

## Mated to the Werewolf King

### Hidden Poison

*Torture.*

*Pain.*

*Blazing re.*

*Eternal Suffering.*

The name *Demon Lord* didn't really bring any other thoughts to my head!

Any time I heard that moniker, I was haunted by the grim visions of fire, blood, and burning flesh.

But as I looked upon his ivory smile, I could think of none of those words. He was gorgeous, unlike any being I had seen before—demons included.

Like a dart frog's beautiful coloring, the Demon Lord's short, spiky hair warned of the poison hiding inside.

His red eyes contrasted nicely with his hair, pale skin, and black clothing. It gave off a hauntingly sexy vibe I couldn't help but find appealing.

He smiled again, and a dimple formed on his chin.

Even though I had heard the rumors myself, I was having trouble believing this man was part of any devil.

"My love, I hold a ravenous hunger that soars as high as the moon on this glorious night," he said lustfully.

My jaw dropped.

I had expected fire and brimstone. Maybe even a few dozen demonic minions storming inside, destroying everything in sight.

There was no chaos left in his wake. No burning bodies or severed limbs.

The being in front of me was none of those things. Not that I could see with my own two eyes.

I couldn't help but be taken aback.

A tingling formed inside my chest, spreading throughout my torso. It moved toward my feet and arms, numbing my fingers as I clenched them into fists at my side.

"Please, do not be frightened," he purred.

"The man who oversaw my capture by sending his minions after me suddenly wants to be friendly? I think we're well past that," I said, with daggers in my voice.

His smile was still there, mischievously brilliant. It was hard to look away.

"I know you must have had a long day, my love. So, I will forgive the confusion. But I am no such man, dear Annabelle. My name is Lasarus, and I have come to take you home."

He smiled.

Even more surprises from an already unexpected evening.

"I don't understand. You're going to take me to my family?" I asked.

His laugh was boisterous and loud. I thought of shielding my ears from the sound but kept what little composure I had left.

The Demon Lord looked to Derek, who stood still and motionless.

"She has a wonderful sense of humor, this one... In a sense, yes, you will be with family. Your new family.

"I have come to take you to our home, where we will rule the Underworld together. After all, it has been ordained, you are my mate," he said, while touching a hand to my shoulder.

His fingers transferred burning warmth that would stay on my body long after his hand left.

I shivered and stepped aside, trying to put space between us.

"We had a deal. You have what you wanted. Now, where is my brother?" Derek asked, with more than a hint of irritation in his voice.

I had almost forgotten about his kid brother!

Lasarus' smile inched, and in that moment, I saw something. He tried his best to hide it, but it was unmistakable.

In that moment, I saw a crack in the mask hiding his true, devious intentions.

"Your brother will be by your side as soon as I have Annabelle at mine," Lasarus hissed, while looking at me.

"If she does not come willingly, you have only fulfilled half of your duty."

Derek's body lurched with sadness. I could see the pain and anger etched on his face.

His little brother's safety was being dangled in front of him, hanging by a thread that would be determined by my own choice.

I took a step forward and they both turned, looking right at me.

"I will go with you. But only if I know the boy is safe," I said with determination.

"That is all I needed to hear, my love," Lasarus said gently.

Lasarus took a short bow, and with a wave of his hands, the door to the throne room flew open once more.

A small child ran into the room and leapt into Derek's open arms.

"Jason! You're alright!" Derek cried with relief. Tears streamed down his smiling face as Jason hugged him hard.

"I wasn't afraid, I promise," Jason reassured his big brother.

Derek stroked his face as he checked Jason for any signs of harm.

"You're such a strong boy," he assured him, adding a kiss to Jason's forehead.

Lasarus watched this exchange, unable to hold back his contempt.

"The boy is delivered safe and sound. Just as I promised."

Then, he looked to me and gave a wink.

"I always keep my promises. Soon, you will see that."

Derek stood up, keeping Jason close.

"Our deal is finished, Lasarus. You have what you wanted. There is nothing left between us."

Derek looked at me as he said this, sorrow knitting his brows.

"You did wonderful, Derek. I couldn't have asked for anything more. And I won't have to..."

