



301 Elysia

Eve 1

Pain twisted into rage just before it could be dispelled.

Rhea's voice cut through the void, low and seething:

> "Burn the love and destroy him, Elysia. You have done it once before."

Elysia.

The name hit like a lightning bolt. Not Eve. Not Red.

Elysia. Mother o

And then...

Flashes.

Too fast. Too raw.

A woman.

Hair like wildfire, it was long, unbound, whipping in a violent wind. Her eyes were



shadowed. A medieval dress clung to her bloodstained body, torn at the seams as she dropped to her knees.

She screamed, as her bones snapped and reshaped, skin stretching into fur so dark it drank the light. Her form contorted into a wolf unlike anything else, huge, ancient, and crowned in shadow.

She snarled at a shape. A figure.

Cloaked in black. No face. Just horns—twisted, curved, obsidian and smoking.

A second shadow loomed above the first. This one was familiar, betrayal bloomed in my chest.

It descended from the void, faceless but crowned in a withered silver crown.

Its hand—massive, pale, veined with light—reached down and gripped the horn of the figure below.

And the red-haired woman screamed,

"Malrik!"

Snap.



The horn broke in the starlit figure's grip.

The cloaked entity let out a horrible, atom-splitting shriek. The kind of sound that precedes a cataclysm. That creates one.

I gasped—and woke inside the nightmare again.
Hades.

On top of me. His weight, his breath, his eyes—
Still inside my mind, unraveling it.

But now—I was burning. Not from him.
From me.

"You don't get to rewrite me," I choked. "You don't get to decide who I am—"

I reached up—

And grabbed his horn.

It burned beneath my palm. Searing. Screaming.
His body jerked as if struck.

> "No," he growled. "You belong to me."

And I bent.



With everything I had. My body shook. My muscles tore.

But the horn cracked.

His eyes widened—just for a moment. Fear broke through the Flux's haze.

And then—SNAP.

The sound was biblical. A death knell. A beginning.

Hades howled—a wretched, gurgling, disembodied thing. Like his soul had been split from his body.

It shredded through the dream realm like a black sonic quake.

Using the shock, I shoved my knees into his stomach and kicked.

He flew backward—slammed into the wall with a sickening crunch that sent cracks spiraling like frost in glass.

I shifted.

My skin split. My bones screamed. My wolf burst through, bigger than I had ever known her to be.



She landed, claws digging into stone, eyes gleaming with vengeance.

Black fur shimmered. Not just black almost void.

Her fangs gleamed. Her lips curled.

Rhea was back. 3

And this time

We weren't running.

He rose slowly.

Shaking.

One of his hands clutched the broken horn—jagged at the base, leaking black-red ichor. The other trembled as he braced it against the fractured wall for balance. I could hear his breath—ragged, uneven, like something inside him had snapped loose.

Then he looked at me.

And for the first time, he didn't snarl.

He stared.

At me.



At what I had become—shadow-bound, fur slick with darkness, ember eyes burning into his.

His eyes that had been searing and cruel, were blown wide.

With fear.

Rhea growled low in my throat, her rage simmering just beneath my skin.

> "Let me rip him open."

But I held. Watched. The air between us buzzed with violence, with heartbreak, with the thin thread between fury and restraint.

Then—

He dropped.

Collapsed like someone had cut his strings.

He fell to his knees. The broken horn clattered from his hand, hitting the floor with a sound that made me flinch.

His talons came together.

Those terrible wings—those mutated, corrupted things—fell limp behind him. Slumped and



defeated.

And then, in a voice that wasn't just his—one deeper, older, echoing through marrow and shadow—he whispered,

> "Elysia... please forgive me."

The world stopped.

That name. That name.

Not Red. Not Eve.

Elysia.

Rhea went still. Not gone. Just... listening. Like something ancient inside both of us had stopped to reminisce.

He looked up at me. Slowly. Almost Reverently.

> "It is you," he said, voice breaking.

No command in it.

No hunger.

Just awe.

Just grief.



He bowed lower, talons dragging against stone, a tremor running through him like he might fall apart.

> "I thought the dreams were echoes," he rasped. "Ghosts. A punishment. But it's you... You're her." 1

I took a step forward.

Claws scraping like thunder.

And I didn't know—

Didn't know if I wanted to kill him.

Or ask what the fuck he meant.

I blinked at and those ominous depths of its eyes shuttered.

He shifted back in a single breath.

Just like that.

No resistance. No battle.

The monstrous silhouette fell away, leaving only the man. No talons. No wings. Just Hades—wounded, bare, reeling.

He pushed himself to his feet, staggering once,



eyes still locked to mine like he couldn't believe I was real.

I shifted too, letting the fur recede, my bones slotting back into place with a cruel snap, pain dancing across my spine like firelight. My breaths came ragged, my hands clenched and shaking.

He took a step toward me.

