



Everdark Cursed

By Selina A. Fenech

Complete summary including spoilers.

How do you tell somebody that you enslaved their soul for the better part of seventeen years? This is the question on Everly's mind as she, Lian, Harper, and Neri help a wounded Jasper into Howell House, who they just found in the street. He comes to them with a warning: the Mesmans are trying to open their very own Shroudpool.

Jasper hands over a series of notes and sketches he stole from the estate. Tammy guesses that the Mesmans are trying to go after their son, Blaise. The sketches depict the same bone structures that

Everly and the others have seen before, all but confirming the Howell team's suspicions that these are eidolghast lures.

Callan drops shocking information: he is certain he saw one a lure the night his and Rylan's father was killed.

After, Rylan asks Everly if they can talk, but Everly is anxious about telling him the truth: that his feelings for her might not be real, and instead might be a result of the Coruscare's control. But before she has a chance to tell him, Cherry bursts inside to report that there are eidolghast lures surrounding the house.

Outside, Jasper is locked in battle with a herrelspurn, a type of flying, fire-breathing eidolghast. The shadys shift into demon forms and enter the fray. Everly uses the Coruscare's increased powers to hold the monster in place. Harper alone can see a glowing weak spot on the beast as she wields her new whip-sword against the monster, and the team works together to dispatch the monster and dismantle the lures. The skirmish ends with everyone safe, but now the team knows they're being targeted.

Rylan struggles with the confirmation that someone tried to have him killed, and that his father's death all those years ago might not have been an accident after all. He feels it is crucial to inform Mordan Darkfrey of possible insubordination within his ranks, so Rylan, Everly, Lian, and Tammy attend a private meeting with Mordan at The Crow's Nest. Here, they report the Mesmans' schemes to Mordan—but Mordan already knows. Not only that, but Mordan confirms that he tried to have Rylan killed, and that he has been using eidolghast lures for years to motivate young shadys to join the Darkfreys. Rylan realizes he's not the only child to end up with the Darkfreys after losing a parent to an eidolghast attack.

Tensions escalate, and Vonny, Nilson, and Annabeth appear, threatening to attack. The Howell team prepares for a fight. Everly tries to use her powers, but Vonny reveals that she has the Bane with her, which makes Everly too weak. Tammy transports the group to Dark Corner. They're safe—but now the Darkfreys want them dead.

Back at Howell House, Tammy tells the group that all those years ago, the whole reason why Blaise wanted to close the Dark Corner shroudpool in the first place was because so many kids were losing their parents to eidolghasts. All this time, it seems that it was Blaise's own parents causing the damage.

They get a surprise visit from Annabeth, who says she got Jasper's message about how her parents really died. She can't stay with the people who got her parents killed, so now she's here—and she brought a suitcase full of books that she stole from the estate.

Rylan and Everly finally get a chance to talk. Everly tells him about how when they first met, the Coruscare bound him to her so that he would protect her. This means that none of his feelings for her are real. But Rylan insists that when she woke him up, she freed him—and when he told her how he felt back in the cave, he did so willingly.

Everly wants to take time to see what's real and what's not. Rylan insists that they've wasted enough time, and that he wants to be with her. Their conversation is interrupted when more Darkfrey defectors start showing up at Howell House, having heard the news about Mordan's murderous recruitment tactics.

In her nightmares, Everly learns that the Coruscare's dark twin helped the eidolghasts take over the Everdark long ago. This shadow twin forged the Bane of Teeth and Stars, and wielded it against the Coruscare. In the dream, she witnesses the Bane absorb thousands of eidolghasts, accumulating the blood of its victims.

Meanwhile, Rushelle moves in with Everly, Harper, and Neri at Boderleth Place for some added protection. Life falls into a holding pattern of daily activities as Howell House becomes a refugee camp for Darkfrey deserters, and word of Everly having the Coruscare inside of her spreads. Tammy reconciles with her family, but Cherry struggles with the fact that his parents aren't among the defectors. When Jasper's parents arrive, he spontaneously decides to come out to them once and for all.

Rylan visits Everly at Boderleth Place one evening to reminisce on childhood memories. They have a heart-to-heart, but they're interrupted when the lights go out. In the basement, they find that someone has busted through the window and planted an eidolghast lure.

