

Malkavian Madness

Atlanta by Night



Eve wandered through the new Haven alone in the dark like a lost spirit. She needed to sleep. So much had happened and her mind was slipping farther and farther from the fine line of sanity all Malkavians had. The ghosts of Savannah, her journey to the Underworld, and the premonitions linked to the sarcophagus had started haunting her the longer she remained awake. As much as she knew rest was the right answer, she found herself longing for her journal to write things down. The thoughts and images replaying over and over from what she'd seen and from the cobweb itself. All of it growing more rapidly in intensity.

Finding a back bedroom, she sat on the floor and began to write. How long she remained that way, she didn't know. "There's not enough paper..." she whispered looking down at her now filled journal. Eve began tearing the pages out and trying to squeeze things in between her ramblings, but there just wasn't room. She looked around for more paper, but there was nothing there to be used. Her eyes darted around the old room for something to use. More chaotic thoughts began compelling her to write and the anxiety of forgetting before she could find another journal started to make her frantic. "Too much to see... not enough eyes to see it all..." she whispered to herself and paced trying to think of what to do. The others wouldn't understand. She couldn't ask them.

Eventually, Eve's gaze landed on the partially bare wall with old wallpaper half peeled from age. She quickly walked over and started to write on its surface. Symbols, glyphs, phrases in other languages both modern and ancient. She wrote for hours until the sun began to rise. Instead of going to bed, she laid on the floor and wrote sideways talking softly to no one until she fell asleep. When she awoke again the next night, another wave of compulsion hit her to keep writing. The beast within her was growling, pacing, clawing within its cage. She hadn't fed yet and the churning sea of thoughts didn't allow her much clarity to go seek anything out to satisfy it. The beast would have to wait.

Eve continued her frantic writing on the wall until her pen ran out of ink. That caused another search of the room for something to write with. There was so much still inside her mind to get

out. It was like a dam had been opened and she was drowning in everything flowing through. Warnings of Gehenna, glyphs and drawings of the Second City, descriptions of the inner workings of the Underworld, symbols and songs of the Malkavian Primogen, and the endless ramblings of the cobweb itself. There was nothing she could do to stop it on her own. Eve opened up the grate in front of the fireplace and took an old burnt piece of wood inside and used it like a charcoal pencil. It dirtied her hands and smeared on the wall, but it was something. She again spent the night writing, needing to use a small table to stand on to use the upper portion of the wall eventually filling it in too. The sun began to rise and she once again laid down on the floor, woke at sundown, and began all over. The beast raging in vain against the madness of her clan to seek the blood she needed to survive.

It was at this point the coterie realized they hadn't seen Eve for almost 3 nights. It wasn't that no one cared, of course. They were all in their own parts of the house respecting each other's space and working on their suites. Kat had been at the chantry to recover from the werewolf attack. Gabe was back and forth with his clinic. Gertrude was keeping up with Jamie and having to find somewhere to sleep in her 7 day cycle. Savannah had been difficult on everyone. Especially the young Malkavian. However, her blood bags had been untouched in the fridge. It was this fact that caused Gabe to seek her out and knock on the door. There was no answer. He heard movement inside and Eve murmuring. When he opened the door, he saw her handiwork. She was desperately ripping the wallpaper off the next wall still wearing the clothes he'd last seen her in, her copper curls unkempt. She didn't hear Gabe say her name until he shouted it. Eve slowly looked back at the door, her eyes glazed and the veins around them dark with thirst.

"There wasn't enough paper..." she murmured and weakly pointed to her torn up journal trying to explain herself. "Must not forget... I can't forget anything important... we must stop Gehenna from happening..." Eve turned back to her task and ripped off another long piece of wallpaper so she could begin all over again on this wall to write the next tidal wave of thoughts. It was clear she was fatigued and starving. A raving Malkavian lost to her own mind that wasn't even fully hers right now. "I hear you!" she shouted and slapped the wall with her soot covered hand. "I can't write fast enough. Slow down... please.. I can't keep up..."

