



312 Hades Is Gone

Eve **1**

Seconds stretched into hours as I flew down the stairwell, Kael's desperate shout echoing behind me. I didn't stop. I couldn't. The elevator was too slow and I needed more than that now.

Floor after floor blurred past as I tore downward, the chill of the concrete walls barely registering against the fire in my veins. My heart pounded like war drums. My lungs burned, but I didn't stop.

I couldn't lose him.

Not again.

> "He wouldn't really go through with it, would he?" I asked Rhea, my voice little more than a frantic breath in my mind.

Rhea's silence was heavy.

And then—

> "I haven't been able to sense Cerberus in days," she said, voice hoarse with dread. "He's gone



quiet. Drowned."

"Eve... if the Flux could suppress Hades' wolf this quickly after exposure—then it was never a fight. It was a slow erasure. One the Vassir's Vein is now accelerating."

I stumbled at the final step but caught myself on the railing, gripping it until my knuckles cracked.

> "If he does this..."

I couldn't finish it.

I wouldn't.

Because saying it would make it real.

Because if Hades injected all fifteen doses of Vassir's Vein.

He would be...

Erased.

Only the Flux would remain.

A predator in the body of a lycan. An Alpha. A father.

And even if it was for now. My husband.



I burst through the emergency doors at the end of the hall, the cold metal slamming against the wall. The corridor was dim and sterile, humming with the low whine of fluorescent lights. The restricted sector. Lower labs.

I didn't know which lab it was.

No signs. No maps. Just an endless stretch of reinforced doors and cold steel silence.

But I could feel him.

Rot—not the kind that came from death, but from something wrong—clung to the air like mildew in the lungs. Thick. Decaying. Familiar.

You can't mask that kind of rot.

Not his kind.

Not even behind reinforced titanium or with guards stationed like statues outside sealed labs.

Because his rot wasn't just physical. It was psychic. It bled through walls. It whispered through floor tiles. It clawed through the edges of thought like a scent you couldn't scrub off skin.



I followed it.

Each step drawn like gravity toward something festering.

Two guards stood by a sealed lab at the very end of the corridor—one holding a clipboard, the other stone-faced, armed.

They straightened as I approached, but I didn't slow down.

"Restricted—ma'am, you can't—"

My eyes met his.

He stopped mid-sentence.

Because he saw something in mine.

Rage. Terror. Fire.

"Your...highness. No one is allowed in." But he could not mask the uncertainty in his voice.

I placed my palm on the biometric panel.

It blinked.

Access Denied.

Of course it was.



Hades had sealed it.

The flux knew I would come and I did care if it was right or it had read me so perfectly.

"Override it," I said, turning to the guards. "Right now. Open the door."

They glanced at each other.

Neither moved.

One clenched his jaw. The other took a half-step back, but steadied.

"The Alpha issued a full lockdown," the clipboard one said. "No overrides. Not from the council. Not even from—"

"I am not asking," I snapped.

Still, they didn't move.

Their fear was obvious—but it wasn't fear of me.

It was fear of him.

Of what was behind that door.

And then—

Kael came stumbling down the hall, drenched in



sweat, face ghost-pale and still smeared with blood. His shirt clung to him, torn and soaked from the sprint.

"Move—move!" he gasped, practically collapsing against the wall beside me. "He's not going to survive this—Eve, you have to get in there!"

The guards held their ground.

One of them raised a hand. "We can't let anyone in. The Alpha made that clear. He said any interruption is to be treated as a threat to the realm—"

Kael snarled, "You think this isn't a threat to the realm?"

Neither flinched.

Because they weren't looking at us like we were people anymore.

They were looking at us like we were civilians.

And he was still their Alpha.

Still their god.

Something inside me snapped.



The part of me that still believed anyone would save him but me.

The part that was tired of knocking.

Without warning, my bones surged forward—skin shredding into fur and muscle. My wolf form exploded from me in a torrent of pain and fury, and I lunged.

One guard reached for his weapon, but it was too late.

With a roar, I slammed my paw against the sealed door. A sickening crack shot through my shoulder as bone dislocated from sheer force.

I didn't care. 2

Again.

And again.

I tore into the steel with claws meant to break mountains.

With teeth that weren't meant for begging.

Blood dripped down my limb. My ribs screamed. The metal dented, warped.



The hinges groaned with every hit, sparks flying as the reinforced metal bent beneath my fury. Each strike sent fresh agony through my shoulder, but it didn't matter. I would get to him.

