and we don't want to be late.”

I nod in agreement, knowing he's right. It's time to push past my fears for the sake of my daughter. Getting dressed, I try to shake off the feeling of unease that lingers within me. When I am done, I help Casey get ready while Casen makes her breakfast. Finishing her hair, I sit her at the table so she can eat while I grab her shoes.

“Could you grab those tickets Marabella sent over? They're on the fridge,” I tell Casen while retrieving her shoes that are by the front door. Kneeling next to Casey, I begin helping her into her shoes while Casen heads to the kitchen. A moment later, his voice floats in, slightly baffled. “They're not here. Are you sure they're on the fridge?”

Exasperated, I quickly tie her lace and join him, taking down the basket, but they're gone. Panic wells up in me. “I remember putting them right here,” I say, my voice shaking.

Casen looks thoughtful. “Maybe you put them in your bag?”

He fetches it, but the tickets aren't there. A chill runs down my spine. "What if Vince has been here?"

Casen's gaze hardens. "Your father would've sensed an intruder."

"But Vince left before being banished," I counter.

Casen wraps an arm around me, trying to calm my racing heart. "It's okay. It's just tickets. Maybe you misplaced them. Let's call Marabella. We'll figure this out, she can log in and print them off again."

As we make our way to the city, Casen keeps up a steady stream of conversation, telling me about his plans for the future and how he wants to give Casey and me a better life. His words are warm and reassuring, and it's hard not to feel comforted by them.

When we arrive at the school, it's already bustling with people. Meeting Marabella, Temperance, Jonah, and the kids, the weight on my chest starts to ease. The school tour is lovely, and Corina's shining eyes when she gets her award makes it all worth it. The atmosphere is lively, and Casey bounces with excitement at seeing her cousins. It's contagious, and I can't help but smile at her eagerness.

We make small talk with the other parents while keeping an eye on Casey as she runs around with her friends. It feels good to connect with others again, to feel part of something normal.

But as the day wears on, I can't shake off my unease. Vince's presence lingers in my mind like a dark cloud on a sunny day. It's so hard to forget what he's done and what he's capable of.

As we head towards the top oval, a sense of unease washes over me. I can't shake the feeling of eyes on me, watching, waiting. Casen notices my discomfort, squeezing my hand reassuringly. But even amidst the fun of the carnival rides and the laughter of children, I can't escape the feeling that I'm being watched.

When Casey runs ahead to chase Corina, her laughter echoes in the distance, but even that sound can't drown out the unease growing inside me. The rides whirl and spin, colorful lights illuminating happy faces, but in the midst of it all, my world narrows. Every tall, dark-haired man in the crowd becomes a potential threat, a shadow from my past waiting to pounce.

Casen, sensing my tension, whispers, "Everything okay?"

"Just feels ... off. Like I'm being watched." My gaze flickers around nervously, settling on each unfamiliar face, searching for the one I fear most.

He drapes an arm across my shoulders, tugging me closer. "Remember, it's a public place. It would be foolish for Vince to make a scene here."

Jonah has a balloon in one hand and his daughter's hand in the other as he wrangles her back with Corina. "Everything good?" he asks as he joins us.

Casen nods, not wanting to alarm the others. "Yeah, just soaking it all in." I smile.

The kids are eager to hop on the rides, so Marabella and Temperance herd them towards the closest merry-go-round. The music, the laughter, the festivities should've been comforting, yet the tight knot in my stomach refuses to loosen.