She walked over to the fireplace for another burnt piece of wood and marched over to Gabe holding it out to him with a slightly trembling hand, her gaze intense. "Help me," she said as if he would know what to do.



Gabe looked at the disheveled Malkavian, then his eyes made their way around the room, taking in the whole of the scene. He looked back at Eve and the piece of sooty charcoal in her

black stained, trembling hand. He hadn't realized how bad Savannah had affected her, and he kicked himself for not coming to check on her sooner. He could make all the excuses he wanted, but his heart broke as he thought about her being here all alone, her mind in tatters... he should have been there for her.

He walked towards her, and gently pushed the hand holding the burned wood down to her side and held her in a tight hug. "Hey now... it's okay." He said in a calm voice. He placed a hand on the back of her head as he made a calming ssssssh sound as she continued with her muttered ramblings. He called on his blood, opened his 3rd eye and used Obeah on her like he had done many times before. He felt her scattered emotions laced with surges of fear and anxiety. He began to channel his own fortitude into her, to lend her his strength. The vitae began to weep him his red 3rd eye and run down his face, his own tears of blood welling up in his other two.

At first, he thought she was hugging him back, but her hold on him became vice-like... he tried to push back, to study her face for some clue as to what was happening... she squeezed tighter and pulled herself closer to him. He looked down, as she looked up, she was wild eyed and gaunt, with her fangs out. She Hissed and lunged for his throat, he had only a fraction of a second to respond, so he activated his fortitude. Her fangs met his throat, he felt the pressure, felt her gnawing and struggling to pierce his rock hard skin. He'd been where she was now, knew what it was like to be at the beasts mercy and have it wear you like a second skin during a frenzy... words couldn't reach her, aggression would make it worse. He kicked himself again for being so foolish... It was just like the time he tried to heal that Banu Haqim, he ended up attacking him too. He was supposed to be helping... but so far he was just making things worse.

He once again used Obeah... as she tried in vain to tear into his neck, he poured strength into her mind and soul.. Slowly, she started relaxing her grip, her attack stopped and she slumped limp in his arms. He gently lowered her to the floor, cradling her head, and once he was convinced she was deep in Torpor, he ran out of her room... yelled for Kat and Gertrude, and decided to bypass the stairs and leap from the railing. With his body still supernaturally hardened, he suffered no ill effects, but the thud echoed loudly through the old, mostly empty mansion. He took off in a run to the kitchen, and grabbed several blood bags from the fridge. He yelled for Kat and Gertrude again, then turned around to run back upstairs and nearly ran into Kat who had followed him into the kitchen without him hearing. "It's Eve." He said, "It's bad this time..." before she could ask him anything, he was back running and heading up the stairs. He came back to her room, Butch was there standing by her head, sniffing her face, he gently licked her cheek. "She's alright buddy" he said, as calmly as he could... but deep down, he wasn't convinced.

He lifted her up to a sitting position, and used his teeth to tear open the line going into the bag. He held it under her nose until her eyes snapped open and she grabbed the bag with both hands, tearing it from his grip... she drained it in an instant, and reached for another. Finally, she was looking somewhat more life-like, but still terrified and exhausted... Gabe didn't know what to do next. So he just held her, and they rocked together, as both their eyes were fixed on her chaotic prophetic words, and mad scribbles... Gabe's eyes fell on a black void, a drawing of a solar

eclipse... under it layers and layers of words... one phrase had been written over more than the others however, it's letters a little bolder...

When Lasombra's dreams come true, on the day when the moon runs as blood and the sun rises black in the sky, that is the day of the damned when Caine's children will rise again... and the world will turn cold and unclean things will boil up from the ground and great storms will roll, lightning will light fires, animals will fester and their bodies twisted will fall. So, too, our grandsires will rise from the ground. They will break their fast on the first part of us. They will consume us whole.

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As if she could read his thoughts Eve added in a whisper:

"I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

All the shining lights in the heavens
I will darken over you
And will set darkness on your land...
Thus sayeth the Lord God."

