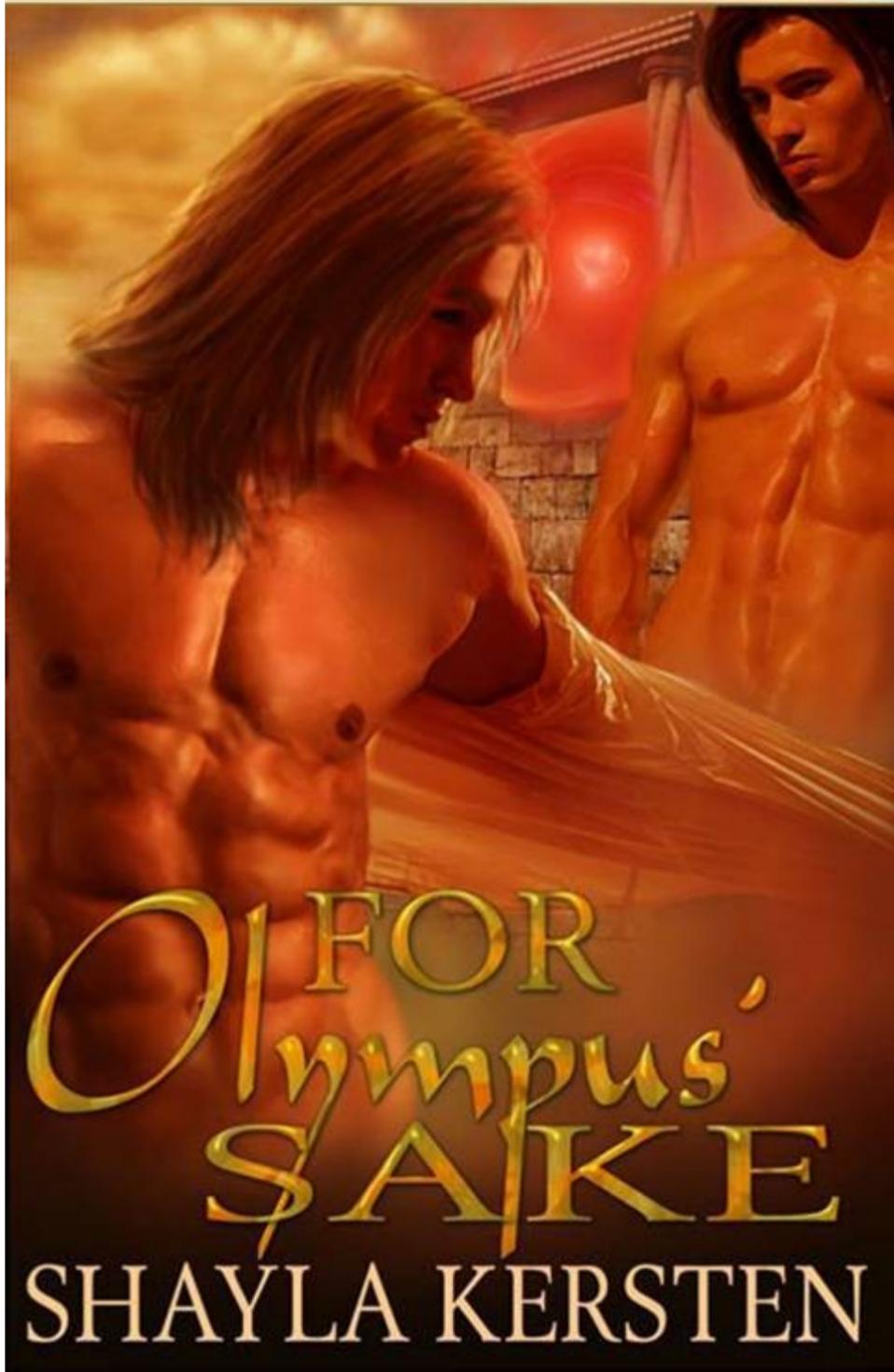


ELLORA'S CAVE *Spectrum*



OF FOR
Olympus'
SAKE
SHAYLA KERSTEN

For Olympus' Sake

Shayla Kersten

Stephen Liatos' career as an archaeologist hit a brick wall a long time ago. His love life crashed and burned right behind it. When a young intern claims to have the key to the elusive artifact known as Aphrodite's necklace, Stephen's life takes a strange turn. Suddenly, he's in the middle of the hottest wet dream he's ever had. Until all hell breaks loose. Literally.

Alex's mission was to retrieve his mistress's necklace. He didn't need a passenger along for the ride, although Stephen's overactive libido makes for an interesting trip. Nor did he expect to end up in Hades instead of Olympus. Now he has to get the necklace *and* Stephen out of the Underworld before they both become permanent residents.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorascave.com

For Olympus' Sake

ISBN 9781419925610

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Edited by Mary Moran

Cover art by Dar Albert

Electronic book publication November 2009

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FOR OLYMPUS' SAKE

Shayla Kersten

Chapter One

Stephen Liatos looked up when his office door opened. His body tightened as the new intern Alex stepped into the room. His brain reminded his cock of the trouble young interns and assistants could be. Stephen's punishment for screwing one of his students led to exile at a completely excavated ruin. Nothing new had been discovered at Knossos in years.

Alex stood a couple of inches taller than Stephen and had a body that looked like he was a Greek god come down from Olympus. And he had a profound effect on Stephen's libido in spite of the danger—or maybe because of it.

"Can I help you?" Stephen winced at the slight crack in his voice. Grabbing a bottle of water, he hid his embarrassment behind a long drink as the desk hid his physical reaction.

"I found the site of Aphrodite's necklace!" Alex's enthusiasm filled his tone and brightened his face.

"What do you mean?" Stephen scowled across the desk. A flush of heat crawled up his neck. Surely, he knew about Stephen's history of tilting at windmills. "The necklace is a legend, not a real artifact." He'd once believed a lot of things...

"No, it is real. And I know where to find it." Alex was practically dancing with excitement. "Would you drive?"

Stephen ran his hand through his hair. *To be young and so naïve again.* He was tempted to tell Alex to get back to the job he was assigned, but the young man needed to learn from his own mistakes. "Okay. Let's go." Maybe getting away from worrying about the museum's budget would make the world look less gray today.

Pushing away from his desk, Stephen stood then grabbed his jacket against the blustery winter day. Situated between the Mediterranean and the Aegean Seas, Crete didn't get very cold weather but the damp wind could be chilling. "Lead the way."

Stephen lagged behind Alex for the short walk down the corridor to the parking lot. A small trowel, a ruler and a couple of brushes in Alex's right back pocket raised his wrinkled T-shirt enough to reveal the contours of his denim-covered ass.

The view from behind both raised and lowered Stephen's mood. His body reminded him of how long it had been since he'd been up close and personal with something other than his hand. Too bad his personal rules now made the staff off-limits. Especially the young hardbodies also known as grad students and interns.

Alex scurried across the parking lot to Stephen's truck. He swayed from one foot to the other, waiting on Stephen to catch up.

Lowering his head, Stephen hid the small smile forming. Once upon a time, he'd had been as enthusiastic as Alex about archaeology. Now at nearly forty, Stephen understood that the find of a lifetime was usually in someone else's life. Instead of putting a damper on the young man's mood, Stephen unlocked the car and climbed in.

"So where to?" Stephen asked as he started the car.

Alex stuffed his tall frame into the seat next to him. "The Minoan ruins."

"But they—" Explaining how many times the palace of Knossos had been searched —by Stephen and others— wouldn't do any good. Stephen started the car. "Knossos it is."

Alex's fingers clenched and unclenched around a piece of paper as his body rocked back and forth in the seat.

"So, where do you think the necklace is?" Even though he was convinced Alex was on a fool's errand, Stephen's curiosity finally roused its head.

"Near the fresco of the leaping bull in the east wing of the palace."

Stephen traced an image of the fresco in his mind. With the brilliant colors lost to the ravages of man and time, restorations filled in the patterns to illustrate the former beauty of Knossos. However, he couldn't remember any structure that might contain hidden secrets.

Keeping his gaze on the road, Stephen held back his opinions. Some days he didn't recognize the bitter, cynical man he'd become. Reality ripped his dreams apart in too many ways, too many times. Digs that didn't pan out, relationships that soured because of his work-tracked mind. And not to forget the lover who charged him with sexual harassment because the grades Stephen gave him weren't good enough.

Even the gods and goddesses he'd once believed real seemed to have failed him. Since few people worshipped the ancient ones anymore, he didn't even have someone to talk to about his loss of faith.

He swallowed against the bitterness of his life. If he disappeared tomorrow, no one would miss him. The world would go on without blinking at his fate. Even the museum ran without real guidance from him.

The short drive from Iraklion ended at a parking lot with few cars present. The winter, as mild as it was, wasn't a big draw for tourists and the natives had lived in the shadow of antiquity all their lives. No novelty there.

Stephen pulled his truck into a spot near the gate. "Lead on."

With the door already half open before the vehicle stopped, Alex leapt out then rushed for the gate before Stephen could climb out.

Following at a more sedate pace, Stephen felt a little sorry for Alex.

Once Alex realized his discovery was nothing more than a dream, the young man would lose some of his excitement. Each washed-out lead would chip away at his morale until he was as empty as Stephen.

He picked up his pace but didn't strain to catch up to Alex. He could find the fresco in his sleep. Many times, Stephen had combed every square inch of the palace, at first in search of a dream then later seeking solace from the simple antiquity surrounding him.

Strange how the ruins could both frustrate and calm him. The irony of his existence...

Wind swirled and peppered him with dust. His steps faltered as he closed his eyes and shrugged deeper into his jacket. Through narrowed eyelids, he found his way around the next corner.

A sharp light—like the aura of a migraine—forced his eyes closed in a hard blink. When he opened his eyes again, the brightness was gone and only Alex remained.

Kneeling near the leaping bull fresco, Alex used a trowel to pry at a crease where the wall met the stone floor.

"What are you doing?" Stephen rushed toward Alex. "You'll damage the wall." Dropping to his knees next to Alex, Stephen grabbed the trowel. "We don't have permission to excavate within the ruins." All he needed was an intern getting him fired.

"But I don't need to dig deep. Just need to remove a little of the material blocking the opening." Alex's face contorted into something resembling pain. Something Stephen could understand.

"Give me a brush." Stephen held out his hand.

The younger man's expression blinked from fear to elation. His smile revealed gratitude and a touch of something else... Avarice?

If the ruins did cough up a new artifact, Alex would be acclaimed in archaeological circles. If the find were significant, he'd make headlines around the world.

Jealousy welled up, threatening to consume Stephen. For a split second, he thought about walking away and taking Alex with him. Why should Alex find the very thing that ruined Stephen's career? Then again, if the necklace existed, it didn't matter who found it. Stephen's reputation would be restored.

Stephen took the offered tool. With gentle strokes, Stephen brushed away dust and dirt until a widening crack appeared. A few more strokes revealed what appeared to be a small lever. "Hold this." Stephen handed the brush back to Alex. Stretching out full

length on the cold stones, he pressed the side of his face to the ground to get a better view.

"Damn." Whatever the contraption was, it was a new discovery. "We need pictures and measurements before we go any further."

Alex's hand appeared, holding a small digital camera. "Here."

First maneuvering around until he had the best angle, Stephen took a couple of shots of just the opening. A quick check of the display showed the camera had picked up the detail of the lever. In the appropriate photo software, any further details should be clear. "I need —"

Alex dropped a ruler into place before Stephen could finish his request.

"Thanks." Stephen captured a few more shots of the niche with the ruler for a record of the measurement. His stomach churned with a combination of dread and excitement. The find could be nothing more than dust.

After so many years of disappointments, Stephen was surprised at the thrill of anticipation rushing through his body. The sensation was almost akin to sex. Even now, slow tendrils of desire tightened his khakis. The smell of dirt and the feel of the cold stone aroused his longing, his dreams of great finds, ancient treasure beyond belief.

Dreams of a young fool.

Handing the camera back to Alex, Stephen slipped his finger into the opening. Not much more than the width of a finger, he couldn't see the lever as he traced its length.

"Open it." Alex's tone was harsh and almost commanding.

"We should wait." Stephen pulled his hand away. "We should study it more. Try to determine what the lever does before we do anything else."

"I have studied it. It opens a small compartment containing Aphrodite's necklace of red diamonds." Alex's voice dropped to an almost reverent whisper. "The Heart of Hephaestus."

"The what?" Stephen had never heard that designation for the necklace.

The legend claimed the necklace was created by Hephaestus, Aphrodite's husband, and stolen in a fit of anger by her lover Ares. If Hephaestus discovered the theft, all hell would've broken loose on Mount Olympus and possibly set off a war between the gods. However, the legend was only found in a few ancient Greek scrolls and never made it into the general pantheon of Greek myths handed down to present day. And no resolution to the conflict was ever recorded.

