

Mated to the Werewolf King

Island of Fire

Silence.

Absolute silence.

And why could I only see white?

I had stepped through the gateway and into a world with blinding whiteness and no sound. I shook my head and tried to yawn, popping my ears.

It took them a moment to adjust.

CHIRP.

I could hear the whistle of birds hiding high up in the trees.

I rubbed my eyes and opened them again.

The glow was everywhere, all-encompassing.

I tried to find the source of the otherworldly light, but it was no use. It came from everywhere and yet had no point of origin.

Finally, the white shifted into something less harsh and I could see the world around me.

I was in a peaceful meadow surrounded by tall trees. In the center of this lush green world sat a large lake.

It was majestic but unsettling in its beauty. I wondered what dangers lurked in the haze.

My knuckles whitened.

There was splashing on the shore. Something was hunched down, playing at the water's edge.

It was small and frail, almost like a child covered in its own shadow.

I approached with caution. My instincts kicked in. This reminded me of when I would hunt, stalking my prey with a stealthy, lethal quickness.

But the shadow heard me and turned its head. I could not find its eyes, but I sensed it watching me.

"Who are you, and why have you come here?" it asked with a wavering, childlike voice.

"I am the Werewolf King, and I come looking for Annabelle. She is my mate," I answered.

As soon as I said the words, I could hear the prophecy ringing in my head. An eternal war would be the ultimate cost for our love.

Thinking about her now, as I stood in this meadow, only steeled my need to find her.

I would not give up looking, no matter the cost.

The shadow child shook its head and then looked at me again.

"The Shadow King is ready to see you. He has been waiting," it said.

It reached out its arm and extended a hand to me. I thought about backing away.

What if this was a trap?

You will only have three hours.

I thought about what Tannon had said. There would be other times for uncertainty. Now, I needed to push ahead.

Taking a deep breath, I grasped the hand of the shadow child.

My stomach lurched into knots as we were overtaken by a swirling mass. The shadow child had opened a portal for us to travel through.

I did not know our destination or who waited at the end. It didn't matter, as long as I found Belle.

I bit my lip as a heavy darkness sucked all light from my world.

A large fire burned in a stone fireplace.

The scent of smoking ash wood filled my nostrils.

The lavish room was a welcome respite from what I imagined a Shadow King would possess.

His throne was proudly displayed in the middle of the room, shining bright from the burning fire.

The shadow child had teleported me here within seconds of touching hands. Just as quickly, it had disappeared, leaving me alone.

Or, so I thought...

Movement caught my eye. I lowered myself, ready to strike if needed.

I could make out two figures sitting near the fire.

As the flames danced, I saw the faces of a child and an adult man. They were reading by the firelight.

Suddenly, the man looked to me and stood up. His long hair swayed across his face, guarding his expression.

The boy stood, too, holding the book close to his chest.

"My name is Derek, the Shadow King. Welcome to my castle, Werewolf King. It is good to see you."

His voice was kind and welcoming.

Yet another thing to catch me off-guard!

He was no monster who had kidnapped an innocent woman.

I quickly looked around us to make sure there was no one else—no one lying in wait.

"Where is she?" I asked angrily.

The boy clung tighter to the Shadow King. I didn't mean to frighten him but could not hold back my frustration.

"The Demon Lord has her," he replied.

I opened my mouth and let out a deafening roar.

The Shadow King stepped forward, holding up his hands to stop whatever I might do next.

"She saved my little brother! The Demon Lord kidnapped him and would only give him back if I found her," he pleaded.

I took a step forward and inhaled a deep breath. It was taking all of my reserve not to tear him to shreds.

"So, it was you who handed her over?" I asked, the anger in my voice unmistakable.

"She went willingly. To save his life," Derek said.

The boy tried to hide behind the King and find some solace from my anger.

I took a few steps back, putting space between us.

"Tell me how to find her, Shadow King. I don't have time for games," I warned.