Kat

I could hear my name being called frantically by Gabe, which was already alarming by itself. As I came running down the hall I saw Gabe clear the railing of the stairs and hit the second floor in a sprint. Oh what fresh hell is this, what on earth could be happening now? I flew down the stairs and met him just as he was rushing out of the kitchen with his arms full of blood bags...blood bags? All he said in a panicked rush was "It's Eve." "It's bad this time..." And then he was rushing back up the stairs. That's all I needed to hear and I was on his heels in a flash following him to god knows what. I wasn't fully prepared for what I saw next. I hit the door frame and froze in my tracks. It was madness, the scribbled ravings of a mind lost to horrors unseen by the rest of us. Her journal lay in tatters, pages littering the floor. Ravings, images, words over words were written on the walls in ink pen, then devolving into...charcoal? Every free space of wall was taken by mad writing. Some of the script I recognized, it was the ancient language of the sarcophagus, images and reliefs that I had sketched in my own field journals accompanied by more mad sketches and scribbling. The further along the wall the more frantic and erratic everything became. Her desperation and fear, a story written across the walls. In the middle of the floor Gabe was crouched over her like a field medic as she drank from blood

bags in a frenzy, her right hand black with soot up the wrist. I looked over to the fireplace and saw messy hand prints and pieces of soot covered wood littering the floor. My lord, she'd resorted to scribbling with soot. Well, that explained the charcoal then. I counted in my head, three days, she'd been alone in here with only the cobweb for company for three days, suffering through this alone. I swore under my breath for not checking on her sooner and for underestimating how much Savannah had affected her. I passed through the door and gingerly stepped around the pages of her journal to kneel on her other side and placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Hey, it's ok, we're here now, you're not alone. We'll sort all of this out together ok?" I eased onto the floor and scooted up next to her and wrapped my arm around her shoulder and squeezed. I finally got a good look at Gabe and had to center myself. He looked terrible. Blood tears stained his face from all three eyes and he was a frantic mess. I looked at both of them and all I could think to say was "What can I do to help you both?"



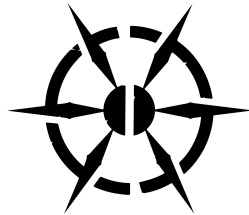
It wasn't until the third drained bag that Eve started to come back to reality. The beast would never be satisfied without fresh blood and a kill, but it was now back to pacing in its cage. It was quiet. And for the first time in days, her mind was too. The only way she could describe it was like drowning in a storm at sea. Every time she thought she could take a breath, another wave would hit and push her back under. The frantic flailing of trying to fight against the current until there was no strength left. Now she felt like she'd awoken on shore having been dragged out of the tide by her friends. Her body and mind were exhausted. It was so... quiet.

"I'm sorry," Eve said in a raspy whisper. "I... I couldn't.. stop.."

Not just her writing, but attacking Gabe. The madness had been one thing. The frenzy had been another. She was just thankful Gabe had fortitude to keep her from harming him. The desperation of a starving vampire was not something any kindred could just hold back well. Especially not in her state. Had it been Kat or Gertrude, they probably wouldn't have been able to stop her from turning on them. Eve hated the feeling of being so weak and vulnerable. For them to see her this way was even worse.

She lifted her weary eyes and looked at the walls. Eve wanted to feel the emotion of seeing every vision and nightmare visually displayed, but she felt so hollow inside. There was nothing left. It was all out there now and no longer in her stuck mind. She knew it wouldn't stop. There would be more eventually, but Gabe's desperate Obeah had closed the door for now to allow her time to

process. But there was something cold in the pit of her stomach that feared now that her mind had descended into the depths of Malkavian madness, was this her ultimate fate? Especially so soon?



Gertrude heard Gabe calling for her and Kat and tore from the room she'd been setting up for Jaime. She heard the thud of him leaping from the stairwell, then in a flash saw Kat almost slam into him as he ran back into Eve's room with several of her blood bags. She caught the end "*bad this time*" and wondered just how bad that could be. They hadn't seen Eve for days since they'd returned from Savannah and she felt a moment's guilt from not checking in sooner. Gertrude wasn't used to looking after others after a lifetime of only being concerned for herself.

