

Mated to the Werewolf King

Taken to the Island

Whomp.

The tapping of the demon wings beat a rhythm in unison with my racing heart.

Within moments of the Demon Lord announcing our journey to the island, we were greeted by what looked to be a large carriage without wheels.

It was black as night but extravagant nonetheless, simultaneously beautiful and frightening.

It was transported by large, bat-like demons with massive wings, pulling from the front with reins that would normally be attached to horses.

In all, it was a terrifying contraption, but one that seemed to give the Demon Lord special pride.

Whomp.

We had been traveling over an endless sea for what seemed like hours. As we crawled above the never-ending waves, an island began to form on the horizon.

A descending sun sent streaks of light across the water, lighting the island with an uneasy, ethereal aura.

Out of the lush green hills sprouted a large structure. In fact, it was many structures linked together to form a complex.

Whomp.

I could see the four-story mansion standing tall like a sentinel. Smaller buildings circled it, completing the gorgeous community in the middle of a remote island.

I gasped at its splendor.

Lasarus heard. How could he not? He had been next to me the entire trip, touching my skin, stroking my hair, kissing my hands whenever I would allow.

I had scooted to the far side of the carriage, but he had planted himself next to me.

I was unable to move—his prey, trapped, with nowhere to go.

I could tell from his neediness that he did not enjoy my cold responses. Lasarus had wanted a woman he could call his own and parade around the island.

He wanted someone who would submit and bend to his every desire. Maybe he knew that soon enough I would not be able to turn away.

What he didn't know was that I would do everything in my power to not give in!

But then, I saw it standing high above the surrounding island. All of my fears and uncertainties began to dissipate at the sight of the mansion.

"Welcome home, my love," he said to me with a grin, as the carriage began its descent.

It was beautiful. But could I ever think of it as home?

"This is your Queen. Bow to her," he called out sternly.

The plethora of servants knelt as one. Lasarus was pleased with this display and showed his approval with a clap.

"Nice trick. Do they roll over?" I could hear the angst in my voice, and it worried me. I didn't like who I was becoming, my cynical nature bursting through.

But it was all I could muster. Fear had draped around me like a cloak, and I needed to show a mask of determination.

"They will play dead, if it is what you desire," he said with a smile.

I know someone I would love to see dead, I thought, as we continued our tour of the complex.

We walked through the great halls, our footsteps echoing on the marble floors. It was lavish, every little feature scrutinized to perfection.

The devil is in the details.

I had to hold back my laughter. Lasarus was too busy showing off his fortune that he didn't see it.

Or maybe he did...

"This is all yours, my love. Every speck of this island will be yours once I mark you as my own. Then, you will become my queen," he whispered into my ear.

I stood, mesmerized, a little annoyed. I hadn't asked for any of this. But there was no denying its allure.

"What's next...the dungeon?" I asked.

When Keith took me as his own to "protect" me from the Demon Lord, the dungeon was my cold, humble abode.

Now that the Demon Lord had me in his grasp, it was mansions and servants, not mildew and darkness.

"You mesmerize me..." he said.

I noticed he was looking closely at me. When I met his stare, it frightened me. Not for fear, but because of the honesty I saw.

I turned away, hoping to hide the redness blossoming on my cheeks.

"This is all so...nice. But why are you doing this?" I asked.

Lasarus broke his strong gaze. He wasn't yelling at me to stop manipulating his mind. The Demon Lord was actually listening to me.

"Because it is our fate, my love. With me on this island, we can have it all. No one will ever say you're too weak. You're too quiet. That you don't deserve more."

He brushed his hand along my cheek. His fingers traced my skin, slowly moving down my neck and across my chest, coming to rest at my navel.

"Together, we could rule the world," he said.

Lasarus leaned in for a kiss and caught my cheek. It was all so much, so fast.

My heart was racing, and I couldn't control the flood of emotions washing through me.

But there was something else, an empty hole in my desire that had never surfaced with Keith's touch. The invisible pull I felt around the Werewolf King wasn't the same.

It was much stronger.

"I don't know, Lasarus. This is all so much."

"We can do it. Together. It is more than just destiny, dear Belle. It is the powerful, ancient blood coursing through your veins."

I looked at him. The smile that had left upon hearing my doubts now shot across his face. In that moment, I could see his benevolence.

"What do you know about my blood?" I asked in disbelief.

"More than anyone else. The Demon Lord does have his ways of bending things out."