An auerdax attacks the house, and Neri, Rylan, and Rushelle shift into their ghost forms to counter the attack. Harper spots the creature's glowing weak spots, and realizes that it's her new sword allowing her this special sight. The group smoothly takes down the auerdax—but there is too much damage to the house, so Everly, Harper, Neri, and Rushelle return to Howell House to join the swelling numbers of refugees.

Rylan assures Everly of his feelings, and the two share a passionate kiss. It is starting to feel for Everly like she could make this town her home.

The Howell House team makes room for countless Darkfrey defectors. Only Denny refuses to give up space in his RV, claiming he is saving it for Alexis Darkfrey, Mordan's daughter, when she shows up, but no one believes him.

Tammy ponders whether Callan might be romantically interested in her. Everly, Tammy, and Neri encourage Harper to embrace herself as she is in the absence of all of her makeup supplies, and Harper grapples with her self-esteem.

Lucas, one of the Darkfrey defectors, reports that a few Darkfrey shadys have been found dead in their homes, and that they're leaving eidolghast bodies around town without cleaning them up. Mordan Darkfrey's recklessness risks outing the shadys to the world, putting them all in danger.

Tammy overhears some of the ex-Darkfreys mocking her for her cursed, black-stained hands. She confronts them, declaring her curse to be a badge of honor for trying to save the life of her best friend. Impressed with her confidence of late, Callan is overcome. He kisses Tammy for the first time. Stunned, Tammy vanishes to Dark Corner.

Everly, Lian, and Harper head out to pick up Tammy while Rylan meets with Annabeth, who explains that she has been going over old notes trying to figure out how Vonny and Kole are getting old shadyr magic to work, since shadyrs no longer have magic like the pureblood shadyrs used to.

Together, Rylan and Annabeth work out that the original Everdark shadyrs used pieces of the Beast and Teeth and Stars to break through the shield between dimensions—and Rylan realizes this means Everly could be in danger, since she contains two pieces of the creature. If the Mesmans are trying to open a shroudpool, they might need her. Concerned, he tries to call Everly, but she doesn't pick up. When he finally gets through to Lian, she answers, but Rylan can hear a ruckus on the other end of the line, and the call disconnects.

On their way back from Dark Corner, Everly, Lian, Harper, and Tammy find the road blocked from a fallen tree. They're ambushed and blindfolded by Darkfreys, but Lian recognizes Vonny's voice amongst their attackers. The Darkfreys kidnap Everly and Tammy and speed off, leaving Lian stranded.

Worried after the indecipherable phone call, Rylan, Callan, Cherry, Jasper, Denny, and Annabeth head to Dark Corner where they find Lian. Harper uses her phone to track Everly to Darkfrey Estate, but the team doesn't know how they could possibly mount a rescue mission without facing the full might of the Darkfreys.

Denny announces a solution: he knows a secret way into the estate, thanks to his alleged rendezvous with Alexis. With no better option and desperate to rescue Everly and Tammy, the group agrees to follow Denny's lead, despite having little trust in him.

The group enters the secret tunnel into the estate, only to be met by a group of Darkfreys blocking their path. The Howell team fights their way through, fueled by years of anger from being mistreated by the oppressive, violent institution.

Meanwhile, Everly and Tammy find themselves tied to a contraption opposite each other in an abandoned ballroom at Darkfrey Estate. Everly recognizes the contraption from the sketches that Jasper brought, and knows this is the mechanism the Mesmans hope to use to open the shroudpool.

Everly urges Tammy to teleport to safety, but Vonny threatens to kill Everly if she does. Soon, Kole begins the shroudpool-opening ritual by cutting Everly's forehead with a knife. Everly is powerless to defend herself in the presence of the Bane of Teeth and Stars. She knows that this is where her story ends, and she regrets not telling Rylan that she loves him.

Kole reveals that he has embedded original shadyr bones all over his torso and arms—the source of his magic. He has made himself one with the ancient shadyrs so that he can bring all shadyrs into a new era of victory.

The ritual structure begins to move, bringing Tammy and Everly closer together. When Mordan Darkfrey arrives, Everly begs him to put a stop to this; if the Mesmans open the shroudpool, they'll endanger everyone. But Mordan gives Vonny and Kole the go-ahead, because he thinks this could be a great

victory for their kind. After what the Coruscare has shown her, though, Everly knows they don't stand a chance against what's on the other side. If the Mesmans open the shroudpool, Shroudhaven—and beyond—is doomed.