Lasarus looked to me again. His eyes flashed with a burning lust.

"As long as I have my Annabelle at my side."

"Because the easiest way to woo a woman is to kidnap a small child. Right?"

I knew it wasn't smart going at the Demon Lord, but what did I have to lose?

Memories of my family flooded my mind. They were still a part of me, but how long would I be able to say that?

"A lively one. You must like to be chased. And believe me, I love the chase. But it is all the more delectable to think about what will happen after my prey has been captured."

Captured prey. To Lasarus, I was just a creature to be hunted.

The thought repulsed me, but I couldn't shake it.

Hadn't I wanted to be hunted? For someone to look at me and chase me with the same need the Demon Lord now showed...?

I couldn't help but compare Lasarus to the Werewolf King.

Keith's cruelty and brashness always caught me off-guard, especially when compared to the desire I felt with his every touch.

Lasarus had a gentleness that undercut his monstrous actions. He controlled his world with a smooth hand, not the power and destruction I had known from the Werewolf King.

Even if that smoothness required a small child to be held hostage...

But he had given the boy back, unharmed. There was something commendable in that, wasn't there?

I didn't even believe the excuses forming in my mind.

If I were to be the Demon Lord's mate and do his every bidding, it didn't seem like my own thoughts even mattered.

I looked at his dimple and felt my worries begin to ease. He wasn't hard to look at, I had to give him that.

Lasarus held out his hand, kneeling on a bended knee.

"If you will, my love, we must be on our way," he cooed.

"Where are we going?" I asked. I had been so lost in thought that I forgot why he had come in the first place.

"To your new home on Demon Island. The demons are eager for our return," he assured me with a smile.

"We must not keep them waiting to meet their new queen."

*Vast emptiness.*

That's all I could see as I stood beside Tannon looking out over the vista of mountains and snow.

Tannon took a wide stance and chanted words I could not hear, much less understand.

The staff at his side began to glow with a brilliance only matched by Belle's short-lived power.

With each passing chant uttered from his mouth, I could feel his power growing stronger.

Suddenly, the view before me gave way, and I could see something else.

An imperceptible force field glistened before my eyes, stretching as wide as the horizon.

"This is the gate you have been searching for. You will find Annabelle on the other side."

That was all I needed to hear!

I lunged forward, smashing into the translucent gate. I could feel the energy pulsing, holding back anything from entering or exiting.

Tannon shouted a spell and smashed his staff into the ground.

Like a bowling ball crashing into water, I could see the ripple effect from his staff's power.

The blast hit me, and I was thrown to the side by a gust of wind. I dusted off the snow from my body.

"What the hell?" I growled.

Tannon's eyes were piercing. I had yet to see him so pissed off. I immediately straightened up.

"Your methods will only break the barrier and allow the demons to pour through the hole, merging our world with theirs."

"Good! Then, I'll rip every last demon until their blood stains this earth," I warned.

Tannon shook his head in disgust. "If that happens, this eternal war between species will never end. Belle will be gone forever. This is not the way to save her."

"Then, how? Tell me! We must hurry before it's too late," I urged.

"Everything in its—"

I cut him off before he could finish. "Everything in its own time, yeah, I get it! But if this isn't the way, then show me. I'll do anything to get her back," I said, my voice pleading.

Tannon contemplated this before he looked at me and nodded his head.

"We must ascend the mountains and retrieve a scroll from the Moon Goddess. Only then will we be able to safely open the barrier," he said, as if in a reverie.

My anger and doubt slowly turned into hope. With Tannon by my side, we had a chance of ending Belle. Of saving her and ending this wretched war.

A steady rumble, stronger than any I'd felt before, shook the ground beneath our feet. It warned of the dangers lurking in the underworld.

A sinking feeling pulled at my heart. Something in that sensation told me all I needed to know.

Were we too late? Belle could already be in the clutches of the Demon Lord deep in the heart of the underworld.

I dug my fingers and toes into the ground, ready to push through the gateway with explosive force.

No matter what dangers awaited me or where they took Belle, I would find her.

I would make sure of that.