



274 It's My Fault

The next two chapters will be them dismantling their complex feelings so heads up (this was harder to write LOL): 1

Eve

Elliot lay in my arms, sleeping now, body ached into mine. His body was warm and small. It was now when I held him like this that I realized just how tiny he was, his frame slight, signs of the incessant unnecessary invasive medical procedures, and under-eating. 1

I knew who was responsible now, without a shadow of doubt, yet would it be enough to grant me reprieve from the guilt that gnawed at me, the hollowed that had taken root in me.

Kael had left, leaving me with... Hades.

For a long moment, there was nothing but the sound of Elliot's soft breathing.

None of us spoke

Because...



What was there left to say?

I raised my head slowly, and from where he now stood, our eyes met. It was like a clash, steel against flesh as agony seized me.

He looked different...

He was different.

Skin, the pallor of snow, the red ring around the stormy greys I had come to love and then fear was more striking. His eyes were sunken, downcast pulled down by the weight of all that had happened.

His scent was pungent, eerie, death in itself. The hairs on my arms raised, the presence of the flux palpable from where I was.

"I should've believed you," he said, voice low.

I found myself flinching at the voice I could no longer recognise. It was worn and jagged enough to pierce.

His voice barely carried.

"I should've believed you." He repeated

There was a pause.



A breath.

Then the soft, shaky scrape of his boots against marble as he shifted his weight—awkward, unsure.

I didn't look away. Not yet. Not even as he let out a dry, humorless laugh that sounded like it hurt.

"I—I don't even know what the fuck I thought I was doing," he muttered, dragging a hand through his hair, fingers curling at the roots like he could tear the thoughts out. "Gods. I mean—how the hell do I even start?" 1

Another pause. His voice cracked the next time he spoke, lower now, like it was buckling beneath him.

"I ran from you. And when I didn't run, I punished you." He scratched at his neck, hard. "I let them do things to you I wouldn't let happen to a stranger. And I told myself it was justice. That it was righteous. That you were the monster."

His eyes didn't meet mine. Not now.

"But I was the one foaming at the mouth, wasn't



I?" he asked, more to himself than to me. "You stood there, broken and begging, and I—" His voice caught. "I wanted you to hurt. I needed you to, because if you weren't lying, then what the fuck did that make me?"

His hand dropped. Hung limp at his side.

He was unraveling, piece by piece, but not like before—not with fury. With something far worse.

Regret.

Real, seeping, irreversible regret.

"I don't have a speech," he said, looking up—just a flicker of eye contact before he dropped it again. "No redemption arc. No plan. I just..."

He inhaled sharply through his nose.

"Can I come closer?" he whispered. "Just a little?" He looked as shattered as I felt. "Please..."

He didn't move.

Not yet.

He waited—on me.



Like a man at the gallows. And I was the rope.

I could feel the tears gather behind my eyes, yet my face remained unaltered by the rage of emotions that threatened to tear me apart. I wanted to let him, tell him to come closer because breathing without him felt like drowning, but the schism was no longer a wound. It was a gulf that swallowed all hope and made mockery of reconciliation. 3

My mouth was dry, my throat itches as I spoke in a voice that sounded distant.

"The distance between us..." I whispered, voice brittle like old glass, "is not something you cross by asking permission." 1

His breath caught. I saw it. A twitch in his shoulders, a wince that wasn't physical.

"You built it. With your hands. With your words. With your silence. And now you want to walk across it like it's a hallway? Like it doesn't reek of blood and betrayal?" 4

He didn't answer.

He didn't dare.



I shifted slightly, cradling Elliot closer, not for protection—but for grounding. For strength.

Yet...

I killed his... mother. 2

>"Evie..." Rhea whispered, pulling me back.

But even her voice could not change the truth.

"You want to come closer?" I said, eyes finally meeting his. "Then come. But know that you'll feel every inch of what you made. Every crack. Every scream. Every time I begged you to see me and you chose to see a weapon instead."

His lips parted—maybe to speak, maybe to plead—but nothing came out. His brows quivered, pale lips quivering, his form shaking as though his knees wanted to buckle.

Seeing him like this was yet another weight on top of everything.

I sank my teeth into my bottom lip until it bled.

I needed another type of pain. 1

I let the silence sit. Let it burn. 1



"You said you don't have a speech," I continued.
"Good. Because there's nothing you could say
that hasn't already been bled out of me." 3

A pause.

Then quieter—

"I hate you, Hades," I whispered—and the words
didn't crack. They sliced. 1

But the silence that followed shattered me more
than his reaction ever could.

He dropped to his knees like his body finally
gave in. Like guilt had weight.

"No, Eve... please—" 2

I smiled through the tears. Cruel, broken, soft. "I
wish I could mean those words. I wish I could
hate you for plotting to use me like everyone
else ever has. I wish I could despise you for
planning to erase my kind like vermin." 2

My voice broke, just a breath now. "I wish I
meant it when I said I regret meeting you."

And gods, I wish I didn't still love you.

"But it was all my fault," I confessed, the words

choking me. 4

Hades stopped, his eyes marred with disbelief as to what I was now saying.

"We would have never met if I didn't rip her open," I said again, softer this time, the words sticking to my throat like ash. "If I hadn't... if I hadn't torn through that convoy. If I hadn't killed her."

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