Rylan, Lian, Harper, Denny, Callan, and Annabeth arrive to the room just in time to see the completion of the ritual. Rylan realizes they're too late: a massive shroudpool has been open, and Everly and Tammy are gone.

Bigger eidolghasts than Rylan has ever seen begin to emerge, and chaos ensues. Hundreds of Darkfreys arrive to join the battle against the monsters spilling over from the Everdark. Callan and Rylan make a difficult decision: together, they enter the shroudpool into the Everdark in pursuit of the women they love.

In the Everdark, eidolghasts descend upon Everly and Tammy. Though weakened, Everly is able to call on just enough light to keep the monsters at bay now that the Bane isn't present anymore. Vonny and Kole search desperately for Blaise, running off into darkness. The Coruscare begins to feed on nearby eidolghasts, strengthening itself. Everly and Tammy hear the horrifying sounds of Vonny and Kole beating eaten alive.

Then Everly and Tammy find human remains: Blaise Mesman. The Mesmans' spell brought them to their son after all, but they died before they could find him.

Tammy recovers the shady artifact that Blaise had with him when he died. Everly recognizes it as a part of the ritual that created the Bane of Teeth and Stars. Tammy suggests they try to use it to shut down the shroudpool. But then, a weroth attacks, gravely wounding Tammy.

Miraculously, Rylan and Callan arrive. Callan, Rylan, and Everly fight back against the encroaching beasts with Tammy in tow. Everly can sense something far worse than eidolghasts approaching them: the Coruscare's dark twin. The group manages to make it back through the shroudpool to their own realm, but the dark twin follows them into Shroudhaven.

It is the Coruscare's twin, the Infuscur. Everly knows she is the only one who might stand a chance against the powerful beast. Unable to exist in this dimension without a host, the Infuscur takes command of Mordan Darkfrey's body.

Everly and the possessed Mordan become locked in an epic duel between dark and light, but Everly can sense that because her dragon is not whole, they are no match for the Infuscur. Everly flees, trying to lead the Infuscur away from the others to buy them time. When she throws the beast off her tail, Everly regroups with the Howell team. They run, dodging chaos and eidolghasts attacks as the Infuscur obliterates the estate. Callan carries Tammy, who is on the brink of death.

As the group flees, Denny finds Alexis Darkfrey and rescues her from some fallen debris. The Howell team is shocked to learn that Denny was telling the truth the whole time about the nature of his relationship with her. Cherry and Jasper arrive with a getaway van, urging the group to climb in, but an eidolghast bites Alexis's head off. Enraged, Denny attacks the monster, but it administers him a fatal wound. Before the group can do anything to save Denny, he blows himself up inside the monster using C-4. The group speeds away, shocked by the death of one of their own.

Back at Howell House, Tammy survives thanks to Neri's healing powers. The group turns their attention to the artifact they found on Blaise's body: a magical orb known as the Swallower. As they brace for the encroaching darkness, they formulate a plan: recover the final piece of the Coruscare, and hope Everly is strong enough to control it, so that a made-whole Coruscare is a match for its dark twin.

The Infuscur in the form of Mordan Darkfrey prowls Shroudhaven searching for Everly. The Howell team embarks on their mission to track down Cardboard Box Barry, who they know to be in possession of the last piece of the Beast of the Teeth and Stars. On the streets, Nilson Darkfrey attacks Everly, but an unexpected savior arrives: Zozo, the undead cougar. Zozo kills Nilson, avenging the death of Nell, its previous caretaker, who died at Nilson's hand.

The group finally tracks down Cardboard Box Barry, but the Infuscur has found them. It attacks Rushelle, killing her on the spot. Shattered by Rushelle's death, the rest of the group quickly crawls into Barry's cardboard box maze for safety, and he leads them to the heart of the labyrinth where the crystal waits.

Inside of Everly, the Coruscare becomes excited, and lashes out, breaking the crystal, and absorbing its remaining piece. The Coruscare takes over Everly's body, and she is horrified to realize that she can't control it. She is on the verge of telling Rylan she loves him when her consciousness washes away, commandeered by the beast inside of her.

The Coruscare flies away in Everly's body to do battle with the Infuscur, and the cardboard box labyrinth begins to self-destruct without the crystal to power it. Rylan, Tammy, and Callan escape, but Harper, Neri, and Barry don't make it out in time. In the sky, the dueling gods wage war.