"Just open it," Alex growled.

Stephen glanced up at Alex. The young man's soft features seemed to harden. He looked much older than the twenty-two declared in his records.

"Do it." Alex leaned forward, his gaze fixed on the small crevice.

As if mesmerized by Alex's tone and words, Stephen obeyed. Wiggling the lever to determine if it turned or pulled out, he felt a slight give on a down stroke. Encouraged, he pressed in that direction. A slight resistance held then the lever popped down.

Stephen yanked his hand back, fearing he'd damaged something. With a soft rattle of stone, a hiss of air rushed out. The stale odor teased Stephen's nose along with a puff of a dust. A small drawer, the width of a CD tray on a computer and maybe twice the thickness, appeared, blowing dust and dirt toward Stephen. Holding back a sneeze, Stephen peered into the tiny compartment as it slid open.

"Fuck." Stephen rose up on his arms to see what the niche revealed.

A break in the overcast sky must have dropped a ray of sunlight into the dark recesses. A brilliant red glow shone from the dark.

Alex dipped his head and murmured a soft whisper. "...most...goddess... Call your servant..."

Goddess? Someone else who believed?

Before Stephen could question him, Alex grabbed the artifact from its hiding place. The wind picked up, twirling around. The clouds closed ranks with a vengeance, darkening the sky more than before, but the rosy glow grew brighter. Swirling dust forced Stephen's eyes closed.

Alex's voice grew louder but the words weren't intelligible. The chant seemed to stir the wind faster.

Stephen crawled up next to the wall, leaning into the fresco to keep him from flailing against the wind. He forced his eyes open in time to see a brilliant red vortex twisting behind Alex. Tornadoes weren't something Stephen had experienced—and he'd never heard of a red one—but he had no other term to describe the funnel of wind threatening Alex.

Reaching for Alex, Stephen pulled the young man toward the scant protection of the ancient wall. The vortex must have gripped Alex already because his body pulled in the opposite direction. Stephen lost his hold on Alex.

"Alex!" Stephen dove toward the younger man. His mind ceased questioning the strange events. His only purpose now was to save Alex. Grabbing hold of Alex's shirt with one hand, Stephen held on until he had his other hand around Alex's wrist.

Alex's loud yells and curses kept Stephen hanging on. He wouldn't let Alex go to his death...

The world twisted around Stephen. The walls of Knossos blurred and faded into the blinding red light. Nausea gripped Stephen's stomach as his vision narrowed with darkness. His last conscious thought muttered out unheard over the roar of the wind.

"Well, fuck."

Chapter Two

Alex's head reeled from the power of the vortex. The ride hadn't been so bumpy the last time. Last time!

His fingers clutched at the cold stones in his hand. "Thank the goddess." Alex relaxed his head against a rather hard pillow. He opened his eyes with caution to find a pale sun high in the sky. The field around him was full of fragrant grasses and –

"Fuck!" Alex sat up too fast as he recognized his pillow. His head threatened to split wide open as his stomach churned. He dropped down, resting his head once again on Stephen's back. His cloudy memory began to clear.

"The vortex." Alex started the chant to open the vortex as soon as he touched Aphrodite's necklace. The small power his mistress granted him combined with the magic of the necklace was guaranteed to bring him home, with the necklace and all evidence of the find. While he hated the idea of leaving Stephen with the mystery and the loss of the artifact, he definitely hadn't meant to bring him.

A rumbling moan vibrated through Stephen's back as the body under Alex stirred.

Damn. As much as he liked Stephen, things would have been a lot easier if the man hadn't survived the trip. The idea shot a bolt of sadness through him even as he thought it. In the two months Alex had worked at the museum, he'd come to feel sympathy toward Stephen.

Everyone whispered behind his back about the necklace and Stephen's futile claims toward its existence. His reputation was destroyed. If it hadn't been for a few friends, Stephen would have been completely ostracized by the archaeological community.

Alex chose Stephen to help him to give the man some relief from his self-flagellation over his career failure. Maybe knowing the necklace existed—even if he couldn't prove it—would have reignited some of his passion for his work.

"Figures. No good deed ever goes unpunished."

"Alex..." Stephen's voice cracked.

A violent cough unseated Alex from the uncomfortable cushion of Stephen's back.

"Easy does it..." After stuffing the necklace in a pocket, Alex moved around until he could kneel next to Stephen. His hand rubbed circles on Stephen's back. "We need to find some water."

The dust stirred up by the vortex and the strange route the phenomena took from the future parched his mouth and throat.

"What happened?" Stephen lifted up on one arm. His eyelids blinked rapidly as he peered out with bloodshot eyes.

"Long story." *And how do I explain we made a little trip to Mount Olympus eons ago.* Mount Olympus... Alex glanced around the field. Sure didn't look like Olympus. The sun crept slowly down from the apex of noon but the orb burned too dim. "Oh no..."

The vortex was designed to drop Alex at his starting point—in his mistress's chambers high upon Mount Olympus. But the power was meant for only one person. If the extra person caused the destination to change, they could be anywhere. Or any *when* for that matter.

The steady thud of hooves drummed a tattoo on the ground. As the sound neared, Alex scrambled to his feet. He'd hate to end his almost-successful errand by being trampled by unaware horses.

The lead of three mounted men grew more familiar as they grew closer. The tall lean body riding the lead horse was unmistakable. And completely unwelcome.

"Oh shit," Alex mumbled as the lead drew his horse to a stop a few feet away. The last thing he needed was Perseus' involvement. The man had an overwhelming need to be in charge of everything. Not to mention, Perseus' current residence was far from where Alex was supposed to be.

"Alex! What are you doing here? I heard you were out doing your lady's bidding." Perseus' gaze slid down Alex's body in an obvious leer. "And you've brought a friend."

A modicum of relief washed through him. At least he was within the right time period. "We're here by accident. Something went awry. My mistress will be looking for me shortly." Alex prayed silently to his goddess, hoping to be swept away before Perseus made any claim on him.

"Ah, but you know the rules. By accident or not, those who end up here can't return to the surface." Perseus' grin widened. "Welcome to the Elysian Fields. I insist you to partake of my hospitality during your stay in the Underworld." His leer ran down Alex's body then back up again.

Stephen groaned as his body rolled over. "Our stay where?" His eyes crossed as he looked up at Perseus. "Alex?"

"It looks like your friend is incapacitated." Perseus nodded to his two henchmen. "Help him."

The two men clambered off their horses. Both were close to seven feet tall and of thick muscular build. Under other circumstances, Alex wouldn't mind sampling either one of their *hospitality*. Or both. Even together.

Alex's libido blotted out coherent thought for a few seconds as his mind dove into a flash fantasy of Perseus' companions under different circumstances. Namely, one on each end.

A shudder swept through Alex as he shook the vision aside. "I have urgent business with my mistress. I need to leave immediately."

Perseus' half smile faded. A scowl chiseled into his hard features. "You'll leave when I'm ready."

"I'll appeal to Hades." Alex squared his shoulders and kept his face blank, praying Perseus wouldn't call his bluff.

As a demigod—someone with a god or goddess as one parent—Perseus would have some influence with Hades, but Alex was a servant to Aphrodite. His claims should have some weight as well.

Perseus' steely gaze broke into a toothy grin. "I doubt he'll listen. I have a...certain hold on Hades." His fingers curled into a circle, as if gripping a spear. Or a shaft of a different kind. When Perseus' hand moved up and down in a familiar, if crude, motion, Alex realized he'd be the one getting the shaft. More than likely, Perseus' thick one...

From a previous encounter a few years ago, Alex knew Perseus' prowess in the bedroom. Under any other circumstances, he'd welcome the attention, but now really wasn't a good time. However, Alex didn't know of another choice at the moment.

Alex conceded defeat by tilting his head in a slight nod. It'd been a while since a man had given him a rough ride and he did miss the feel of a hard body against him. At least losing this argument would end in something he'd enjoy.

The women made available to him on Olympus were too soft and scented. He could only leave the Mount with Aphrodite's permission. With the necklace safe, he could spare a few hours dally with Perseus. Until he figured out how to get out of the Underworld, he didn't have much choice.

A groan behind him caught Alex's attention. He turned to see Stephen cradled in the arms of one of Perseus' men. *I wonder if their cocks match their build...* Alex fought a grin at his thoughts.

While Alex had no problem fucking Perseus or his men, he wasn't so sure about Stephen. Rumors said the man preferred his own sex as lovers, but suddenly being *convinced* to have sex with a couple of giants and a demigod might be a little intimidating.

The other man ran a huge hand across Stephen's chest. A wide grin crinkled the sides of his mouth and the corner of his eyes. "Nice one here."

His friend nodded as he started toward his horse.

A jolt of possessiveness surprised Alex. "Uh, my friend is ill. I'd appreciate it—as I'm sure my mistress will—if your hospitality to him were limited to sustenance and a healer." Alex leveled a hard stare at the two men.

"A healer in hell. What a novel idea!" Perseus kicked his horse forward. Leaning over on the horse's back, Perseus wrapped a strong arm around Alex's waist then yanked him up until his ass settled on the horse in front of him. "Your request will be considered. However, we don't want to disappoint Cyrek and Jerzyr. When they are unhappy, bad things can happen."

The two men had mounted their horses. One had dumped Stephen across the horse's withers like a sack of produce. He steadied Stephen's body by sliding a large hand down the back of Stephen's khakis.

"And Cyrek seems quite taken with your friend already." Perseus' light tone set his companions laughing.

Stephen hadn't said anything but his wild eyes and pale features said enough.

"Don't worry," Alex sighed. "I'll make sure everyone is happy." *Probably won't be able to sit down for a week.* A shudder of desire whipped down his back. His cock reacted and began to fill and lengthen in the confines of his jeans.

A glance revealed a large bulge lifting the short tunic of Cyrek as his hand moved beneath Stephen's khakis. *Maybe a month...*

Still dazed, Stephen allowed the massive brute of a man to fondle his ass without objecting. Although the entire sequence seemed like a hallucinogenic dream—the necklace, the strange whirlwind, this field and three hot men speaking in what seemed to be an ancient Greek dialect to the museum's intern. And Alex speaking it back...

The necklace! Stephen rose up but his captor—or caretaker—he wasn't quite sure—distracted him. If Stephen didn't know better, he'd swear the guy was pressing a cock along the crack of his ass instead of a finger.

Just thinking about it sent a fissure of need circling through his groin. He couldn't begin to imagine how big this guy's dick would be. If proportionate to his body... Stephen shuddered hard. His cock seemed to enjoy the ignominious position of being draped over a horse. Stephen's groin bounced against the horse in a steady rhythm, encouraging his dick.

A grunted laugh above him made Stephen look up at his captor. Cyrek, if Stephen understood correctly. The man's grin was as friendly as any Stephen had seen in a pick-up bar. The same gleam of desire lit his eyes. After a quick wink, Cyrek pushed a finger deeper in Stephen's crack until he rubbed against his hole.

The sensation forced Stephen's body to tighten, lifting his shoulders and legs up and clenching his cheeks around Cyrek's finger.

Cyrek muttered something about cocks and tight. The dialect made it difficult for Stephen to follow exactly but he didn't care.

This was a dream. Or maybe some kind of psychotic break due to massive disappointment with his life. He always figured he'd off himself when he reached this point. Fantasies of being kidnapped and fucked—by a giant, no less—was a lot better plan than suicide.

Removing his hand from Stephen's pants, Cyrek lifted Stephen up until his legs straddled giant's waist. His ass bounced against the horse as his cock rubbed against Cyrek's massive bulge.

Temptation led Stephen's hand toward the hidden surprise but he stopped short of his goal. What would Alex think? Or the other men?

It's just a wet dream. And a hell of one at that. Stephen slid his hand under the tunic and gripped Cyrek's dick. His hand couldn't fit around the hot shaft. "Fuck." The guy was huge. Definitely more than Stephen had ever taken.

Some feeling of inadequacy snuck into an otherwise wonderful dream. While Stephen wasn't small by any measure, he didn't stack up to Cyrek.

But it's my dream. Why wouldn't I be as hung as I want?

Do people really argue details of a dream while they are dreaming it?

Stephen shut the nagging voices out of his head. He would enjoy the dream because reality sucked these days.

The horse's pace slowed to a walk. Voices murmured around him as Cyrek handed him down to the other man...Jerzyr.

Like his friend, Jerzyr showed his interest with a hard cock tenting his tunic. Instead of lowering Stephen to the ground, Jerzyr stopped with Stephen waist-high. His large hands gripped Stephen's ass like a fitted chair as Jerzyr rubbed his erection against Stephen's crotch.

"Gonna fuck you," Jerzyr growled.

The words still had a flavor of the strange dialect, but Stephen understood loud and clear. As Stephen's feet finally hit the ground, he searched for Alex.