He circled, inspecting every inch of me as I stood there, unable to move.

"Only I know your true origin. Don't you want that knowledge, my love? If I were you, I would want to know the truth. I would want to see my real family."

The wind was howling louder than anything I could muster.

I followed Tannon's footsteps straight up the side of the mountain. For such an ancient being, he was surprisingly agile.

It took most of my energy to simply hold on at such a great height, much less keep pace.

It was freezing, even for beings like us. I could feel sweat accumulating on my skin.

He had told me about the next part of our mission. We were to climb the highest peak and summon the Moon Goddess.

What happened next was not up to us, Tannon had warned. She would meet us only if it was our destiny.

I knew the look on my face told him all I needed to know. I would do anything to see Belle. It was undeniable now that she had been away for so long...

She was my true mate. The queen that would help me rule over my land and my people.

Even if she was not a werewolf, she would be accepted as one of our own.

I would make sure of that.

I looked up again, and Tannon was gone.

My heart began to beat quickly. Had this been a trick?

I saw his head pop over the side of a cliff only a few meters away. His hand reached down, and I grabbed it. Not only was he agile, but he was strong, too!

With help, I pulled my body up and over the ledge onto a small plateau. We had gone as far as it would take us. This was the peak.

"You are surprisingly fast at climbing mountains, warlock," I called to him over the screech of the howling wind.

He smiled. This was the first time I had seen this side of him. It seemed our workout had cleared his mind from the daunting tasks ahead.

"I have scaled this mountain many times. I wasn't always successful in reaching the Moon Goddess, but it was always a challenge I looked forward to."

His face returned to its usual stoicism. "Now, it is time."

Tannon closed his eyes. It almost looked like he was resting. But within seconds, I knew, he was in a stupor, calling to the powers within.

The wind died down. I could hear the last flakes of snow falling at our feet.

Tannon's stance again filled with light, but this time, it coursed through his body.

He opened his eyes, and a powerful white glow erupted, shining atop the peak of the mountain like a strong beacon.

His body shook even though everything around us had frozen still.

I couldn't believe my eyes.

Something was beginning to form out of thin air. It was a blur of particles sticking together to create a larger mass. Then, it began to take the shape of a woman.

I could see the curve of her hips and supple lips of her mouth. Her eyes formed and she looked at us.

She was beautiful.

She was the Moon Goddess.

"What is your reason for summoning me to this earthly plane, warlock?" asked the Moon Goddess.

Tannon's eyes no longer glowed. He had been broken from his trance and was knelt down on one knee. He looked humbled by the presence of the Moon Goddess.

I looked at my own legs and immediately knelt.

"We have come for your guidance, Moon Goddess, mother of the night children. The Werewolf King must know his prophecy," Tannon said.

She looked from Tannon to me. I could sense her eyes penetrating my body, reaching into my soul.

"You are the Werewolf King?" she asked.

For any other being, I would have demanded simple answers by phasing into my werewolf form and showing my true power.

But for the Moon Goddess, I could barely open my mouth, much less look her in the eyes.

"Yes, I am Keith, King of the Werewolves. I have come to learn of my fate so that I may help another. My mate."

The Moon Goddess floated closer. In her hand appeared a withered scroll. It unwound itself and floated out of her hand, hanging in the air between us.

When she spoke next, her voice resonated through my entire being.

"A hybrid will be born

The rest of many

She will be the fate

of many rulers

but, will be claimed by

only one King

She will bring darkness

among my children

and destruction

consuming the world

unless the King of one

sacrifices his fate

for the peace of all."

Her hidden meanings were beyond my grasp. I looked to meet her eyes, to try and understand what the prophecy meant. But she was gone.

We were alone.

The howl of the wind had picked up once again. I screamed my words as blinding snow hit my face.

"I don't understand. What does she mean?" I pleaded.

Tannon looked at me, his eyes filled with sorrow.

"You are destined to be with her," he shouted.

His words filled me with an odd peace I did not expect. It was true! We were to be mated. The pull I felt had been true all along.

Then, he said more.

"But if you mark her as your mate, Keith, war will break loose. And this time, the war will never end," he warned.

That couldn't be true. Everything I had felt and done was to be with her, not to push her away!

My mate or eternal war...was this really the choice I would be forced to make?

Tannon's next response answered my worst fears.

"If you want to save your people...if you truly want peace...you cannot choose her as your mate."