Looking after Jaime was a job in and of itself. No matter. She could and would do better. By this time she'd reached the doorway and rushed in and slammed to a full stop. Papers, ink...*is that.....soot?* Everywhere was scribbled words, madness, some similar to what was on the sarcophagus and the rest just...madness. It looked like graffiti in the slums of New York had come to visit this room inside Atlanta but she knew better. This was straight from the mind of the Malkavian and her visions.

She finally tore her eyes from the scribblings around her and *my god it's all over the floor too* saw Gabe and Kat hovering over Eve. Gabe's third eye was open and weeping as he held her tenderly and shushed her. She barely caught the "*couldn't...stop*" and heard Gabe console her, telling her not to worry. She'd file that away and ask him about it later. She assumed Eve was referring to the writings but there seemed to be a deeper meaning.

She slowly walked toward the three, seeing Butch's worried muzzle and patted his head "*She's ok buddy*" she murmured. She glanced at Eve's face, gaunt, eyes glazed and empty. *She hasn't fed since we've been back*, she realized.

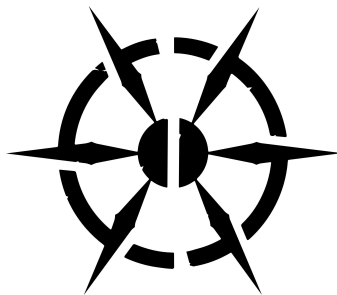
"Eve," softly...calmly "*you're not alone. We're here, you're ok.*" Her weary eyes rolled in their sunken sockets toward the nun's face. Gertrude's habit wasn't on, she'd taken to leaving it off while in the Haven, so her hair was hanging loose in her face. Eve reached up and touched it, "*I'm sorry...so sorry.*" she whispered.



All she could do was apologize. Eve felt like she was a liability. A burden even. After connecting with Lasombra in his sarcophagus she'd honestly been of little help to anyone. That had been the catalyst. The ghosts and even going to the underworld had been somewhat curbed with 2 rounds of Gabe's Obeah a night apart. But reaching out to that darkness... Eve didn't even know why she did it. She heard the call. A beckoning. From all the dreams of this thing to actually seeing it in person, her mind had simply opened up to the whispers coming from it and... well they saw what happened. The evidence literally written on the wall.

To Eve, the coterie all had their own problems and lives to focus on. They shouldn't have to babysit her. The looks of pity and guilt were hard to accept. She didn't want to be the weak link. They shouldn't have to worry about her and keep checking to make sure she hadn't spiraled. Eve lowered her head a little, her long hair veiling her face from all of them, her shoulders slumping in personal defeat.

"I really am crazy..." she said in a tone almost like a frightened child. She was both the traumatized 10 year old rescued by police a day after her mother's murder and the 30 year old woman who had also been slain far too soon. Was unlife really worth living if this was her reality?



"I really am crazy" Eve muttered, sounding so much like a frightened child. It ripped Gertrude's dead heart to shreds. She knew placating her would do no good and only make things worse. *"Eve, listen to me. We're going to figure this out...and we'll do it together."* She thought of the beast taking over the night they returned to Atlanta, making her bolt after the stress of seeing the Giovanni family member, dealing with Birch, brutally murdering the copy of Thomas Maxwell, seeing Gabe almost lose himself while staking Lasombra....the Werewolf was her breaking point. Seeing her bullets do absolutely nothing and watching the wounds close, having not taken the time to feed after the events that had transpired....she lost herself.

If all of that stress was enough to make *her* momentarily lose her shit...she couldn't imagine what it was doing to Eve, who was tied to the Malkavian cobweb. She glanced at Kat, who had a fierce look of determination on her face and then glanced over at Gabe, worry and weariness across his blood stained face. She knew he'd been helping Eve with his Reiki treatments and she usually calmed down significantly afterwards. There had to be a way they could figure this out.

She put her hand on his back lightly, hoping to give a sense of comfort and support. She placed her other hand on Eve's shoulder, then reached up and cupped her face, repeating again...hoping to put emphasis on her words; *"I swear to you Eve. We. Will. Figure. This. Out. Together...You are NOT alone. Do you understand?"*

Eve leaned her face into Gertrude's hand and closed her eyes, beginning to sob softly.