The third man, not as tall or as built, had an arm around Alex, guiding him down a path paved with flat stones.

Looking around, Stephen could hear voices but he didn't see anyone. Maybe his fried psyche could only handle so many images.

Jerzyr tapped Stephen's back, urging him forward. Evidently, Stephen didn't move fast enough because the world danced sideways then upside down as Cyrek tossed him over his shoulder.

A few long strides and the two men slowed down. Stephen could hear Alex talking to the other man—Perseus.

"I promise to take care of everything, but my friend is a little out of it. He doesn't realize what's going on."

A rumbling laugh trembled through Cyrek. "He knows what's up and he's hungry for it."

"Really?" Alex's tone was sharp and louder than before. "I need to talk to him. Before anyone does anything."

"Fine." Perseus didn't sound happy. "Take them to the baths."

Cyrek dropped Stephen, steadying him as he got his feet under him. "I get him first."

The deep growl startled Stephen but he didn't have time to do more than gasp. Cyrek's arm wrapped around him. A hard, fast kiss slapped against his mouth. A brutal tongue robbed him of words.

And his body thrummed with need at the rough handling. Stephen melted into the heat, working his arms around Cyrek's thick neck.

Cyrek pulled away as suddenly as he'd attacked. "He's mine—first."

Stumbling without the support of Cyrek's hard embrace, Stephen tried to stay on his feet.

"I know the way." Alex caught Stephen before he fell to the ground.

First? Stephen's mind cleared a little as Alex grabbed his hand. Pulling him through the door of an ornate stone building of ancient Greek design, Alex set a fast pace down a long corridor.

"You have no idea what you've basically agreed to!" Alex's words were sharp and stilted. "You have to fake illness. Anything to get them to back off."

"Don't be pissy. It's just a dream." Stephen pulled his hand from Alex's. "And who are you to be telling me what to do?"

"It's not a dream, Stephen." Alex shoved open a heavy wooden door then pushed him through it.

The sound of running water combined with a mist of humidity. Stephen caught sight of shadows moving but couldn't focus on any one person.

"We're supposed to prepare ourselves for Perseus and his men. I've already agreed to entertain all three so you don't have to." Alex motioned Stephen closer to a pool of water. "Strip. We'll decide how you can beg off while we bathe. Their patience won't last long."

"And what if I don't want to beg off?" His anger flared, matching the heat of the bathing room. "I haven't had sex in what seems like forever. I don't need you telling me I can't have it in my own dream."

"Damn it, Stephen, this isn't a fucking dream!"

"Well, not if you keep me from getting laid!" Stephen jammed his fists on his hips to keep from taking a swing at Alex. His disappointment at his life—his failure—morphed into boiling rage. "This is a dream. One that started with you finding the one artifact that destroyed my life. If this isn't a dream, where's the necklace?" His voice rose with his frustration.

Alex pushed Stephen against a wall with a surprising strength. His hand slapped across Stephen's mouth. "Keep your voice down!" Alex glanced around the room. "I have it."

Alex's manhandling only exacerbated his arousal. Stephen hadn't been into kinky sex but this dream was bringing out some kind of hidden tendencies.

Stephen tried to ask again where the necklace was but Alex's hand muffled the words.

"Perseus doesn't need to know about that." Drawing a long breath, Alex closed his eyes. "Okay." When he opened them again, his eyes almost glowed. "I'll explain everything but you won't believe me."

Stephen snorted a small laugh into Alex's hand.

"You'll keep your voice down?"

Nodding, Stephen relaxed against the wall.

"Good." Alex lowered his hand. "But we need to get cleaned up. Perseus won't wait long." He swept an arm toward a large steaming pool of water. "Communal bathing."

Stephen let a smile quirk the side of his mouth. "Why not?" Alex was good wet-dream material. Had already been many times. He'd dreamed of a golden-haired man most of his life. When Alex showed up, his imagination had jumped on him.

Unbuttoning his shirt as he moved toward the bath, Stephen gave in to his rising curiosity. "So. Not a dream. Then what is it? I'm leaning toward psychotic break with audible and visual hallucinations."

Dropping onto a stone bench, Stephen twisted his shirt into a ball while he watched Alex.

"Not that either." Alex shed his clothes with the nuance of a stripper and the grace of a dancer. His body glistened with a light sheen of sweat. His uncircumcised cock put in a good showing even half erect. "What's happening is real." Alex held up his hand before Stephen could speak and continued quickly. "I know it's almost impossible to consider, but you have to believe because a dream can't kill you. This can."

Stephen stopped his lazy perusal of Alex's body and met the man's gaze. Dead serious. *Dead?* "O-kay..." Stephen dragged the word out slowly. His mind raced through all kinds of possibilities but kept circling around to a failure in his sanity. "Where exactly do you think we are?"

"You heard Perseus. We're in the Underworld. The realm of Hades."

Hades. Maybe Stephen was already dead. Hades was both heaven and hell in Greek mythology. Maybe he'd been rewarded for his belief, even if it had faltered in the last few years.

Or maybe Alex was insane.

"And no, I'm not crazy."

"Ha!" Stephen pointed a finger at Alex. "If this isn't a dream, how'd you know what I was thinking?"

"Please. From the expression on your face." Alex sat down at the edge of the pool. "Look, you have to suspend disbelief for me. Pretend I'm telling the truth. Take

everything I say at face value. Don't try to examine or analyze it. Just believe it can get you killed and behave accordingly."

"Okay..." Stephen's thoughts lingered on the already-dead theory. Would being Cyrek and Jerzyr's sex toy be heaven or hell? Remembering the size of Cyrek's erection, maybe a little of both.

"For now just get in the bath."

Stephen squirmed on the bench for a few seconds. In spite of the weirdness of the situation, his body reacted to a combination of his erotic thoughts and a naked Alex. Usually fear and sex are mutually exclusive but not this time. At least not according to his raging hard-on.

"I...ah..."

Alex frowned as he slid into the water. "What? Are you injured?"

"Not exactly." The idea of being a plaything for Cyrek and Jerzyr had gotten him started but Alex kept him boiling.

"Then come on."

With a long sigh, Stephen tossed his shirt on the bench then stood. Stripping off his khakis and briefs together left his aching cock bobbing up and down.

"Hmm..." Alex cocked his head to one side and arched an eyebrow. "Well, I guess we could do something about that first."

"Yeah." Stephen wasn't sure what he expected Alex to say but relief whooshed through him like a hard breath.

A couple of steps put him near the pool. Sitting on the edge, he dipped his legs into the warm water with a hiss of breath. "Hot."

Alex grinned as he walked toward Stephen in the waist-deep water. "Yeah. It is." As he closed the distance, his water-warmed hand wrapped around Stephen's cock. "I've wanted a piece of you since we first met."

The heat pulled Stephen's breath out of him in short gasps. "Really?" Putting his arms behind him for support, Stephen arched his hips, sliding his cock through Alex's tight fist. His eyelids fluttered shut as anticipation washed over him.

"Oh yeah. Would have done something about it by now but I had business to deal with."

"Business?" Stephen mumbled the word as his body melted into the pressure and friction of Alex's slow strokes.

"Yeah. Some of that stuff you won't believe." Alex's tone was low and soothing. Almost a verbal caress.

"What stuff?" Stephen's mind wasn't focused on the content of the conversation. He just wanted to hear Alex's voice.

"Stuff we'll talk about later."

Before Stephen could protest, wet warmth engulfed his cock. His eyelids flew open. Alex's head bobbed up and down, taking Stephen's flesh deep with each stroke. "Oh yeah..." Stephen reached for the wavy blond hair. His fingers combed the strands a couple of times before he fisted a handful. "Feels good."

The incredible heat disappeared. "Want more?" Alex grinned with lips reddened from his exertions.

"Yeah. Whatever you want." When Stephen woke up this morning, he never dreamed he'd end up a sex toy in his own dream. Or in a weird version of hell. Usually, Stephen took the dominant role. He picked the positions and actions since it was his dream. What was his subconscious trying to tell him?

"Get in the water." Alex tugged him into the pool. "Come here." He led him to the other end where a set of stairs led up between a couple of urns.

Just beyond the pool was a table covered with some kind of padding and a sheet.

Alex paused when they reached knee-deep in the water. He reached into the urn on the left and pulled out a handful of yellowish lotion. He circled around Stephen, layering a handful on Stephen's chest, until he stopped behind him.

"Shit." Stephen almost slipped off the stairs but regained his balance. Compared to the water, the lotion was icy cold.

"It'll warm up. It's used to cleanse." Alex mixed a little water with the substance, rubbing it until a thin lather formed on Stephen's shoulders and chest.

"Soap." Stephen inhaled the familiar fragrance of olive oil rising from his body.

"Yes." Alex's body lined Stephen's back. His cock pressed against Stephen's ass, cradled between the cheeks.

Strong fingers kneaded Stephen's shoulders, spreading the soap. Alex's hands dipped to Stephen's chest. His fingers paid particular attention to Stephen's nipples. Slippery tweaks and pinches sent tremors through his body. And his hard, aching dick.

Sliding his arm forward, Stephen wrapped his hand around his cock. Between the deep massage and easy strokes up and down his length, Stephen was ready to purr.

"Not so fast," Alex whispered near Stephen's ear. His hand pulled Stephen's wrist, removing Stephen's hand.

"But..."

"No buts." Alex snorted a soft laugh. "Not yet anyway."

A soft whimper was all Stephen could manage.

"We can't take too long, so you won't have to wait." Alex's hands moved in wider motions, covering more skin with less massage. "When I finish washing you, I plan to take care of this."

A soapy hand pulled the length of Stephen's cock then moved to his balls.

"It's been so long..." Stephen leaned into Alex's hard body.

"Since you've been fucked?"

Alex's word sent a jolt of need through Stephen. "Yes. Since anything..."

"Since you've been sucked and fucked?"

"Yes."

Alex ran his tongue around the shell of Stephen's ear. "So, you'd let me fuck you? Or maybe I should let you have a turn with Cyrek and Jerzyr. I bet they'd open you up real good."

"Oh shit." A shudder ran down Stephen's spine.

"Of course, I could fuck you first then turn you over to them. Stretch you out so you can take Cyrek's thick staff up your tight ass. What do you think?"

His words made Stephen's need worse. "Yes. Yes." Stephen jerked his hips back and forth, shoving his cock through Alex's tight fist.

Alex matched Stephen's pace, stroke for stroke. "Maybe I'll just let you keep on believing this is a dream. Keep you as a plaything. I bet Apollo would love to get his hands on you. He's always had a *thing* for mortals."

"Dreaming. I'm dreaming." Stephen's pace faltered. "Apollo." The god of the sun... Talk about a golden man.

"And Ares, as much as he likes my mistress's bower, wouldn't turn down a tight ass if available. Although I hear Ares likes it a little rough." Alex pushed Stephen, forcing him down the steps and into the water. "You could be a plaything to the gods."

Stephen almost laughed. Not surprising the god of war would like rough sex. "Uhh..." Stephen couldn't think anymore. His brain shorted out. Caught in a dream of ancient Greece—he'd spent his life studying the history of Greece, believing in the pantheon of the gods and goddesses. No big mystery why his dream had planted him here. Not the first time. Just the most real.

Hands ran over his body, splashing water and washing away the slick soap. Hard lips stole bruising kisses while fingers tweaked and pinched Stephen's nipples. A hand combed back Stephen's hair then tightened. A hard yank pulled Stephen's head back. Biting nips traveled up his neck.

"Time to fuck you, Stephen," Alex growled as his mouth reached Stephen's ear.

"Yes..."

Rough hands pulled him up the stairs then away from the pool. Pushed face first across the padded table, Stephen moaned against his arm.

His subconscious picked today to show him a side he didn't know existed—total slut. Alex's rough handling made his dick rock-hard. He wanted more. He wanted it all. Wanted them all—Cyrek, Jerzyr, Perseus and most of all Alex.

Chapter Three

Stephen buried his face in the crook of his arm. Heat blasted his skin from embarrassment as well as lust. Splayed over a table, he waited with intense anticipation for Alex's next move. Never had Stephen wanted anything or anyone so much. Not even the fucking necklace that ruined his career.

Slick liquid drizzled down the crack of his ass. Fingers followed, pressing toward his opening. He wanted to scream. Yell at Alex to hurry up. Fuck him already, but he'd done more than enough to embarrass himself.

Strange how he worried about his image. Usually his dreams didn't embarrass him until he woke up. He pushed his thoughts aside. *Just feel. Don't think.*

Stephen pushed back into the pressure of Alex's fingers.

With no warning, Alex jammed an oiled finger into Stephen. "Like that. Hard and rough."

Nodding, Stephen muffled his groan by biting his arm. The rough fingering nearly set him off. Inching forward, Stephen sought relief for his aching cock against the padded table. The tip of his dick brushed against the soft linen sheet. He gasped against the sensitive touch. He needed more pressure.