Inside the maze, Harper and Neri stop to help Barry from being engulfed by the encroaching void, but ahead of them, their exit has closed. Barry tells them there is no way out. With the world closing in around them, Harper confesses her romantic feelings for Neri, and Neri agrees that the feelings are mutual. They hope that Barry might have some power to save them, from spending so long near a piece of the Coruscare, much as Neri has a special talent from her similar past, but he is unable to conjure anything. Barry, Harper, and Neri hold hands as their world collapses and they await their end.

The Howell team regroups, grieving their dead. They form a plan that requires them to track down the now missing Swallower and Bane of Teeth and Stars, but first they need a distraction. Lian retrieves the remaining C-4 that she confiscated from Denny over the years.

While the gods continue to battle in the sky, the team sets up the explosives around the rest of the bone lures at the estate. Using an old shadyr family heirloom, Annabeth calls upon her studies to conduct a ritual that activates the bone effigies, which begin to attract the nearby eidolghasts. The team allows the eidolghast to amass in the area before detonating the C-4.

Above them, Everly wields the Swallower. Both Mordan and Everly tumble out of the sky. Rylan finally tracks down the Bane, but it's broken, and his hope to save Everly from the Coruscare's control is crushed.

Lian heads to where Mordan's body fell out of the sky. She finds that he and the being inside him are close to death. Lian kills him for all the horrible things he has done. His body disintegrates, leaving behind a crystal in which the Infuscur is now trapped. Her sword, which she uses to kill him, seems to be imbued somehow with the Infuscur's powers too.

With the Bane no longer an option, Rylan and Lian discuss releasing the Infuscur into Everly with the hope that it and the Coruscare will cancel each other out inside her. Rylan plans to join Everly by allowing himself to be consumed so that he can warn her of their plan. Lian argues that there will be no way to get him out again now that the Bane is broken.

Rylan accepts this fate. But just as he is about to allow himself to be consumed by the Coruscare, Lian steps in and takes his place, sacrificing herself.

Everly continues to push back against the Coruscare's control. Then she feels a familiar presence join her: Lian. Lian quickly explains their plan. Everly promises to get the Bane and free Lian when this is all over, but secretly, Lian knows this won't be an option.

Rylan takes the black crystal that contains the Infuscur and breaks it at Everly's feet. It rushes into Everly's body, and she becomes herself again, but she can feel the gods fighting inside of her.

Tendrils of both beings lash out of her through cracks in her body, and Rylan fights them back with Lian's sword. Each strike he makes cuts the tendrils and they form into tiny crystals, scattering around the battlefield. Everly struggles to hold onto herself through the ordeal, and soon it's over, but Everly's body has been through too much and she becomes unresponsive.

Suddenly, Harper, Neri, and Barry burst out of a hole in the ground nearby and rush to Everly's side. Neri sings, using her healing powers to save Everly. Harper explains that Barry realized he had powers, too, from living in proximity to the crystal for so long. He was able to use his powers to rescue them from the collapsing maze. Neri's healing works, and Everly wakes up—but Lian doesn't. The group is devastated by the loss of Lian, but Annabeth reminds them they still have the giant shroudpool to deal with.

Using her memory of the day she and Blaise tried to close the Dark Corner shroudpool, Tammy helps Annabeth perform a ritual. Many members of the Howell team realize they were hit by tiny shards of the crystals, and find that they have some odd new powers.

The Swallower engulfs the shroudpool, destroying it. In the process of the ritual, Tammy's Everdark-cursed hands go back to normal, no longer stained with black.

In the aftermath of the epic assault, the people of Shroudhaven work to recover and rebuild. Everly informs Rylan of her true feelings, and they can finally grow their relationship.

One day, Rylan learns some shocking news. Mordan Darkfrey's last will and testament indicates he left the estate to his children, Nilson and Alexis. Logically, since Nilson and Alexis are both dead, the estate should pass onto Alexis's children—but it seems that Denny had a hand in things.

Alexis had her will changed in secret, leaving everything to Denny. Denny, in turn, left everything to Lian. Which means now, the estate belongs to Callan and Rylan. Rylan and Callan hope to usher in a new, more accepting era of shadys.

Of all the monsters and mysteries that had bombarded Everly since returning to Shroudhaven, nothing surprised her more than how she'd been able to find herself a home in that place. That a house of

tormented memories could grow warm again. That abandoned fantasies of love could blossom into something better than ever dreamed.

That with so much darkness, so too came a glorious light.



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