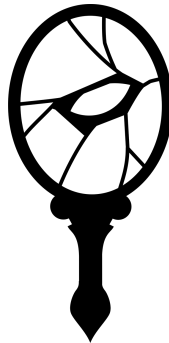


Now that the intensity and shock of the situation was leveling out, Gabe became aware of his own tears, and wiped his eyes with his shirt. He looked at Gertrude and nodded, he was grateful she was there with him, he felt helpless and having her near him was a comfort. He looked up at Kat and felt similar feelings of camaraderie, their Coterie had come a long way, and being all together made this situation feel more manageable to him. He looked down at Eve, and he felt a presence with him stir. His voice changed briefly, became smooth and calm, almost feminine *"Crazy? No...not Crazy. That's an illness, delusions. This, all this...is real. And what's more... all this didn't come FROM you, it came THROUGH you. You're still you Eve, you're just connected to something bigger, it just overwhelmed you for a bit."* His voice took on a bit more bass once more. *"I'm not going to pretend this isn't awful, I can only imagine what you're going through... but it's passed for now, we know how to keep it in check, and... it may actually help save us all in the end."* He touched the Salubri pendant around his neck and mentally thanked Dr. Nakayama for her much needed help.

His own will was a bit drained, Obeah literally gives some of your strength to the other person and it takes a bit of time to rebuild... he was feeling that drain, on top of the emotional dump of the moment. He knew Eve wasn't the touchy feely type and was uncomfortable being the center of attention, so he made himself let go of her, patted her on the back and sat back, giving her some space. Butch didn't get the memo, and found the opening he had been looking to render dog obeah in the form of face licks.

Kat

Intense emotional situations always made me uncomfortable. I always had a hard time comforting people in distress, I felt like I just made things worse. I gave Eve one more squeeze and agreed with the sentiments from Gertrude and Gabe. I lifted myself off the floor and went over to pick up the pages of Eve's journal and carefully placed them inside and closed it. Seeing that Eve was feeling a bit better and back to herself I finally took the time to really survey the room. Lots of end of the world talk, but what caught my eye were the sketches. They were near perfect depictions of the ancient language that was written on the sarcophagus and on the pillars around the site. Some of them were completed copies of work that I had done in Turkey. Where pieces of the pillars and the inscription had been lost to time in my sketches, these were perfectly intact. I had to write this down, I had to get this somewhere I could sit down and finish the translation. This could explain so much and help us in trying to neutralize Lasombra too. I looked over at the group starting to pick themselves up and looked back at the wall. They really would think I was some kind of insensitive creep if I just pulled my phone out and started snapping pics. This had to be immensely personal for Eve and I didn't want to be an ass...but dang there was a ton of amazing info here. She *saw* it, she was there, when it was new and untouched by the ravages of time. I spoke without looking away from the wall in front of me and said "I'm not trying to be *that person* but, would it be weird if I took a few pictures?" "I might be able to put my skills to good use and decipher some of this. I already have a good bit translated." I turned to face them all then expecting to see three pairs of judgemental eyes staring back at me. But none of them did, none of them looked at me like I was a creep, they just looked to Eve for permission.



Gabe's observations had taken Eve by surprise. He was a smart man, but things like this were perhaps a little outside his usual comfort zone of knowledge. However, she had noticed the way he'd changed. Like someone else was talking through him. She remembered him mentioning his sire's soul was merged with his and sometimes came out. Perhaps this was one of those moments. The wise doctor imparting some thoughts that really did put things into perspective. She was right. Eve wasn't lost to her own delusions. She wasn't raving about conspiracies or about things unreal. She was channeling truth. Dark truth, but truth all the same. Gehenna was real and these were the signs. The Second City was real. They had proof in the real world and she had been there through the mind of another. The Underworld existed and she'd been there! The

rest was filtered through the cobweb and might have been hit and miss, but none of it had been from her mind only. That fact actually made her feel better. She herself wasn't crazy. Her sensitivity to the unseen and the cobweb made her more receptive to the messages sent by others and without a tight hold on that, she became a very overwhelmed messenger. It reminded her of something she'd heard about her clan. Malkavians often had the answers before there were questions.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Butch trying to bring her comfort his own way. Eve gently stroked his head while Kat started to pick up the scattered journal pages. Then she wandered to the wall. *"I'm not trying to be that person but, would it be weird if I took a few pictures?"*