Shifting his feet forward, he tried again for contact.

"Nope. None of that." Alex's hands grabbed Stephen's hips then pulled him back until only his head and shoulders rested on the table. "I'll deal with you when I'm ready."

A sharp swat on Stephen's ass surprised him. In more than one way. The thrill of the quick pain, a blush of burn at the point of contact.

Stephen stepped forward again to see what Alex would do.

Another hard slap to his ass. Then another. Stephen squirmed forward, wanting the next blow.

"I think you like that." Alex's low chuckle carried a darker note. "Maybe I'll mention that to Cyrek. Can you imagine the hand print he'd leave?"

Another sharp blow jolted Stephen's body. Before he could react again, Alex shoved another finger in his ass. Instead of moving forward, Stephen pushed back. "More..."

Alex rammed his fingers in and out with hard, short strokes. "You want more of this..." Another blow warmed Stephen's flesh. "Or this?"

"Anything. Need. To come." The words slipped out as a groan. "Please." The hell with anything resembling dignity. "Please..."

Leaning over, Alex's chest rested on Stephen's back. "Tell me what you want." The hoarse whisper teased the hair on the back of his neck.

Stephen pushed into the pressure of Alex's finger. "Fuck me." His fingers dug into the pillows, curling until the sheet bunched in his fists. "By all the gods and goddesses, fuck me!"

"Interesting..." The word was so soft, Stephen wasn't sure if Alex had actually spoken it. His mind forgot the thought as fast as he had it when Alex's fingers disappeared.

"No!"

"Don't worry."

More oil drizzled down his crack. A thick cock replaced the fingers. No finesse. No tenderness. A hard dick pushing in, filling him. The burn of entry, the sting of stretching... The abrupt pressure of Alex's cock on his prostate.

Wanting more, Stephen pushed back. "Oh shit, yes..."

Alex pulled back then pushed in harder. The hot flesh slid almost home. A third stroke and Alex's pubes teased Stephen's ass.

"Fuck me." The moan became a chant. "Fuck me. Fuck me."

Alex complied with long, hard strokes.

Stephen's chants melted into grunts, keeping time with Alex's rough ride. Harder and faster.

"Yes." Alex's moan joined Stephen's.

Warmth slicked Stephen's inside. The tight friction of Alex's cock eased with the extra lubricant of come.

"I gotta come." Stephen couldn't take any more. He reached for his dick but Alex's hand beat him to it.

Three hard, fast strokes were all it took. Stephen's body clenched with waves of ecstasy as his cock shot stream after stream of come. "Yes, yes." Stephen sobbed into the table padding.

If this was a dream, please don't let him wake up.

Alex leaned over Stephen's sweaty back, panting for air. Keeping Stephen around sounded like a great idea. He hadn't had that much fun in ages. Literally. Living forever had its disadvantages.

After easing out of Stephen, Alex pulled the trembling man to his feet. "Back in the pool. You're going to need another washing."

"Will it end like this one?" A wide grin creased Stephen's face.

"Probably not. At least not with me. We still have to figure out what to do about Cyrek and Jerzyr."

"Hmm..." Stephen's grin faded a little as his brow creased. "Then again..."

Laughing, Alex pushed Stephen in the pool. He followed him in, grabbing a handful of soap as he passed the urn.

Stephen leaned the back of his neck on the edge of the pool. "Those guys are huge. Never had one so big. Could be interesting."

He stopped on the stairs in knee-deep water. "Wouldn't know. Haven't fucked either one of them." Only because he hadn't met them before. Alex loved living the life as a servant of the goddess of love. Everyone expected him to fuck anything that moved. And he took his duties seriously.

Alex rubbed his hands together to create a thin lather. One thing the twenty-first century had on his world—great soap.

The slippery lotion worked well enough as he washed his dick. The beginning tingles of another erection threaded through his groin. One of the gifts of his goddess—quick recovery.

His gaze roamed over Stephen's body. Maybe another round before—

A sharp rap on the door interrupted him. Evidently, their time was up. He stepped into the deeper water and rinsed.

Another knock sounded, this one louder and longer.

"Just a minute!" Alex climbed the steps then snatched the sheet off the table. Glancing at Stephen, Alex shook his head. "Looks like your time to make up your mind is up. What do you want?"

With the sheet wrapped around his waist, Alex crossed the room to answer the door. The heavy wood burst open before he reached it.

Cyrek's bulk filled the doorway. "Where is he?"

"Still bathing." Alex stepped aside and motioned toward the pool. "We're almost finished."

"You're done." Cyrek wrapped his huge hand around Alex's arm. "Perseus wants you now."

A slight panic settled in Alex's stomach. "My friend is not well." He hadn't expected them to be separated. At least not so soon.

Besides Stephen's well-being, there was the issue of the necklace. Alex didn't need Perseus or his men finding out about the original theft. No one was supposed to know

about it. Aphrodite trusted him to recover the necklace before she was found out and he managed to fuck it up enough already.

Cyrek guided him toward the door with little effort then pushed him out of the room and into Jerzyr's arms.

Jerzyr spun him a little, tugging at the damp sheet. "Perseus will like this." With a quick grin, he ducked through the door to the bathing room.

The door slammed shut in Alex's face. He pushed on the door but it didn't budge. Alex banged on the thick wood with his fist. "Hey, you two oafs leave him alone. He's been ill." He tried the door again but it was no use. "You'd better not hurt him."

He bumped his forehead against the door a few times. "Fuck." If he could have gotten his jeans with the necklace in the pocket...

A loud splash elicited a long laugh—seemingly from Stephen.

"Oh, leave the boys alone."

Alex swung around to find Perseus leaning against a wall. "My friend has not been well. I don't want him getting ill again."

Raucous laughter erupted from the bathing room.

"Sounds like they'll be fine." Perseus pushed away from the wall. "I think it's time for us to get reacquainted."

"I'd like to get my things first."

"Your apparel will be safe until we return."

"But—"

"Come on." Perseus' forehead creased. "Or shall I call for some help." His voice dropped to a low growl.

"No. No need." He didn't have any idea if there were more servants.

Last time they'd met, Perseus had been alone. Alex had come to Hades to bring a message to Persephone. Perseus had been hanging around Hades' palace. Good thing.

Persephone had some unique ideas about appropriate ways to greet guests. The last thing Alex wanted was to piss off Hades by dawdling with his wife.

Memories of Perseus' prowess heightened his arousal. A quick fuck wouldn't hurt anything. Cyrek and Jerzyr would be too busy with Stephen to worry about searching clothes. Alex glanced again at the door and threw a silent prayer to the heavens. "Lead the way."

Another round of laughter sounded behind the door. If Alex took care of Perseus quickly, he could be back before things finished.

Perseus rubbed the rising bulge under his toga.

Then again, it had been a long time since Alex had been mounted. Torn between his duty and his dick, Alex didn't think he had a choice so he might as well enjoy the ride.

Perseus seemed determined and, if the noise was any indication, the boys and Stephen seemed to be playing well together.

"Well," Alex said with a shrug, "what are you waiting on?"

Grabbing Alex's arm, Perseus hurried down the corridor. Double doors at the end opened as if by magic, however, Alex knew the Underworld employed invisible imps and lower demons to serve the higher classes. As a demigod and hero spending eternity in the Elysian Fields, Perseus certainly qualified.

As they entered the room, the doors swept closed behind them. Perseus' grip eased then slipped free. Within a few steps, his toga slid to the floor. Lowering himself to a low reclining couch, he lay with his legs open, his erect cock resting on his stomach. "Serve me."

While Perseus had never failed to satisfy, he was a bit bossy in the bedroom.

Moving toward him with a sigh, Alex resigned himself to a little fun before duty. Alex straddled the couch with the sheet still wrapped around his waist. Tugging the sheet free, Alex tossed it aside. "Where to start?"

Perseus arched an eyebrow. "Here might be good." He cupped his hand over the length of his cock. His fingernails ran across his scrotum.

"Interesting." Alex dropped down, knees on either side of Perseus' calves. He waved away Perseus' hand then wrapped his fingers around the thick flesh. "No particular instructions?"

"No." Perseus tucked his hands behind his head. "I'll let you use your imagination."

Alex grinned as he fisted Perseus' dick. "I have a few ideas."

Perseus closed his eyes and let out a long sigh. "So, who is this friend of yours?" His hips flexed, pushing his cock through Alex's hand. "And where'd you get the strange clothes?"

"Someone I've known for a couple of months." Alex wasn't sure which way to play his relationship with Stephen.

If Perseus thought Stephen was important to Alex, he could try to use it against him. But if Perseus decided Alex wasn't attached at all, then he might insist Stephen stay in Elysian Fields. A twenty-first-century mortal in Hades? Not a good idea.

"He and I are exploring possibilities." Leaving the situation vague left Alex some wiggle room.

Speaking of wiggle... Perseus' body jumped in time to Alex's strokes. "Is this all you can think of?"

"Your fault. You distracted me." Alex leaned forward until his lips hovered above Perseus' cock. He needed to finish Perseus quick. No telling what Stephen was going through right now.

* * * * *

"Damn!" Stephen didn't think he could recuperate so fast. Then again, Jerzyr was more than expert in the art of a blowjob. And it'd been a really long time for Stephen.

Well, before Alex, it had been a long time. Stephen had a lot of time to make up. "Oh yeah..."

Having Cyrek and Jerzyr invade the bathing pool with hands touching everywhere set him at half-staff. Being pinned between the two giant men, held in place while they did what they wanted, was more than Stephen could bear. He evidently liked being assaulted...or at least his cock did. Good dream, this one.

Water sloshed over Stephen's waist as his shoulders rested against Cyrek's broad chest. Cyrek's amazingly muscled arms wrapped around Stephen's chest, holding him above water. His fingers tweaked a nipple now and then. The sharp pressure added to his rising need.

Jerzyr's large hands held Stephen's lower body out of the bathing pool just enough so he wasn't breathing water as he sucked dick.

Once again, Jerzyr's hot mouth engulfed Stephen's cock all the way to the root. A finger prodded his ass. Already lubed with oil and remnants of Alex's come, Jerzyr's finger slid into him without resistance.

Stephen had sex toys smaller than Jerzyr's finger. Hell, he'd had men with smaller cocks. Almost like being fucked and sucked at the same time by the same guy. "Damn!" Made him glad Alex had already stretched him. The memory of Cyrek's erection while they traveled here sent a shudder raging down his spine.

"I knew you'd like playing with us." Cyrek's grin broke a little while he spoke. "Just wait. We have more to come."

Stephen pulled a harsh rasping breath through his nose. He wasn't sure he could handle more. First Alex, now —

"Oh yes!" Stephen squirmed against Jerzyr's hand, helping push a second finger in beside the first.

The tight fit burned, but Stephen didn't care. Jerzyr's mouth sucked him hard and deep. Words of encouragement spilled from Stephen's lips as incoherent gurgles and groans.

Jerzyr's hand moved faster. His fingers battered Stephen's ass, each sharp stroke assaulting Stephen's prostate.

"Oh fuck!" Stephen yelled as he came. Coming again so soon added intensity as well as a little pain. "Yes. Yes. Yes."

Wet heat captured what little come his body offered up. Sucking him dry, Jerzyr chuckled his amusement around Stephen's aching flesh.

"Good one, Jerzyr." Cyrek's fingers caught Stephen's nipple.

A sharp twist distracted Stephen from one luscious pain to another. Jerzyr released him. Stephen's body floated for a few seconds. As he began to sink in the water, he closed his eyes. Sleep would be perfect right now.

A giant hand grabbed one of Stephen's legs at the knee. "Time to fuck him."

Stephen opened his eyes to Jerzyr holding his ass out of the water with one hand. The other dipped into the urn of oil.

"Me first." Without warning, Cyrek let go of Stephen.

Without Cyrek's mass behind him and Jerzyr holding his leg up, Stephen's head dunked under the water.

Spitting water, Stephen flailed his arms, trying to surface, but his entire body was weak from pleasure. Not to mention, Jerzyr wasn't letting go of his prize.

Frantic sputtering and flailing arms didn't catch their attention. Didn't people wake up from dreams when they were about to die? Or was it they really died if they didn't wake up?

Panic raced through him. Kicking hard with his free foot, he found something solid but with little give. He kicked again, as hard as he could. Running out of air, he couldn't stop a small gasp. Water sucked into his mouth threw him into a flurry of underwater coughs, each causing him to inhale a little more water.

A third kick caught someone in a softer spot. Hands grabbed his shoulders as his trapped foot was freed.

Coughing water from his lungs, Stephen rasped in hard breaths. Water streamed down his face, capturing the tears accompanying his fit.

"Fuck!" Stephen shook loose from Cyrek's grip. "You almost killed me."