"The Demon Lord doesn't play. He will torture until he gets what he wants. I know your time is precious. I promise, I want to bring him down as much as you," Derek said.

His face was serious, showing nothing but determination.

I felt my determination grow.

"Good," I said. "Then, what do you suggest we do next?"

I couldn't move. My breath was ragged, my lungs unable to fill with air.

Lasarus held my hands tightly, his body pinning me to the ground.

"I gave you the chance to do this the easy way," he said, as I struggled beneath him.

Right.

The easy way...

I only had to give myself over to the Lord of all Demons and his psychopathic brother. All they wanted was to pass me around for their own sick sexual amusement.

No big deal...

So, I kicked and punched, connecting my assault with them more than once.

Lasarus retaliated as expected, but it was his strength that surprised me.

Now, I was in a bit of a bind, as two very powerful demons looked to take me as their unwilling mate.

To my utter astonishment, Azazel spoke for the first time. His voice cut my ears like gravel cuts flesh.

"So much energy. That is very refreshing. I am actually looking forward to tasting your flesh," he hissed.

My skin grew hot as I felt Azazel's scorching body approach.

I prayed silently to the Moon Goddess. This could not be my fate!

The door burst open, taking us all by surprise.

A large wolf stood in the doorway, his teeth dripping saliva. I noticed the color of his fur and the shape of his eyes.

It was Gregory! He had shifted into his werewolf form and had broken through the barrier.

He had come to rescue me!

I smiled at the thought of his bravery and then immediately gasped.

If he was my half-brother, his powers were like mine.

He could shift, but he would not be a true werewolf. He would be weak and open to attack.

Gregory rushed the two brothers, and even outmatched, he managed to scare them back against the far wall.

I was finally free!

I saw him lunge, and then he halted mid-air as if time had stopped.

Lasarus was smiling as he held out a balled fist.

"Well, look who it is," Lasarus hissed under his breath. "You truly are siblings."

Gregory's wolf was tossed across the room and against the wall.

Azazel leapt with such speed I could barely see his body move. Within the blink of an eye, he was upon Gregory.

A blazing sword began to form out of thin air, the handle growing right into Azazel's outstretched hand.

"This will be fun."

Lasarus joined his brother's side, and I pulled my eyes away. The open door beckoned me to leave.

I was up and out of the door in seconds, running as fast as my feet and lungs would let me.

The once beautiful island now burned with the intensity of a raging forest fire.

Roaring flames drowned out all sound, distorting my senses. But there was something else to the noise...

A horrible moaning.

I looked up and saw cages dangling in the air, hovering without chains or ropes attached.

Limbs dangled over the sides, pushing through the metal bars to find any kind of solace available.

Their flesh was burned and boiled.

I took several breaths to calm my nerves and almost vomited. The smell of burning flesh and hair filled my nose.

I didn't think I could move but my legs churned of their own volition.

It forced me to move away from these horrible sights and smells.

I ran past more and more tortured souls. The screams blazed on around me.

This fire would not abate.

I could feel sweat soaking my skin. Precious fluids were pouring from my body, but all I could do was press forward.

Suddenly, there was nothing in front of me.

I had run as far as this world would let me.

Before my eyes was a vast pit, a hole that instilled even more fear in my bones.

This was it. The true pit of hell that would take me straight to my eternal damnation.

I spun around to see Lasarus and Azazel approaching.

It looked like I had two choices: try my hand at the unknown pit, or give myself over to the two men who had just killed the boy who was once my crush.

That choice was easy...

I closed my eyes and readied myself to jump.

My stomach clenched, and I could feel something else besides fear. It was a familiar pull, and it gave me hope.

ROAR!

I opened my eyes and could barely believe the sight.

A werewolf, massive and terrifying, was running through the burning flames. I had seen this werewolf before.

It was Keith!

Suddenly, I understood that familiar pull.

My mate has come for me.