Eve looked over to where Kat was standing. "Oh... no, go ahead. It would be foolish not to take advantage of it," she said softly. "But I definitely don't want to be surrounded by it anymore. Can... can I change rooms?"

To be fair, her broken mind had probably chosen the bedroom in the worst condition anyway. As much as she didn't want to have to face a reminder of the last three days of personal hell, it would be stupid to paint over it and make the room livable. She'd know it was there and who knew if her powers would make it visible under times of stress. Best to just keep it separate from her and let people study it at their leisure. There would be a lot to go through.



Gertrude took her hand away as Gabe wiped his face with his shirt, turning it crimson *!god he smells delicious!* She rolled her eyes and mentally smacked the beast inside of her upside the head *NOT NOW STUPID!* The beast relented, skulking back into its cage. She knew Gabe must be drained. He usually was after he calmed someone. He'd need to feed later.

She gave him a slight smile as he glanced at her and then she noticed his countenance changing...seeming to be more *feminine?* She'd seen this before and listened as he (she?) spoke, but it seemed to be coming from behind his eyes and far away. He had explained to her before that his sire's soul had merged with his, and sometimes she would step in during times like this and give words of wisdom.

Her words seemed to greatly calm Eve, and for that she was grateful. It was also a comfort that Eve could get better at handling these visions. We just needed a way to help her.

She glanced back at Kat, who was surveying the damage so to speak and smiled when she asked permission to take pictures. If anyone could figure out and make sense of this, it was her. Kat was, by far, one of the most knowledgeable in our group so she knew without a doubt that she'd have answers in no time.

She might know about Black Dawn. It appeared in her mind before she could stop it. The screams, the blood, how good it felt. She shook her head *NO! Stop it! I'll never tell them that.*

Eve had asked to change rooms. Good, that's for the best. They could change this room around a thousand times but she'd still know what happened in here. We could just close it off for now. They helped her up, carefully while she took an elbow and Gabe hung back behind her, respecting her need for space. Gertrude was more hesitant, just in case she stumbled.

Eve had done a lot for her in Savannah, and even put her newfound weapon training to the test after she had bolted like a lunatic. She was developing a softer spot when Eve was concerned now.

Kat was busy snapping pictures as they started towards the door and called out that she'd join them in a bit. Butch reached the doorway well ahead of them with one bound and turned expectantly, as if coaxing Eve out of the bowels of this hellscape.



Eve followed the hellhound to the door though her movements were slow. She was exhausted mentally and emotionally which made her body feel sluggish. Reaching Butch, she petted his head again with her cleaner hand. Both had some soot, but her right hand was far worse from all the writing. A bath was definitely going to be needed tonight. If there was time before dawn. What time was it anyway? Though her mind was far more quiet, the voices barely whispers now thanks to Gabe, it was still a little hard to think. Like the recovery period after an intense migraine. That's what this felt like.

She wandered out of the room and peeked into another guest room nearby. Too small. Too dark. Her steps took her down a hallway to another couple rooms. One was Gabe's. She didn't want to be too close to his room or Gertrude's for... reasons. Next to Gertrude's was Jamie's. That seemed to be coming along well. She saw one that was going to be Kat's next. At the other end of the hall was a decent sized bedroom with a large window and small attached bathroom. Eve shuffled over to the window and looked down at what once had been a garden but was now overgrown and long forgotten. Her weary gaze moved about the room and then the first hint of a smile came to her face.

"I like this one," she said more to herself than anyone else who may have followed her. Butch was close at her side the whole time. He'd been through Gabe's worst and had sensed similar distress in her. He wasn't going to leave her until she was acting more normally or Gabe told him to.