"Sorry!" Cyrek and Jerzyr exclaimed together. Their chins dipped toward their chests like two chastised boys.

"We'll be more careful now." Cyrek reached one of his heavy paws toward Stephen's face.

"Yeah, right." Stephen ducked past Cyrek's hand then stalked up the stairs and out of the pool. "I could have died." A sudden dizziness overtook him as his words settled in his brain.

Could Alex be right and this wasn't a dream? He should have awakened when he nearly drowned.

Stephen turned in a slow circle. The architecture was definitely ancient Greece. Interior columns in the Ionian style capped with ornate scrolls. They matched the columns outside. Brightly colored frescos covered the walls, depicting heroic actions or the gods and goddess.

Stephen stumbled toward one of the larger frescos.

The painting captured a tall youth resembling Perseus holding the snake-covered head of Medusa and the winged horse Pegasus flying away in the background. The old myths told of Perseus' quest to kill the Gorgon and how the flying horse was born from the stump of Medusa's neck.

But that was just myth. Legend. Like the necklace of Aphrodite.

Perseus. His strange host.

Dizziness struck Stephen with a fury, sending waves of nausea through his gut. His belief in the old pantheon of gods had started as a stab at the world around him. Then he clung to the belief when he was at his lowest point—disgraced and humiliated by his peers, reduced to babysitter in the place that mocked him the most—Knossos.

"Are you ready now?" Jerzyr stood beside Stephen, his shaggy wet hair obscuring his almost childish pout.

"I...ah..." Stephen cleared his throat. "Not right now. Please." His brain needed to be clear of lust and fear so he could think. Alex. He needed to talk to Alex. "Where's Alex?"

"He's with Perseus." Cyrek moved to flank Stephen's other side. "They can't be disturbed."

"But I need to talk to him." Stephen realized his two friends could overpower him and do whatever they wanted—whether it was fuck him or keep him from looking for Alex or kill him. "It's very important. I...ah..." If these two believed... "I have a message from our lady Aphrodite." Stephen swung his head back and forth to gage the men's reaction.

The two brutes looked at each other over Stephen's head. The hard lust in their gazes turned to something softer, as if recalling a shared memory. Jerzyr responded to Cyrek's quick nod with one of his own.

"Okay," Cyrek said. "We'll go find Alex."

Jerzyr shrugged. "Perseus might not like it, but if Aphrodite wants something, I'm not one to say no." His hand slid down to his genitals, covering them like an athletic cup. "I like my dick where it is and how it works."

Suppressing a chuckle, Stephen nodded his agreement. What did they think Aphrodite would do to them? A shudder slid down his back. If the pantheon of gods were real, who knew? For now, he needed to find Alex, and if their belief helped, then he wasn't complaining.

First some clothes—and the necklace. Alex had had it in his jeans pocket.

Stephen glanced across the room at the pile of clothes. His and Alex's. Alex was about the same size... A plan formed and while it wouldn't solve all of his problems or give him many answers, it would have to do for now.

Chapter Four

Facedown on the couch, Alex moaned into the hard padding. Perseus took his ever-loving time getting his dick in him. And the wait was exquisite torture.

"You are so tight." Perseus' fingers clutched Alex's hips. "How long has it been?"

"Too fucking long." Alex pushed up, pressing Perseus' long, thick cock deeper. "Get on with it."

As much as Alex enjoyed his current situation, he needed to find the necklace, Stephen and a way out of Hades.

He wasn't sure if his mistress could hear him in the bowels of the Underworld, so the means of escape was up to him.

The Dark Lord had many powers over his realm. Although Alex had been here at different times doing Aphrodite's bidding, he'd never figured out just how much.

"Oh yeah!" A swift stroke took Alex's breath and thoughts away. "Feels. Good." He gritted his teeth through the burn of Perseus' final plunge.

"Yes." Perseus reared back. His dick slid halfway to freedom then he rammed a hard stroke, filling Alex again.

"More." Alex arched up to match Perseus' pace. If he could bring him off quick—Perseus reared back then rammed him again. The thrill of having a hard cock pounding in him hampered his thoughts of escape.

"Not so fast." Perseus' grip tightened on Alex's hips, holding him still. "Haven't had a tight fuck like you in ages. I plan to take my time."

An unintelligible whisper teased the edge of Alex's hearing. He craned his neck around to look at Perseus. His lips moved but Alex couldn't understand the words. Perseus' brow creased in a deep frown and his eyes grew hard and dark.

Alex grunted as Perseus slammed home, more rough than before. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing I can't fix."

Another whisper, this time closer to Alex's ears, but still he didn't see anyone. The invisible servants of the Underworld? Shades grew more transparent and with less substance over time. Some of the older ones—those close to reincarnation—were all but invisible. Part of him shuddered at the idea others were here watching him service Perseus. A darker part of him welcomed the audience.

Soft as silk, invisible hands caressed his shoulders and neck. The teasing touch ran down his arms then clamped around his wrists.

Alex tugged at whatever was binding him but it didn't budge. Not even the slight give of cloth or leather. He was pinned to the low couch, ass held in the air by Perseus' iron grip.

"I wasn't planning on going anywhere." The bindings added to Alex's desire. His cock had been ready and willing before, but now...

"Your friend plans to interrupt us. I just want to make sure you aren't disturbed when he comes bursting through the door." Perseus' chuckle faded into a grunt as he took another rough plunge into Alex.

"But..." Alex wasn't sure he liked the turn of events. It wasn't as if he had a relationship with Stephen. If he was caught with Perseus' dick up his ass, it didn't mean anything. Besides, Stephen knew what Perseus wanted. Alex had offered to fuck Perseus and his men. Still a blush of embarrassment matched the heat of need.

"Maybe I'll invite your friend to join us. Or he can watch as we take care of you."

"We?" The word started out as a growl and ended with a squeak as Perseus impaled him again.

"My invisible friend has taken quite a liking to you." Perseus hissed another sibilant whisper.

Something bumped Alex's stomach. Ducking his head, he could see the impression of someone or something on the padding of the couch. "What—"

Wet heat suckled the tip of his aching cock. Lips and tongue teased the edge of the crown. Then teeth raked the sensitive glans.

"Fuck!"

Invisible hands grabbed his hips from below while Perseus dug deeper into his flesh from above. Perseus' pace climbed with each stroke. Hard, fast and deep. Over and over again.

Matching his master's fucking, the invisible creature sucked Alex's cock.

Alex's brain shut down. The concept of his mission, his mistress or his guest in ancient Greece disappeared. The only thing remaining was the need to come. His body kicked into overdrive. His heart raced, pounding blood throbbed through his head and cock. Pressure built, come rising, ready to blow, but his body wouldn't let go.

Grunts and groans punctuated Perseus' laughter. "You can't. Not until he says so."

"How..." Alex gasped with an exquisite combination of pain and need. His cock was going to explode if he didn't come. Soon.

"His sense of humor. Shares space. With his love of torture." Perseus' hands bruised Alex's flesh.

Sweat ran down Alex's back to his neck. He chewed the cushion under his face to keep from begging. Or screaming. He wasn't sure which would happen if he opened his mouth again.

"Ask." Perseus growled above him. "Beg. Or we'll be. Like. This. Until you do."

"No." Alex spit the word out then grabbed another mouthful of padding.

Perseus' hands dug in deeper. "Curse you! Beg!"

An inkling of understanding crept past the pain and deep arousal. "Please. I need to come." His words weren't quite begging. Would it matter? "Please." He tossed another in for good measure.

His body seemed to be set on tremble. Waves of shaking tore through him. His cock felt like it was being ripped out of place by the need for release. As if his come would find a way out, even if it had to make a new hole.

A long, heaving sigh from Perseus ended in a harsh groan. Perseus rammed his groin against Alex's ass and held there. "Thank you." Perseus' whisper was comprehensible this time.

Whatever sucked Alex's cock engulfed him then held still. Within seconds, Alex erupted into the invisible mouth. Long streams of relief forced a low cry and a harsh breath from Alex's lungs. "Fuck..."

The invisible lover moved away, leaving Alex sore and sated as he'd never been before.

"Got to lie down." The tremble grew worse. Holding his weight up on his trapped forearms was too much. The silken hold on him disappeared. Perseus' body draped over Alex, forcing him onto the low couch. The low couch shuddered under their combined weight but Alex didn't care if the thing collapsed. He couldn't move.

Near the door, a shimmer of light turned dark. Tall, lean and as dark as a moonless night, Hades stood licking his lips. "Not bad." He ran his fingers down his short goatee.

Pounding on the door erupted as if someone turned on the sound. Stephen's voice rose above the pounding in Alex's head.

Hades winked as he waved toward the door. The wooden doors blew in so hard they bounced on the hinges then swung back toward Stephen, Cyrek and Jerzyr.

When Alex refocused on the spot where Hades stood, nothing remained but a slight shimmer in the air.

"Come in." Perseus' voice limped over the words. "Don't mind us."

"Alex. Are you okay?" Stephen rushed across the room. Kneeling next to Alex, Stephen ran a hand over Alex's sweat-drenched face.

The concern in Stephen's eyes surprised Alex. "I'm fine. You?"

Stephen's gaze cut toward Cyrek and Jerzyr. "Fine. We had a bit of an incident but I'm okay now."

With a wave toward his men, Perseus groaned. "Get me off him. I need to rest."

The two giants dropped their guilty looks as they rushed to aid their master. With one on each side of the couch, they lifted Perseus off Alex.

"Easy!" Alex yelped as Perseus' dick popped free. "Damn. Still connected here."

Perseus moaned what might have been an apology. Or reprimand. Hard to tell with the mumbling.

"Help me up." Alex held his hand out to Stephen. "I need to get back to the bathing room. Fast."

Sweat—the clean scent of exercise mixed with the sharp acrid odor of fear—covered his body from hair to feet. Add the trail of come Perseus left behind, Alex was desperate for a bath. Not sure he could take one. But he'd rather drown than stay like this for long.

"Sure." Stephen tugged him up to a sitting position. "Can you walk? I don't think I can carry you."

Alex eased into a standing position, testing his legs for proper workings. "Yeah. Slowly." And with a bit of a limp.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yeah. I was looking forward to a rough ride." Clenching his ass sent a jolt of pain through his abused hole. "Just not quite that rough."

Stephen grabbed the sheet from earlier and wrapped it around Alex's waist.

Clothes. Alex narrowed his gaze at Stephen. He'd been in khakis when this started. Where had he found jeans? A few seconds went by before Alex realized Stephen wore his jeans.

The necklace had been in the pocket.

Alex grabbed the left pocket, pinching hard stones along with Stephen's flesh.

“Ouch.” Stephen pushed his hand away. “It’s fine.”

Too tired and weak to argue or react, Alex nodded. With Stephen’s shoulder under his arm, they started the long—long—walk to the bathing room. Hot water and a quick nap would set him back to rights.

* * * * *

Stephen sat Alex on the edge of the pool, still wrapped in his sheet.

Alex drooped toward the pool. His muscles quivered with obvious exhaustion. The smell of sweat caught in the back of Stephen’s throat.

First things first. Stephen needed explanations only Alex could give. For that to happen, he needed him coherent.

Stephen stripped off his shirt and Alex’s borrowed pants. The shirt, he tossed on the low table. However, he folded the jeans carefully to keep the necklace from falling out then placed it on the floor an arm’s reach from the pool. He didn’t want the necklace out of his sight. While he hadn’t been able to look at it with Cyrek and Jerzyr by his side, his fingers had traced every stone and every strand of gold.

Even now something held him back from revealing the prized piece of jewelry. A sense of caution settled over him after his brush with drowning.

A dream can’t kill you but this can.

A tiny voice in the back of his mind told him to go along with anything until he knew the truth. He could wait. An archaeologist’s life revolved around slow, meticulous discovery.

“Come on.” Stephen slipped into the pool then reached for Alex. With little encouragement, Alex slipped into the water, sheet and all.

“So tired.”

“Perseus must be one hell of a fuck.” A twinge of jealousy snuck in under Stephen’s radar. He wasn’t quite sure if it was because his playtime had been interrupted or because Alex had been with Perseus.

"You don't know the half of it." Alex leaned in, resting his head on Stephen's shoulder.

"Well, let's get you cleaned up and see if we can find someplace to rest. And to talk. I have a lot of questions."

Alex lifted his head with a long sigh. "You know it's real now, right?"

"Let's just say I'm willing to take things at face value until I have a better explanation." Fear was a powerful motivator.

With his arms still around Alex, Stephen moved toward the stairs. He eased him down on the steps near the urn of liquid soap. "Dunk your head under."

"Promise you'll pull me back up."

Stephen chuckled, but at the same time he fought a shudder. The memory of his almost drowning was too recent. "I promise." To reassure Alex, he kept his hands on Alex's shoulders as he dipped his head under the water.