Kael, didn't hesitate.

With a hoarse growl, he shifted partially—his arms thickening, claws sprouting from his fingers—and threw himself into the assault beside me. Together, we became a battering ram.

The guards shouted, scrambled back. One raised a weapon but didn't fire—either because he was frozen in disbelief or still loyal enough to hesitate.

And then—

The door gave.

It screeched open, half-torn off its hinges, revealing the horror inside.

Hell.

The lab was coated in red.

Blood smeared the walls. It dripped from



shattered glass vials, pooled beneath overturned carts, and soaked the white coats of at least three scientists lying motionless on the ground. One twitched weakly, fingers scrabbling at the floor, leaving a trail of crimson.

And in the center of it all—

Hades.

Stripped.

Suspended.

Hung like an offering on metal hangers bolted to the reinforced rig above him. Arms stretched outward, back arched, chest heaving as if his lungs were drowning in fire. Black veins spidered across his skin, thick and pulsing with a sick, glowing hue. The skin around them was blistered, cracked.

His head hung forward—until one violent tremor wrenched him upright with a guttural, inhuman gasp.

He didn't scream.

He couldn't scream.



Because his mouth was sewn shut.

A trembling scientist stood beside him—barely conscious, shirt torn, one hand bandaged in gauze soaked through with blood. He was weeping, sniffing, whispering something under his breath as he shakily inserted another vial into the IV line running down Hades' forearm.

Vial number... fourteen.

"No," I breathed.

"No, no, stop!"

Kael shoved past me and tackled the scientist, wrenching the vial away just as he tried to push it in. The man cried out, collapsing to the ground in exhaustion and shock.

I surged forward, claws retracting as I shifted halfway back into myself—enough to reach him.

"Hades," I choked, reaching for his face. "Hades, look at me."

He didn't move.

Not until his eyes flicked up.

They weren't fully his.



Not anymore.

One eye glowed red, pulsing with the Flux. The other—his—was barely hanging on, fogged with pain and flickering recognition.

He tried to speak, but the stitches kept him silent.

His body jerked against the restraints as if he wanted to collapse, to curl inward—but the metal rig held him open like a crucifix.

"Eve..." Kael whispered beside me, voice hollow.

"He's still in there."

Barely.

But he was.

I reached up with shaking hands, stroking the side of his face where the skin hadn't blistered. It was burning hot—fevered, cracked, trembling beneath my touch.

His jaw twitched.

His breath rattled.

But he didn't flinch away.



"Gods..." I whispered, voice breaking. "Look what you've done to yourself..."

My thumb brushed beneath his eye, where the faintest trace of blue still flickered under the corruption.

My Hades.

Still holding on.

Still suffering.

Kael stepped forward, jaw tight, voice clipped. "We need to get him down. Now."

The trembling scientist whimpered from the corner. "You don't understand... we can't."

Kael turned on him. "What do you mean you can't?"

The man shrank further into the wall, shaking his blood-slicked hands. "He put himself there. He broke through the restraints we gave him. Used the old rig from Sector Twelve. Forced me to prep the doses. Said if I refused, he'd kill us all—and when one of us did refuse—he did. He ripped him apart."



His voice cracked, tears streaming down his soot- and blood-streaked cheeks.

"It's crazy. He's gone—that's not your Alpha anymore. That's something else."

Kael froze.

I turned back to Hades—no, to the thing that used to be him.

"Hades," I said softly, desperate. "Please—listen to me. I'm here. I'm here. You don't have to do this."

His body trembled.

His bound arms flexed against the rig.

And then—

He lifted his head.

Eyes wide, feral, burning.

One still fogged with memory.

The other—

Infernal.

And with a sickening tear, he clenched his jaw

and ripped.

The black stitches split.

Skin tore.

Blood flooded his chin.

A ragged gasp left his mangled lips—wet, guttural, savage—and then he spoke.

But it wasn't my Hades' voice.

It was deeper.

Older.

Colder.

Oily.

"Elysia," he rasped, smiling through the blood.

"You came."

My stomach twisted.

"No," I whispered. "Don't do this."

The thing in Hades tilted its head, the grin growing wider, darker. "You can stop calling for him. Hades is dead."



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I shook my head.

Tears streamed down my cheeks.

"No."

"I am Vassir," it said, voice like razors scraping bone. "And this body is mine now." 

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