

# Hades | Emma Carroll

*Inspired by Franz Kafka's "Poseidon"*

Hades stood in his study, reading documents that closely examined the new operations budget, blueprints for the upcoming room remodel for Persephone, and the pleas of the dead which would never be granted. As he flipped through them all, he paced his rounded study with a silent *click clack* of his black suede loafers. The rare red Brazilian rosewood flooring echoed, a constant reminder that his domain extended far down into the depths of the Earth and beyond.

Hades set the stack of papers down with an empty thud and pinched the bridge of his nose. The eternal grunts and heaves from Sysiphus could be heard even in the study. Charon requested yet another pay raise and a new boat. Orpheus' songs were constantly on a loop as he called out for Eurydice on the opposite end of the Underworld.

Hades didn't necessarily *hate* his work, he was just tired of it all.

It's not like the other Olympians would offer him other positions under their cabinets or above ground for that matter. His younger brothers with all of their glory and busy schedules never had time to meet with him. He would often hear of Ares' unchanging brutality through his fallen comrades and enemies. And Demeter...well the two of them were obviously never going to be on solid terms. The only Olympian Hades truly had contact with was Hermes when he delivered the occasional mail from above. Even then, Hermes didn't dare stay a moment longer than he had to in this wretched heat.

It's not like Lord of the Dead was a position everyone was applying for. Hades just had a knack for it, albeit he didn't know why. He never despised his work; most millenia he was quite proud of it.

No one understood the intricacies, the detail, and the

stakes of it all. More than that, no one understood how heavy the eons of death and molten heat weighed on him.

He rarely felt the breeze and mists from his brothers' domains. He would never admit it, but Hades sometimes wished his nostrils would tickle with the pollen from fresh flora and to bask in the intense rainfall from a hurricane. These odd yearnings would only arise when Persephone would arrive and leave. He blamed her for the small chips in his heart. He didn't love her, he simply loved her stories—her freedom.

Hades collapsed onto his oxblood leather chaise, the material squeaking in the silence of the room as the leather molded to his body. He began to sink further into the cushioning, his eyes fluttered to a close. He could still see through his eyelids, casting a reddish pink glow in his closed view, the overhead light creating a central point against his lids.

He much preferred his human form rather than his true form. He liked feeling the paper cuts on the moist pads of his fingers, the saliva swishing between his fleshy cheeks, and the burns from the fierce heat surrounding him whenever he went. His ears popped as he went further into his domain and the headaches from all the tortured screams reminding him of this fate they share.

Sometimes, he thought about asking his brothers for more flexibility when visiting them or the mortal world. He thought about asking them to reprieve him of this position. But then he remembered that no one would want to be the Ruler of the Underworld. Too many souls to be responsible for, too many cries and shouts for mercy, too small of a budget to work with.

A polite knock at the door chided him from his respite. A skeletal man in one of the Underworld's volunteer uniforms softly creaked the door open, allowing the wails of the undead and bursting celestial flames into his study.

Hades sighed and got back to work.