As soon as Alex straightened up, Stephen dumped a handful of soap in his hair. "So what is going on here?" His fingers kneaded the water-darkened blond strands, building a thin lather.

"Not a dream," Alex mumbled through a long sigh.

"So you said before."

"Uh-huh."

"No sleeping yet." Stephen grabbed another handful of soap. Slathering the slippery liquid across Alex's shoulder, he whispered in Alex's ear, "Funny. I'm telling you not to sleep when I still think this is a dream."

Digging his fingers deep into taut muscles, Stephen concentrated on his task. Touching Alex was reassuring. When the door to Perseus' chamber wouldn't open earlier, Stephen's mind tossed a dozen terrifying ends for Alex. Then Alex was so exhausted he could barely walk.

Sex could be tiring, but this seemed to be something more. With already a dozen questions clouding his mind, Stephen didn't really know where to start. Or if they were safe from being overheard.

"But now you're willing to believe this isn't a dream."

"I'm willing to suspend disbelief for now." Stephen slid his hands under Alex's arms. "Now to find a bed. And maybe something to eat."

"No food!" Alex bolted up, his sleepy eyes alive again. "Eat and you have to stay."

"Okay. No food." His stomach growled its dissatisfaction.

Damn! The myth of Persephone and Hades. After Hades had kidnapped her, she ate only six pomegranate seeds. Because of it, she was doomed to spend half a year with her mother Demeter above ground and half here in the Underworld.

If Stephen was to take everything here on face value, food was definitely out of the question. His stomach gurgled again as he hauled Alex out of the bath. Hopefully, he'd wake up soon.

But when had he ever been hungry in his dreams?

* * * * *

Stephen woke to darkness with a hint of light coming through a window. He filed through his foggy mind and came up with a tendril of a memory. Cyrek carrying Alex to a bedroom. Stephen had followed, all the time reassuring Jerzyr he wasn't mad at him for trying to drown him.

Running his hand across soft sheets, he found another person in the bed. Soft snores rose and fell with even breathing.

Alex.

At least he hoped it was.

Not big enough to be Cyrek or Jerzyr. Or even Perseus.

The necklace!

Stephen sat up in the bed. Fumbling around in the early dawn light, he found Alex's jeans stuffed under the pillow. A quick check reassured him the necklace was safe.

So much had happened in one day. Too much for him to think through. But the necklace was real.

Years of research, of searching, of ridicule and humiliation—all over the jewels his fingers caressed. Real jewels. Real necklace.

But if the necklace was real, then where was he? If he believed what he was told, he was in Hades. Had he died? The red tornado! Had it killed him?

Was his belief in the old gods rewarded by afterlife in Hades? But the Elysian Fields was the home of heroes in the Underworld. Had anything he'd ever done been remotely heroic? Other than sticking stubbornly to his beliefs, he hadn't done anything he'd consider remarkable.

No, that wouldn't work. He'd almost drowned, so he wasn't dead yet.

He wanted to question Alex but he'd been falling asleep in the bath.

Alex stirred in his sleep, as if Stephen's thoughts disturbed him. The soft snore ended with a loud snort. Alex popped up from the bed as if he had a spring go off beneath him. "Where are we?"

"That's what we need to talk about." Stephen rolled over on his side. The dim light revealed Alex's hair sticking up in every direction. He resisted the urge to comb his fingers through in an attempt to tame them.

"Still in Hades. Damn." Alex flopped back onto the bed then bolted back up. "Where's the necklace?"

"Here. Safe." Stephen pulled the jeans from under the pillow, moving it between them.

"For a minute, I thought I was dreaming."

Stephen chuckled. "So did I until I nearly drowned. And now... I've never slept in my dreams either. So tell me where we are and why."

"You already know where we are, if you're willing to believe."

"The Underworld of ancient Greece."

"Yes. But it exists in your time as well. Very few still believe. Most of the pantheon has moved on. With so few believers, there was nothing left for them." Alex lay down on his side, facing Stephen. "Hades is one of the few left."

"So, what you're trying to say is we are in the past." Stephen tried to find shock somewhere in his brain but instead he felt numb.

Alex nodded. "The vortex should have brought me home—to my mistress. I don't know what happened for us to end up here."

"Vortex?"

"The whirlwind? In the ruins? Don't you remember?"

Stephen remembered all right. He remembered grabbing Alex to save him from the strange red tornado. "I tried to save you. I thought the..." What an idiot he was.

"I realize that now. I was in such a hurry to get back to Aphrodite, I called the vortex too early. I should have waited until I was alone, but I didn't think I'd have the chance once you saw the necklace." Alex took a deep breath. "And I couldn't let you get a picture of it. No proof of its existence could be left behind."

Which would have been worse, having a picture of something he couldn't produce or having no proof at all? His colleagues would probably accuse him of manipulating the photo. And how could he explain its disappearance?

Disappearance. "How do I explain our disappearance?"

"You won't have to if I can get us back to Aphrodite. She can send you home at the moment you left."

"And the necklace?" His reputation could be restored. His life would change in so many ways.

"Stays here." Alex's face hardened and his gaze narrowed. "To prevent a war among the pantheon, Aphrodite must regain possession of the necklace."

"So, I go back to the way things were." What was the use? If he disappeared, people would probably think he'd committed suicide. If he stayed here? Stephen snorted in disgust as he rolled onto his back. Here was nowhere. In spite of the things he'd seen, of what Alex had said, the idea of being stuck in Hades in ancient Greece was ludicrous.

"You don't have to believe, Stephen. Once we get out of here, my mistress will send you home and your dream will end."

A small lump tightened Stephen's throat. Home didn't have much allure. While Alex might be crazy, being around him had livened up his life considerably.

"For now, just keep in mind the people we encounter live by a different set of rules and different moral standards. Try not to piss anyone off because it could be a death sentence."

This time Stephen's snort held back laughter. Yesterday he'd played by the local rules and he nearly drowned. "I'll try."

Alex flicked the light covering off. "We need to get out of here before Perseus comes looking for round two. Probably with you."

"And that would be a bad thing?"

"Good and bad..." Alex limped naked across the room to a trunk.

Muscles in his back rippled with each step. Bruises marked his hips and thighs.

A tendril of arousal swirled through Stephen's groin. He wouldn't mind another go-round with Alex, but the younger man was all business this morning.

"We should dress as the locals do. Don't want to call any more attention to ourselves than necessary." Alex pulled a pale yellow tunic from the trunk then a long piece of material. "Here this should fit." He tossed both on to the bed. "Put these on." He pulled another tunic, this one pale blue, from the trunk then yanked it over his head.

Next Alex grabbed another long piece of material. Running part of the cloth between his legs, he tied a short loincloth. "Do you need help getting dressed?"

"No." Stephen rolled out of bed. He'd worn loincloths on digs in North Africa so the concept wasn't foreign, however, those digs had been years ago.

His second try succeeded. Then he pulled the tunic over his head. The material fell just below his hips but the extra loose material around the shoulders indicated the tunic was meant for a broader man. "What about our other clothes?" The idea of showing up anywhere dressed like this was embarrassing, but if he found his way home, the last thing he needed was to be dressed in this outfit.

"We'll put them in here." Alex pulled a leather pouch out of the trunk.

The pouch would be a tight fit for everything they had, but if Stephen could put on some pants, the tunic would pass for a long shirt.

"And the necklace," he held up a small pouch, "in here." Alex picked up the jeans and rummaged through the pocket. He switched the necklace from one to the other so fast Stephen barely caught a glimpse of it.

"Can I look at it?"

"No. Not here." Alex tucked the small pouch into the waist of his loincloth. "We may not be totally alone."

Stephen raised his eyebrows but Alex wasn't forthcoming with an explanation.

Using a pitcher of water and a bowl, Alex wet down the crazed strands of his hair. As he wiped his hands dry, Alex narrowed his gaze at Stephen. A slight shake of his head accompanied a short sigh. "Come on. We have to get to my mistress as soon as possible. And getting out of Perseus' palace is one step in a long, hard road."

Chapter Five

Alex crept along the corridor as close to the wall as he could. Not much cover but it was something. So far they hadn't encountered anyone. At least not anyone he could see.

Every muscle in his body ached from his dealings with Perseus and Hades. Even his dick hurt. That was a new one.

The last time Perseus fucked him, Hades hadn't interfered. Then again, he'd been on a mission authorized by Aphrodite and approved by the other gods of the pantheon. Now only the goddess of love knew what he was doing. If anyone else found out, the repercussions could be dire.

Judging from what he'd studied in the future, his mission was a success. The history of the necklace was obscure with only a couple of cryptic mentions. Poor Stephen believed and destroyed his career defending his position. But why was his belief so strong? Did the fact Stephen was with him now and knew the truth about the necklace somehow end up leaving a clue in the future?

The conundrum of time travel made his head ache.

Near the junction of two corridors, footsteps distracted him. Alex motioned to Stephen to hide before he ducked behind a statue of Clio. He could almost feel the Muse of History laughing at his predicament. Or plotting against him. One never knew...

Peering around the statue, Alex held his breath as Cyrek marched across the corridor and away from his hiding spot. He let out a long sigh as Cyrek's footsteps retreated. Unfortunately, Alex needed the same path to get out of the palace.

Stephen moved from his hiding spot and joined Alex. "What are we waiting for?"

"We need the same route," Alex whispered. "Give him a few minutes."

“What if he comes back?”

Alex held up his hand. He didn’t need questions when he had no answers. “Just wait.” Things couldn’t have gone more wrong if someone had planned it. A sneaking suspicion had been tossing about in his mind since they landed in Hades. What if someone had planned the detour?

Just thinking it made his skin crawl, but it was unlikely. The only one with a vested interest in disrupting the return of the necklace was Ares. As the god of war and bloodlust, Ares loved strife and conflict. But since Ares was as arrogant as he was bloodthirsty, he and Hades didn’t get along very well.

Hephaestus slaved for years over the necklace to ensure its beauty matched that of his wife Aphrodite. If he knew Ares had taken it from her chambers after one of their trysts, the god of the forge could endanger many more than just Aphrodite or Ares.

As the god of fire, an angry blow from his hammer could crack the earth, causing fire to rain down on unsuspecting innocents. And no one knew what dangers would befall those in Ares’ path if he should meet Hephaestus on the field of battle.

The consequences were too dire to contemplate. Alex’s mission must succeed at all costs.

Warmth spread through Alex as Stephen leaned against Alex’s back and rested his head on his shoulder. The well of tenderness toward his unfortunate friend couldn’t distract him or allow him to falter. If sacrificing Stephen was required, Alex had to harden his heart and let it happen.

The clank of closing doors pulled Alex from his thoughts. Cyrek must have gone outside. “Let’s go.” Alex moved away from Stephen’s touch then slipped ahead to peer around the corner. Clear in both directions, Alex led the way toward freedom.

The corridor was empty. Doors at the end were closed. Alex motioned Stephen to follow as he jogged toward the exit. The sharp pace reminded Alex of his sore muscles and bruises.

Perseus wouldn't be happy when he found them gone. Not exactly a bad guy, Perseus had a distorted view of his importance in the grand scheme of things. Sure he had killed the snake-haired Medusa and survived, but how long could a guy use one incident as a claim to fame?

Alex let out a long sigh as he reached the door. Cracking it open, he peered outside. He held his breath to listen for company. His heart thumped in his ears, drowning out some of the ambient noise. Pulling the heavy wood open a little more, Alex slipped out into the pale sunlight.

No sign of Cyrek. *Thanks to the goddess.*

"Come on." Alex motioned at Stephen. "We need to move fast."

Stephen nodded as he stepped out of the palace.

Setting off at a quick sprint, Alex ran for the cover of the distant tree line. A glance behind him revealed Stephen a few feet behind. And Cyrek near the palace.

"Damn! Faster!" Alex strained already sore muscles. The burn pushed past pain into almost numb.

Cyrek, with his long legs, was gaining ground at half their pace.

Stephen's face flushed red from exertion. Sweat glistened on his skin.

With regret, Alex pushed harder. If Cyrek caught Stephen, the delay would probably help Alex escape. He'd hoped he wouldn't have to lose Stephen, especially so soon. He cast a glance over his shoulder, hoping Stephen would understand—

He was gone. So was Cyrek.

Alex stumbled to a stop. "What the fuck..."

Turning in a circle, he examined his surroundings. Not much cover the way they'd come. Nothing big enough to hide both men. Not enough to hide Cyrek by himself.

Alex drew deep gulps of air into his burning lungs and wiped sweat from his brow and eyes.

The tree line was close, but Cyrek couldn't have gotten in front of him... Unless he had help. Perseus didn't have the power. His life in Elysium was because of his hero status, not because of any gifts his deity parent might have given him.

While fingering the pouch with the necklace, Alex shuffled toward the forest. As long as the necklace was safe.