"I should've fought it," he said, voice hoarse, desperate. "I should've known it was you, I—"

But he didn't finish.

Because I punched him. 5

Square in the jaw.

The crack of bone against bone echoed like thunder, and he stumbled back with a grunt, eyes wide in shock—not at the pain, but the fury behind it.

Tears burned their way down my cheeks.

"You don't get to say that," I hissed, my voice breaking with each word. "You don't get to see me—now—after what you did and think an

apology is enough."

He didn't answer.

Didn't lift a hand to touch his jaw where it was already darkening with a bruise.

"I begged you," I whispered. "I cried for you. I bled for you. And you still chose control over truth. You let the Flux have me. You let it unmake me."

I stepped forward.

And then the dam broke.

"You tried to possess me!" I screamed, the sound tearing up my throat like glass. "You looked into my soul, saw everything—every scar, every fracture—and instead of protecting it, you shattered it!"

My chest heaved. My fists shook.

"You tried to rewrite me, Hades. Like I was a story you didn't like the ending to. Like I was a thing. A possession. A fucking tool!"

He flinched, lips parting—but I didn't stop.

"You think I haven't had that done to me before?"



Everyone I've ever loved has tried to mold me into what they wanted. My parents. James. Ellen. Felicia. They all saw me as something to use."

I slammed my palm against my chest, my voice cracking. "And now you. You, who said you loved me."

His jaw clenched. "I do love you."

I laughed. Sharp. Ugly. Hollow.

"Then you should've fought the Flux," I spat.

"I should've," he said, low and remorseful. "I should've fought harder—"

"No," I snapped, stepping closer. "Don't give me that."

He looked up at me, brow furrowed. "What?"

"You act like it was something done to you. Like you were just some passive victim." I stabbed a finger at his chest. "But you let it in. You welcomed it. You took that thing and buried it inside yourself like a coward because you were too afraid to face what you really felt."

Hades' throat worked like he wanted to argue,



but the words wouldn't come.

"You didn't do this because of the Flux," I seethed. "You did this with it. Because it made it easier. Easier to be cruel. Easier to control me. You used it as a crutch to run from guilt."

I stepped even closer, my voice lowering. "You think I don't know what that feels like? To be hollowed out? To have your will stripped from you, thread by thread? I lived it. I bled for it. And you—" my voice broke, "—you chose to become the very thing that broke me." 9

Silence hung like a guillotine between us.

Then he whispered, barely able to speak, "What was I supposed to do?"

I stared at him.

"Tell me, Eve. What would you have done?"

I didn't answer right away.

Because I knew.

And when I did speak, my voice was quiet—but it cut like a blade.

"If something inside me ever made me a danger



to you..." I swallowed hard. "If some dark god, some curse, some poison made me lose myself... I would've slit my own throat before I laid a hand on you." 3

Hades blinked.

The air in the room changed.

His face—so unreadable moments ago—crumpled. Cracked.

And in that breath of silence between us, I said what had been crawling beneath my ribs for weeks:

"But it looks like—even after everything—you wouldn't do the same for me."

I let the truth settle in.

My voice turned bitter.

"So what exactly do we have left?"

I shook my head. "Because if this was love... then it was always one-sided." 1

Hades' mouth opened—just slightly.

Like he meant to protest.



To reach for something, anything, that might still tether us to what we used to be.

But I didn't let him.

"I know what you're going to say," I said, voice low and steady, but hollow at the edges. "You'll say you didn't mean it. That it wasn't you. That the Flux twisted you."

He flinched—because it was true.

"I know," I continued, staring straight through him, "you'll say you were desperate. That you were scared. That you were trying to protect me, or Elliot, or some version of the future you couldn't bear to lose."

He tried to step forward, but I took a half step back.

Not out of fear.

Out of finality.

"But I'm not the naive girl you branded with a mate mark and locked in a cell, Hades," I whispered. "Not anymore."

He froze.



I saw it.

The break in his expression—the realization that something in me had changed in a way that wouldn't be undone. Not with time. Not with tears.

I straightened my spine and wiped a tear from my cheek with the back of my hand, smearing ash and blood and heartbreak into my skin like war paint.

"There will be a Council meeting tomorrow," I said coldly.

His brow furrowed. "Eve—"

"I have an announcement."

My voice was steel now. Hardened in the fire he lit and then left me to burn in. 1

Hades took another step forward, panic threading his voice now. "Eve, don't—"

"Don't what?" I snapped, eyes sharp as broken glass. "Don't take back my life? Don't stop being your shadow? Don't remind the world that I was never just your mate—I was always more?" 1



He went quiet.

I turned to leave, my body aching, throat raw.

But just before I opened the door, I looked back
—only once.

And I said it not with malice.

Not even hate.

Just the truth.

"Whatever's left between us... It can't survive
what you did." 3

Then I walked out.

And this time—

He didn't follow.