

## Mated to the Werewolf King

## Great Escape

*Dancing re.*

*Swirling smoke.*

*Dripping fangs.*

"Keith!" I screamed at the top of my lungs.

I had longed to see him, fearing I would never again get the chance.

Saying his name out loud made me happy. Knowing he heard it, that he could see me, too, caused my hope to rise.

I watched Keith tear at the ground as he bounded toward my captors.

Three different men had fought to take me as their own. Now, they would simply fight one another to see who was the victor.

I shook that thought from my head.

They fought for my love! That meant it was my choice.

No matter what they wanted me to give, only I had the will to grant it.

They would be wise to remember that.

I took a step back and could hear rocks falling over the pit's edge.

One wrong move, and I could fall into the deep abyss.

"Belle!" Keith screamed, as he lunged high in the air.

My heart leapt with him.

The two Demon Lords took their stances, readying their weapons and powers.

Bloodshed was the only option.

This battle would soon be over, but the eternal war had only just begun.

*Keith!*

I heard Belle scream my name, and it pumped me with waves of energy.

It had been my own actions that sent her away from me, starting this frenzied search. Finally, I could correct my wrongs.

I leapt into the air and came down hard on the two Demon Lords.

They had been waiting, but my sheer size and forward momentum pushed the scales in my odds.

I landed hard on top of them and slid across the field of embers.

"We were hoping to see you, Werewolf King," Lasarus said as he stood.

His eyes burned more passionately than the world around us. The spiked hair on his head began to reverberate from side to side with powerful energy.

"I couldn't bear to have my queen miss your death," Lasarus hissed with glee.

Azazel drew his amazing sword from thin air, and the flames that surrounded him danced with a mind of their own.

"Now that you've come, she can watch you die," Azazel assured me.

I smiled, letting my fangs drip with hot saliva. I stood on my hind legs, towering over the two demons.

They were powerful, yes. But I would give them a fight they did not want.

A blast of energy sent me tumbling backwards.

"You are no match for us!" Lasarus laughed.

Another wave picked me up and sent me spinning like a whirlwind.

I steadied myself and shook my head. That was unexpected!

I lunged to the side as Azazel's sword came down hard. It pierced the spot where I had stood only moments earlier.

The already scorched earth bubbled from the unimaginable heat emitted from his devilish blade.

"You've gotta do better than that!" I roared.

I swung with all my might, alternating between closed fists and open claws.

Azazel jumped back and away, inches from a vicious tear that could've ripped open his chest.

"Watch out!" Belle's warning barely reached my ears, but it was enough to save me.

I could sense a presence approaching quickly from behind and rolled to the side.

A huge blast tore a hole into the ground, sending chunks of scorching earth in all directions.

I leapt and rolled several times in a row, trying to distance myself from danger.

*SLASH.*

I tumbled to the ground, my legs giving way.

A large gash had suddenly opened on my thigh. Singed hair smoked up to my nostrils as I bit my lip in pain.

The wound was cauterized...

I had been cut by Azazel's sword.

I saw the blazing Demon flying through the air and somersaulted over his body, landing behind him. My teeth sunk into the flesh of his shoulder.

I could feel the flames burning my skin, so I clenched down even harder and tore with all my might.

*ROAR!*

The flames burned my face. I rubbed them with a paw. Azazel's burning body was a natural suit of armor.

I watched as Azazel clutched his shoulder that now oozed with black blood.

I knew the only way to win was to take risks. But how many would I need to take?

*BOOM!*

I fell to the ground in a heap.

Lasarus had once again circled around behind me. The Demon Lord had used his brother's aggressiveness as a distraction.

My ribs were bruised, and I could feel my back aching from the blast of dark energy.

With ancient blood coursing through my veins, I knew the wounds would heal with time. They always did.

But Tannon had warned my powers were not as strong in this realm. I shook my head in disbelief at how true that warning had been.

I turned over onto my back and winced.

Lazarus was standing over me. Azazel soon took his side.

"Your time has come to an end, Werewolf King," Lasarus said with a smile.

Azazel leaned to the ground and extended his fiery blade toward my heaving chest.

"Don't worry, we'll take good care of her," he assured me, with venom in his voice.

I watched him fall to the ground. His attack had been successful, but the blast had caught him off-guard.

Now, he was about to be overtaken, slaughtered by the same men who had slaughtered Gregory.

Everything I knew was about to come to a sudden and violent end.