Sadness clogged his throat as he stepped out into a slow jog. Stephen never had a chance and it was all Alex's fault.

Ares had sealed the compartment with a curse. The necklace's hiding place had to be opened by a human.

With Stephen's reputation already disgraced, no one would have believed him if he'd told them about the intern who disappeared in a blast of red wind with Aphrodite's necklace. Alex doubted Stephen would even try.

His legs trembled with overuse, but rest wasn't a good idea. He had a long trek and several obstacles to overcome before he reached the River Styx.

First among them, he must get past Hades' palace.

* * * * *

Stephen's head spun as if he'd downed an entire bottle of ouzo. From under his eyelids, he could see the faint glow of lights. He ruled out opening his eyes. Light wouldn't be his friend right now.

A soft moan whispered next to him.

Alex?

The last thing Stephen remembered was following Alex. His memory replayed the way Alex's tunic occasionally popped up, revealing a nice tight ass framed by his loincloth. Stephen's body stirred with a hint of arousal.

"Not now..." An erection meant increased blood flow, and the throbbing in his temples didn't need any help.

Another groan, this time louder. Still on his right.

Stephen lifted his right eyelid a fraction. *Oh shit.*

Cyrek's bulk filled the space between Stephen and a set of bars.

Cyrek had been chasing them. Were they back in Perseus' palace? And what punishment could he expect for attempting to escape?

His right eye closed as he tilted his pounding head to peek out his left eye.

The other side of the small room held a mattress on the floor.

Jail...or a dungeon?

Stephen closed his eyes tight. Willing the scene to go away, he contemplated the situation. His brain finally settled on the fact Cyrek wouldn't be locked up with him, in a similar drugged state, in Perseus' palace.

The one thing the cell didn't have was Alex. Maybe he'd gotten away. With the necklace.

At least the necklace was safe. If Alex's story was true, the necklace had to be returned. A serious war between the gods could kill many and maybe change the course of history.

Stephen took a deep breath then released a long sigh. The sound of footsteps forced his eyes open. He struggled to a sitting position just as a tall man stopped in front of the bars. His black shoulder-length hair, goatee and mustache accented his olive skin.

"Welcome to my palace." His voice was deep with a hint of gravel. His eyes seemed to flicker like the flame of a candle. "I can only imagine why Cyrek was chasing you." His gaze traveled down Stephen's chest, stopping at Stephen's crotch for much longer than polite. "But why were you chasing Alex? And more to the point, who are you?" His stare met Stephen's gaze.

"Uh..." Stephen pushed to his feet, biting back nausea. His stomach felt a lot like when he went through the vortex. Not quite as bad, but close. "I'm Stephen." He swallowed hard. "A friend of Alex's."

"Your accent is strange."

While Stephen understood the ancient dialect, trying to speak in it was a whole other problem. The words were close but it was like a musical score with one lone instrument completely out of time from the rest of the orchestra. And Stephen needed to mimic the out-of-step tune.

"I'm from far away from here." A shudder of lust ignored his queasy stomach.

A low chuckle added a crinkle around the man's eyes. "Everywhere is far from Hades." No warmth reached his eyes. Just the flicker and blink of a hidden flame. "Since Alex nor you had permission to enter my domain, I have the right to keep you here and do with you what I wish."

Fear shimmered down Stephen's spine. "It was an accident. We don't know how we got here." The subject of the future or the necklace had to stay buried.

"And where were you supposed to go?"

"To Alex's mistress." Stephen raced through the memory of their encounter with Perseus. He was certain Alex had mentioned Aphrodite, so it wasn't as if Stephen were revealing a secret.

"His exquisite mistress." Hades glanced over at Cyrek. "Cyrek!"

The large man still lay on the floor, muttering between his groans. He rolled onto his side. "Yes, Dark Prince."

"What do you know of our strange guest?"

"Only what he said. Whether his words are true or not, I do not know, but his story is the same as Alex's."

"I dislike unexpected visitors from Olympus." Hades' full lips curved into a half smile. "I need to think of an appropriate punishment for your transgressions." Once again, Hades' gaze dipped low then returned.

Stephen noticed a bulge tenting Hades' black tunic.

Is everyone in this place going to want a piece of my ass? Not that he was really complaining. He relished the end of a long dry spell. Or was it over? If this turned out

to be a dream, did the sex count? He clenched his ass cheeks together. A teasing itch remained from when Alex fucked him yesterday. *Sure felt real...*

Part of him was ready to break down and admit this wasn't a dream, but his rational side wasn't ready to give in completely. Still he'd follow Alex's advice and behave since a false step could get him killed.

So far, his steps had led him into some fantastic sex. More of the same would be fine by him.

Stephen's gaze darted up toward Hades' face. God or not, dream or not, the guy was hot. Six foot and change, swarthy olive skin, muscular arms—biceps for days, tunic stretched across what appeared to be amazing pecs. The black goatee and moustache gave him a slightly dangerous air, but Stephen'd always had a thing for facial hair.

Stephen's headache throbbed while his cock filled. His brain refused to come up with a response. Or at least one that didn't involve bending over and presenting his ass. The dark god had some serious sex appeal.

Hades raised his eyebrows. His smile softened a little but it didn't reach his eyes. "Good." With a shimmer of darkness, he was gone.

"Damn." Stephen walked to the bars, trying to peer up and down the corridor. No sign of the man. "I don't think I've ever looked forward to punishment."

"I wouldn't be so unconcerned about the prince's discipline."

Stephen turned around.

Cyrek had moved from the floor to the pallet. His huge bulk pretty much covered the half-assed excuse for a bed.

"Why not? Sounds like Hades wants to fuck. I can handle that."

"Don't speak his name. Bad luck." Cyrek pressed his forearm across his eyes. "Sex with a god can be unbelievable. So good you can almost lose your mind. And sometimes you do."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you ever heard of a god or goddess settling with a mortal for more than a few days? Or where the mortal didn't end up a plant, animal or set in stars?"

Stephen ran through most of the myths. "Eros and Psyche?" But he understood what his large friend was getting at.

"Yes, but they both were under the spell of Eros' arrows. If the god of love hadn't been struck by his own poison, he wouldn't have been with Psyche long, nor gone through what he did to keep her. Even with the spell, they probably wouldn't have lasted if Zeus hadn't granted her immortality." Cyrek moved his arm off his eyes. "Playing with the gods and goddesses is dangerous. Just keep it in mind." Cyrek scooted his bulk over. "You might as well rest up. Once he decides, it could be a while before you get any sleep."

Stumbling toward the mat, Stephen wondered where Alex was and if he'd ever see him again. Rationality whispered he'd see him as soon as he woke up and went to work. But part of him admitted he might never see him again. Sadness squeezed his chest and tightened his throat.

Stretching out on the edge of the mat, Stephen tried to shut out his thoughts. A nap would help the residual nausea and dizziness. Lying flat made his stomach reel. The urge to throw up crept up his throat with a little bit of acrid bile.

Stephen rolled off the mat to his hands and knees. A hole in the floor in the other corner marked the toilet. Even in modern Greece, public toilets were sometimes nothing more than a porcelain hole.

Wake up... If he woke, then everything would be back to his normal boring life. This non-alcohol-related hangover would be gone. And the legend of Aphrodite's necklace would still be an embarrassing fiasco. Usually, he didn't think too hard about his irrational insistence over the necklace. While he'd finally given up on finding it, his belief in its existence hadn't faltered. And now he knew it was real. Or his mind had finally broken with reality. One or the other...

Scooting toward the wall, Stephen rested his back against the rough-hewn stones. A slight chill shivered down his back as his neck made contact with the cool, damp rock. Never had his dreams been so full of details nor such tangible sensory overload.

He'd always believed the old gods were real. Maybe they really weren't gods but some other life form no one in Stephen's time would understand. But Hades hadn't fit the image Stephen had in his imagination. He'd always pictured Hades as leaner, paler, as befits someone not often in harsh sunlight.

If this were just a dream, wouldn't everything in it be based on Stephen's knowledge or subconscious memories?

His head throbbed through a maze of questions but found no answers.

The squeak of metal against metal forced Stephen's eyes open. The door to his cell swung open in a slow, deliberate arc.

"Follow me." The words floated on the air. A shimmer of light teased Stephen's eyes.

He closed his eyes and shook his head. Maybe he had some kind of brain tumor and everything happening to him was a result of brain damage. When he opened his eyes again, a young woman in a flowing white robe stood holding the door open.

"Don't wake your friend." She motioned Stephen toward her. "He's not needed yet."

Pushing off the floor, Stephen gasped as sharp pain thrust through his head and nausea threatened to make a mess of the cell.

"Hurry. My mistress can cure your ailments but we must go now."

Mistress? Aphrodite? Had Alex made it back to his mistress and she sent help?

The door swung closed, seemingly without the woman's aid. The lock clicked into place without benefit of a key.

"This way." The woman scurried off on silent feet. Her long robe didn't even whisper as it floated around her ankles. Her bare shoulder revealed almost translucent skin, as if she would disappear at any moment.

Stephen kept up with some effort. Whatever had knocked him out left him weak and shaky. His stomach gurgled from lack of food. He had no idea how much time had passed since he was snatched from the path behind Alex. At least a day since he'd been thrust into this strange dream. And since he'd eaten.

Hunger. Stephen's breath caught sharp in his chest. He wouldn't be hungry in a dream. Slowly, his mind absorbed the idea that somehow, some way, he'd been transported to the past, one where gods and goddesses actually existed and roamed the world. His thoughts made his head twirl as much as the nausea.

The woman opened a heavy wooden door then motioned for him to enter. "She's waiting for you."

As he stepped through the door, the woman faded into a shimmer of light and was gone.

"Damn."

The door eased shut behind him but the click sounded like the sharp clap of thunder. So far, he'd not paid much attention to what was happening. Convinced his adventure was a dream, he had let events carry him along without worrying about a misstep or being afraid of consequences.

Candles flickered all over the cavernous room but didn't cast much light. Through the dimness, a strong feminine voice said, "You may approach." The tone held a hint of hardness.

Stephen hesitated as he squinted into the shadows. Aphrodite wouldn't be in Hades. The only woman of any power in the underworld would be...

"Or do I have to *order* you forward?" Sharpness cut the edge of each word. Persephone, the dread goddess of the dead. She wielded almost as much power as her husband.

As if compelled by her words, Stephen moved across the room toward a high throne. The black stone surrounded her, seeming to swallow what little light the candles threw off.

Seated in icy paleness, Persephone's gaze followed his steps. "It is right for you to fear me. I have control over Hades' heart, therefore I have control over the Underworld and your fate in it." White robes draped over her shoulders, falling down her arms, covering her to the wrists. A swath of silky material fell down her legs and pooled at her feet, as if a suppliant begging for mercy.

Maybe Stephen should follow suit.

Her full mouth was at rest in neither smile nor frown. A high forehead complemented the pointed chin and aristocratic nose. The swell of her breasts barely moved against the white silk covering her. Persephone appeared to be chiseled out of marble, a vision to rival the Venus de Milo.

Stephen's step slowed to a crawl as he came within several yards of the throne. His newfound caution kept his head bowed with only furtive peeks at the still figure. As much superstition surrounded her name as her husband's. One didn't speak her name lightly. "What honor has brought me to your feet, Beautiful Goddess?" He hoped he didn't mangle the pronunciation. He seemed to be getting the hang of understanding the ancient dialogue but speaking it was still a bit of a tongue twister.

A slight smile curved the side of her mouth.

While Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty, flattering Persephone wouldn't hurt Stephen's situation. According to myth, the Underworld was outside the realm of the other gods. What Aphrodite didn't know wouldn't hurt Stephen. Hopefully.

"I'm in need of entertainment." Her dark eyes reflected the flickering candlelight.

"I have no talent to amuse you, Gracious Queen."

Persephone stood, her white robes flowed around her like a cloud of silk. "But you have the necessary equipment." She shrugged her shoulders and the pale material slid

around her, floating to a pile around her feet. She stood in naked glory. Her fair skin almost glowed in the darkness.

Oh fuck. Stephen gulped as her meaning hit. Of all the things Stephen was unsure of, his sexuality wasn't one of them. He was firmly in the gay column, about as far as he could get. While he could appreciate the beauty of Persephone's form and figure, getting his cock into the idea would be a problem. Nothing. His body didn't react at all.

Faint lines marked the beginning of a frown on Persephone's forehead. "Do you understand the honor I'm bestowing?"

"Yes, Dread Queen." Stephen swallowed against rising panic. Insulting her could leave him a permanent resident of hell. Maybe one that was really dead. "I'm in awe of your beauty."

The frown eased but her expression remained cold. "Then you will worship me."

Four tall women, almost Amazon in stature, appeared from the darkened edge of the room. Hands tugged and pulled at his tunic and loincloth until he stood in nothing but his birthday suit with an unresponsive dick.

