

Into the Underworld

Visions of flames danced across a blood-soaked, war-torn battle field.

Demons, witches, and werewolves lay in heaps.

An eternal war sparked by my deepest desire to have her as my queen.

I stood before the barrier to the underworld. Once the Moon Goddess left Tannon and I on the peak of the mountain, I could not even imagine what might happen next.

It was as if every desire I had ever felt for Belle multiplied tenfold.

She was all I could think about.

She was all I wanted.

And if I were to mark her as my mate, it would be our world's undoing.

Tannon watched me in silence. He had been just as shocked by the revelation when I first hearing it.

Now, he stood beside me with that same stoic expression I had grown to know and love.

"I'm ready," I said aloud.

My clenched teeth and fists fooled me into thinking I could stop all of this. The uneasy beating of my heart let me know what I did not want to understand...

This would not be easy.

"Are you certain this is what you want?" Tannon asked, even though he already knew the answer.

I nodded in response, my muscles flexing as I thought of the journey ahead.

"Once the gate is open, you must hurry. I will hold off any evil that tries to come through the gateway, but my strength will not last. You will only have three hours. After that, I must reseal the gate to ensure the safety of our world," he warned.

Three hours. It wasn't long, but it would have to suffice.

The power inside me waiting to burst forward assured me once more that I could handle this mission.

My heart fluttered, but I ignored it, sending my worries to knot up in the pit of my stomach.

I would not fail this mission. No matter what happened, I would save Belle.

"Nothing can stop me now. I will succeed in my destiny. I have to," I said.

A smile grew across Tannon's face as he considered my determination.

"I have faith in you, Werewolf King. But you must know that your powers will not be the same once you cross over. Use your strength sparingly..." Tannon said.

I knew what he was trying to say. It was just like Belle had warned before disappearing not long after.

I must lean on my intelligence and intuition. There would be plenty of time to fight later—the prophecy had promised as much.

Tannon took a wide stance and raised his arms in the air. His stance hung from his grasp, the conductor of so much of his power. He looked at me again, a harsher glare behind his eyes.

"You may not be able to save Annabelle on your own," he cautioned.

ROAR!

I let my anger go, bellowing it into the orange sky that glowed above us.

"Open the gate!" I screamed.

Tannon continued to stand, unmoving.

"The Demon Lord waits for you. I can sense him," Tannon said. "He and his brother Azazel are strong, powerful beyond compare."

Azazel? His brother?!

I searched my memory for an answer and recalled the image of a gleaming sword. I had not met either of these demons, but I knew of their power.

Lasarus was known to be smooth and manipulative.

Azazel, on the other hand, was known as the Lord of Death. He could be considered the strong, angry type.

Great. There would be more than one Demon Lord that would need to be defeated.

I could hear the caution in Tannon's voice, but my conviction only grew.

"This conversation is over. It is time," I commanded.

Tannon looked straight ahead. His eyes began to glow with that eerie light, much like they had on the mountain's peak.

The glow began to emanate from his stance and eyes. I could feel it happening.

The gateway to the Underworld was beginning to open.

I could feel his hot breath on my neck as he fumbled desperately at my pants. He had held back his desire as long as he could.

I imagined this was far longer than he had ever done before.

"It is time, my love," he sputtered as his lust grew.

I could see his shaft, swollen and hard, trying to break through his pants. I shuddered at the thought, and in that moment of disgust, fell onto the bed.

I landed on the floor with a thud and a gasp.

Lasarus' head popped over the side of the bed.

His eyes were still burning, as if a flame had been ignited inside his head. He was ravenous in his desire to have me.

I backpedaled, trying to get away.

"You told me I would see my family. You lied to me!" I yelled, trying to sway his mind from the task at hand.

His lips formed a smile that quickly turned to anger.

I could see his perfect teeth shine between his lips. They were sharper than I remembered, small knives ready to cut into my pale flesh.

"I have done my absolute best, my love, in allowing your arrival here to be at your own speed. But that's over. You are mine. It is destined. Tonight, I will mark you as my own. Tomorrow, you will be my queen."

I finally hit the wall and had to stop. There was nowhere left to go.

"Stop, I'm not ready."

To my surprise, Lasarus did stop.

Was that really all I had to do?

Maybe I was wrong. Maybe he would give me more time.

A burning light grew from behind Lasarus. His smile grew wider.

I could now see streaks of blood in his teeth. Some unfortunate victim had been unable to slow him as I had.

When I looked at the smile, I felt nauseous. I tried to look away, but the burning continued to grow until I could feel the heat from its flames.

Against all of my will, I looked straight ahead and gasped in shock.

A figure had appeared within the flames. It looked similar to Lasarus, but there was something much more sinister in the burning glow.

My mouth dropped.

This was the image I had seen in my dreams. The horrid figure that lurked at the edges of my nightmares, watching me.

Smiling at me from the darkness.

That nightmare had become real. It was standing directly in front of me.

And to make matters worse, it was engulfed in flames.

"I would like you to meet some family of my own, love. This is my brother, Azazel. Say hello, Azazel, the Lord of Death."

I couldn't believe my eyes. Things just kept getting more and more surreal.

But the heat I could feel from his body told me this was no illusion.

My nightmares had come to haunt me in whatever world I now inhabited.

The Lord of Death stood next to his brother, the spitting image if not for the flames. He did not speak, but his hellish eyes told me all I needed to know.

"This can't be real."

Lasarus laughed.

This triggered a domino effect in Azazel, who laughed as well, fire shooting from his mouth.

I looked at the room around me, and a sudden vertigo took hold.

My focus became blurred. The immaculate master suite began to shudder and shift.

I began to understand what was happening. This was not the real world I had come to expect.

It was a mirage!

I crawled to a nearby window and watched the lush vegetation of the island spark up in flames.

The servants shifted from their work attire and revealed their true forms—demons without distinguishing attributes.

They were simply pale surrogates of their lord, red eyes complimented by spiked white hair.

"If you will not have me alone...perhaps you will have us both, my love?"

The Demon Lord and the Lord of Darkness stood side by side. Lasarus licked his lips, while Azazel cracked his knuckles.

One...

CRACK.

By one...

CRACK.

By one...

The popping of his knuckles mixed with the conflagration of his body overwhelmed my senses.

I could feel a slight pull, stronger now because the two of them lusted together, doubling the sensation in my body.

He had been so gentle, so understanding...

How could I have fooled myself into believing this could be my happily ever after?

I could hear an imaginary anecdote from my parents bouncing off the walls in my skull...

A man is a man is a man...they only want one thing. Make sure your first time is special. Make sure it's what you want.

Well, this was not at all how my first time should be. It wasn't how anyone should experience one of the greatest moments in their life.

I cowered as the hellish landscape raged around me.

This was not how I had imagined it at all...

I was in hell.

I watched as the invisible barrier slowly split open, like a pinhole growing into a crater.

Tannon's body shook from the energy needed to open the gateway.

I was thankful for his contributions. Without him, I would never have made it this far, and Belle surely would have been lost to the Underworld.

"Hold on, Belle," I whispered to myself as I continued watching the gateway grow larger.

"Now. You must go now!" I heard Tannon yell above the sound of the whirling mass circling before us.

"Remember. Three hours! That is all!"

I nodded my understanding and moved to the door.

"Thank you," I said to him, before turning my attention to the gateway only inches from my body.

As I began to step through, I could feel a deep dread spread over me.

An image of Belle surrounded by flames lled my mind.

I almost stumbled but gained my composure.

Tannon had been correct; I could already feel my strength fading.

"I'm coming, Belle!" I screamed, as I pushed forward into the uncertain darkness that lay ahead.