I tried to reach inside myself for some hint of my dormant powers—but being trapped in this world did something.

Hell had a way of incinerating even the smallest glimmer of hope.

Azazel raised his sword, and I felt myself struggling to force out any signal of strength.

*"ATTACK!"*

I heard the cry and looked up.

A heavy shadow was flying through the sky, approaching with an urgent speed.

I peered into the darkness and saw a familiar face in the shadows.

*Derek! The Shadow King!*

He had an army of shadow children following his lead, soaring through the air as their screams filled all of hell.

Lasarus and Azazel stumbled backward in shock.

They had expected Keith's attack, knew that his desire for me would bring him here.

What they had not expected was the support of the Shadow King.

I thought of young Jason and how scared he had been of Lasarus. The joy he had at seeing Derek was all I needed to give myself over to the Demon Lord.

Derek repaid my sacrifice in kind, attacking when they least expected.

I saw the shadows descend and subsequently begin to tear apart, one by one.

The Demon Lord and Lord of Death were too powerful.

I couldn't bear to watch. Their attack would be in vain.

Then, my feet left the ground and I was swept up in a tangle of hair and muscles.

Keith had used the distraction to come for me. I was tossed onto his back and held on for dear life as he sprinted through the burning fields of hell.

"You came for me!" I yelled to Keith, as he continued our retreat.

"Of course, I did," he said, while looking quickly over his shoulder.

I caught his eye and my heart melted. But his next words caused that heat to cool.

"Let's just hope we still have time."

Belle clung to the fur on my back with all her strength as I pushed forward.

The muscles in my arms and legs popped under the stress, tightening with the pressure.

I refused to slow even for a moment. Even if we were not racing the clock, this world was not one in which to stop and smell the roses.

I twitched my nose, which still stung from Azazel's fire. If Belle and I were going to survive, we needed to exit the gateway.

An image of Tannon's glowing sprang to mind. I wondered if he had kept the strength to open the gate and fight off any demons trying to exit.

Our lives depended on it.

I laughed at my selfishness. It was not just Belle and I who needed the warlock's powers to remain.

The fate of the world depended on it.

I could feel her hold giving way, but I dared not stumble or stop.

We were approaching the spot I had come through. Only a few more seconds, and she wouldn't need to hold on.

I would carry her through the gateway and into our world...

My feet dug into the ground, and we halted our march forward.

I looked left and right. Up and down.

My nostrils filled with air as I tried to gather Tannon's scent.

This had been the place! It had to be!

But we were alone.

Tannon had closed the gateway, officially sentencing our souls to eternal damnation in hell.

"It's not here!"

I could hear panic in Keith's voice.

"The gateway is closed. Tannon lied to me!"

Keith pounded at the invisible barrier, sending shockwaves in every direction. His body slumped and he shifted back into his human form.

He was no longer the feared version of the Werewolf King.

Now, he was simply a naked man slowly realizing that all was lost.

I saw his eyes look to mine. They were filled with sorrow.

"I didn't want it to end this way," he said, with a truthfulness I had rarely heard him speak.

"Is that why you were lying with Daisy on that couch? You were only kissing her to make sure she knew you loved me?" I asked in disbelief.

I kicked the ground, sending rocks smacking against the barrier.

The anger I felt standing on the edge of the pit returned. Why should my fate be chosen? I had desires.

My body had urges that needed to be fulfilled. And no other person would tell me how to address those needs.

Why should I give myself to any man?

"I'm sorry, Belle. It's all my fault," he acknowledged.

I laughed at the thought of it and nodded my head. "You got that right."

"I was afraid. The feeling I felt inside has never happened with anyone else. It was new, and I didn't know what to do," he admitted.

"It's my fault, right? You went to someone who didn't confuse you. Is that it? I didn't give myself over fast enough, so you found a very willing participant."

Keith stood and tried to move closer.

I took a few steps back.

"I am a stubborn fool. But I know what I feel. This pull inside...it's for you, and only you. Belle, you are my mate," he said.

His words ignited the burning desire in my gut that I had hoped to quell. With a few steps, he was in front of me.

Our eyes locked.

The flames around us grew higher and higher as our time together faded.

He kissed me hard on the mouth, and my body went numb.

Our first kiss! This time, he didn't feign attraction before suddenly turning his back on me. No, this time, he really gave in to the desires we had both felt for so long.

Our tongues connected in a tangle of passion.

I could feel the heat inside my body growing, rivaling the flames about to consume us.