Lifted from his feet then carried backward, Stephen didn't see what the women set him on, but the cold stone lining his back wasn't helping in the arousal department. His balls shriveled from the chill sweeping through him. Chains rattled as his arms and legs were shackled into place. A final chain slid across his throat. Moving his head around resulted in pressure on his Adam's apple. Move too much and he'd strangle himself.

"You will satisfy me or you will be banished to the deepest pit of Tartarus for insulting a goddess." Persephone's voice hovered near Stephen's head but he couldn't see her.

Satisfy her? Stephen couldn't fake an erection. He could try oral sex, but he hadn't the foggiest idea how to start. Hell, he'd never seen a woman's pussy up close. Stephen wished the whirling vortex that brought him would swoop down and take him anywhere but here.

Chapter Six

Alex slowed as he neared Hades' palace. Unfortunately, it lay on the only path to the River Styx. The dark god had to have something to do with the sudden disappearance of Stephen and Cyrek.

The vortex Alex's mistress sent to collect him from the future wasn't something limited to Aphrodite. All the gods and goddesses had the power to transport humans from one place to the other. They didn't do it often because the ability was draining, even for a god, and almost debilitating to the human. Dizziness, headache and nausea usually followed a ride through the vortex.

The large palace stood in the center of the Underworld. All roads led to the dark stone structure, and guards kept watch for anyone approaching.

Alex knelt in shrubbery near the road. So far, he hadn't seen another soul – living or dead – since Stephen disappeared.

The palace seemed unusually quiet today. Fear trilled up and down Alex's spine. Once caught, getting out of Hades' grasp could be difficult. Everything depended on his fickle mood. Too bad, because Hades could help him get in touch with Aphrodite.

Before when Alex had descended into the underworld, Aphrodite had asked Hades' permission. Hades' favors usually came with a catch. And he didn't like unannounced visitors. Especially ones determined to escape from his domain. Having Alex and Stephen show up unannounced could make for a peevish god.

A guard approached with a stiff-legged march. A black steel mask obscured the top half of his face. Eyeholes were narrow slits and a nose guard dipped in the middle. The setup on a normal human would hamper the guard's vision, but very few of Hades' guards were anything close to human.

The Erinyes, goddesses of vengeance, inhabited Tartarus, the Underworld's place of punishment, inventing tortures from mild to unthinkable in the darkest place of Hades' realm. As creatures born of the blood of the Titan Uranus, they took great pleasure in the punishment they meted out. Sometimes too much pleasure...

A shudder of fear snapped down Alex's spine. The idea of being at the tender mercy of the shades of Tartarus instilled a greater caution. And a greater sorrow for what might be Stephen's fate.

Stephen didn't deserve an eternity at the hands of Hades' minions. Guilt added to Alex's burden. He should have been more careful while retrieving the necklace. Stephen should be in his own time, living in his world, not suffering in Alex's.

Nothing could be done now. Hades couldn't get his hands on Aphrodite's necklace, so any chance for Alex to bargain for Stephen's fate was lost.

The guard turned around then began stomping his way back along the dark stone walls.

The crackle of brush and a twig's snap alerted Alex of the presence of someone behind him.

Damn! Alex crouched lower, hoping the sparse cover behind him would keep him safe.

"I know you're in there. You might as well come out on your own. It would make things go easier on you. Alex." The familiar voice of Hades held a bit of a smirk in its tone.

"I'm just passing through. No harm meant." Alex straightened from his crouch.

"Well, I'm a little curious as to why you are here without my knowledge. Or should I say my prior knowledge." Hades' black eyes flickered with a ghostly flame. "You know how I feel about uninvited guests." He seemed to forget about their encounter in Perseus' chambers. If that's the way he wanted it...

"Yes, Dread Lord. But I am here by accident." Pushing his way through the brush, he paused a few feet away from Hades. "Something went wrong when my mistress called me to her side from Knossos. I ended up in Elysium instead of Olympus."

With a deep frown creasing his brow, Hades' gaze roamed up and down Alex's body as if gauging the veracity of his words.

"I had a friend with me as well. We left Perseus this morning but somehow he disappeared. Along with one of Perseus' men."

His frown softened as Hades exhaled a long sigh. "Both are here. You managed to miss my net."

Relief left Alex's muscles weak and his heart beat loud in his ears. "I wondered what happened." His reaction surprised him. Stephen had been a means to an end. When did he become so attached to him?

"But you and your friend are still uninvited. Punishment of some order will be required."

"I understand, but both my friend and I need to get to Olympus as quickly as possible. My mistress expected us yesterday. We shouldn't keep her waiting any longer than necessary."

Hades' eyes narrowed and his frown returned in earnest. "Do you presume to tell me what I should do in my domain?"

"No, Dread One, never!" Alex bowed his head and clasped his hands in front of him. "I acquiesce to your will." Insulting the gods was a fast one-way ticket to Tartarus.

"Good." Hades' fingers on his right hand wiggled.

With his head down, Alex could only see Hades from the waist down. He almost missed the slight gesture. Rapid footsteps approached but Alex didn't look up or speak. He'd pushed a little too far and hit one of Hades' buttons.

Legs came into view. Hands grabbed Alex's arms—not too rough but enough to know they meant business.

Alex didn't complain. He'd already angered Hades once. Doing it again would make his situation worse. He hoped Hades wouldn't have him searched. The pouch with the necklace pressed into Alex's stomach as an urgent reminder of his mission.

"Let's go." The gruff voice came from his right.

While he knew some of Hades' people, neither man seemed familiar.

Hades led the way toward the palace. The black stone seemed to absorb the light from the pale sun of the Underworld. The air grew darker and thick the closer they got to the entrance.

Fear crawled along Alex's spine. A sense of foreboding settled on his shoulders, as if entering here meant he might not leave. Maybe he was reflecting the desolation of the permanent inhabitants.

The Underworld wasn't all unpleasant. Most of the dead lived as if they were still alive. A pale sun warmed most areas. A moon marked the dark sky at night. With no real change of seasons, the weather was warm and comfortable. Rain rarely fell. Water from the world above flowed into Hades' realm as the five rivers surrounding the Underworld.

Elysian Fields were for fallen heroes, like Perseus. A life of luxury with all desires fulfilled were the reward for the valorous. Tartarus, on the other hand, was the fate of miserable creatures foolish enough to commit grievous sins. Insulting a god was only one way to end up in perpetual torment.

Alex kept silent as he followed the grim god. The man was sex on legs. Watching him walk was a pleasant pastime. Or would have been if his situation hadn't been so dire.

The memory of yesterday's play with Perseus and Hades sent a hidden shiver of desire through Alex. The blowjob had been phenomenal. His libido distracted him with questions of Hades' sexual prowess in other ways. What would being fucked by the dark, melancholy god be like?

Already half erect, his cock hardened. Alex needed to keep his thoughts on the mission at hand. Getting the necklace to his mistress should be his only concern. Definitely a priority above getting fucked.

And Stephen. Hades had him as well. Had Stephen revealed anything about the necklace?

Alex didn't think he would intentionally. Who knows what could have happened in the few hours since Stephen was taken. If Hades had pushed for information, Stephen might not have resisted. Or been able to.

Wide doors eased open without visible assistance. The hall within echoed with the immensity of a great cavern. The walls were made of the same ebony stone as the outside. Tapestries hung around the room. Candles burned in elaborate candelabras made of dark gray metals but not enough to brighten the gloomy depths of the room.

Hades' step didn't hesitate as they crossed the room at an angle, heading toward a smaller set of double doors. Once again, the doors swung open then closed behind them.

Statues of all kinds littered the long, wide hall. Some so real they appeared to be caught in midflight from some dark evil. Even the expression on their faces was one of terror.

As Alex walked past one—a young man barely eighteen or nineteen—the statue appeared to move. Alex stopped in spite of his escorts. "That—"

"Is no concern of yours." Hades motioned for the two men. "Punishment isn't always painful. Being stuck in the memory of a haunting crime can be as effective as physical torment."

Alex shuddered at the idea of being trapped inside a frozen body, reliving a single moment over and over again.

"Don't worry. You don't merit a punishment so gruesome." A smile made more sinister by Hades' short, black beard curved his lips. "Not yet anyway." He turned then resumed his course down the long hall.

One of the guards poked him in the back, urging him to follow.

The end of the hall appeared out of the darkness. Another set of doors floated open then closed with a gentle click behind them.

Another huge room, this one with a high ceiling, gave the feeling of being open to the night although it was day out. Spots of light flickered like stars. Candles at myriad different heights cast a shuddering glow around the room.

A dais – almost an altar – stood in front of a high throne.

A woman's voice, tone firm with command, echoed across the room. "You will satisfy me or you will be banished to the deepest pit..." Her voice faded out but Alex knew what she threatened.

Alex peered past the glowing light of the candles. Spread on the altar before a naked Persephone was Stephen. Bright gold chains wrapped around his wrists and ankles. Another draped across his throat and his clothes were also missing. Alex's cock took notice of Stephen's helplessness and filled to rapid hardness in spite of his best intentions.

Even in the distance, Alex could see Stephen shaking. Being asked to sex up a goddess could both terrify and elate a man. However, Alex thought Stephen was tilting more toward terror.

"Persephone!" Hades' voice rang out across the room. "I told you that one is mine and I'd find you someone else to play with."

"Why can't I have him too?" Persephone dropped onto a massive throne behind her. "You never want to play together anymore." Her harsh expression softened into a pout. "I get so bored without you around."

"Dearest," Hades' gentle tone held a hint of reproach, "you know I have to deal with business at least some of the time." His grim expression faded. An aura of joy lit his face.

"Well, I want this one. He's different." Persephone crossed her arms over her alabaster breasts. Her gaze returned to the shaking Stephen. "And he called me beautiful." Her lips puckered in a childish pout.

Realization hit Alex. "Excuse me, Dread Lord, I think there may be a problem." Alex kept his head bowed but not so low he couldn't see Hades' expression.

No sign of anger. Curiosity maybe, with one eyebrow raised in a question.

"Stephen only desires men. I don't know if he could...perform for a woman—even for one as beautiful as your lady."

"Really?" Persephone interrupted before Hades could respond. "Only for men?" Her eyebrows rose toward her hairline. "Interesting." Her gaze darted between her husband, Alex and the two guards then back to Stephen. "Prove it. One of you fuck him."

She slumped in the throne, her long legs stretched out in front of her, splayed wide. A hint of blonde fur teased Alex's view.

Stephen's head turned a fraction of an inch but he didn't turn far enough to make eye contact with Alex.

The two guards grinned wide and nodded their approval of the goddess's idea.

Movement on the dais caught Alex's gaze. Rising from hiding, Stephen's cock also voted yes.

The pale goddess sat up on the edge of the throne, her gaze locked on Stephen's growing erection. A giggle erupted from her lips. "This might be interesting."

Hades' face brightened as his wife went from a giggle to a laugh. Evidently, the fearsome god of the underworld was a slave to his wife's fancies. Then again, Hades' tunic hid a nice-sized tent pole by now. His thick cock bulged against the lower edge of his silky black tunic.

"All of them?" Stephen's voice choked the last syllable. The chain didn't allow talking either.

“Yes. All of them.” Persephone’s eyes almost glittered in the dimness. “Release his neck. I want to hear him beg for mercy.” Her fingers ran across her lower stomach, dipping out of sight at the apex of her thighs.

One of the Amazons lifted the chain from his throat. The ends didn’t appear to be tied to anything. The chains must be enchanted.

Alex didn’t bother to mention that Stephen probably wasn’t objecting. The sight of his cock rising from flaccid to interested in very little time was a good sign of Stephen’s willingness to cooperate. The idea of Stephen used by the three men both aroused and angered Alex. The stab of jealousy had to be curbed.

Alex watched the god’s tight ass as he strode toward Stephen. What would it be like to ride a god’s ass?

Hades motioned the guards forward. The two men followed without Alex. One already had his hand under his tunic, stroking his cock. Almost as an afterthought, the two men turned to look at Alex.

“I’m coming.” Alex stripped his shirt over his head then bundled it at his waist. Pulling the necklace’s pouch free of the loincloth, he rolled it into his shirt. “I don’t plan to miss this.”

Looked like he might have a choice of asses—or more than one. His power to recuperate meant he’d be ready for anything almost immediately. Sometimes his mistress’s gifts were so much fun.

Stephen watched the four men approach. His relief at seeing Alex was almost a turn-on by itself. Anything to keep Persephone from forcing the issue. Women just didn’t do it for him. Never had. But the four men approaching him...

Alex was as fair as Hades was dark. Both were well-built—tall with taut muscles. Hades’ beard and mustache gave him a sinister air while Alex’s clean-shaven face looked as innocent as a cherub. Of course Alex had already proved he was anything but innocent.

Need grew as the other two men approached. Both as tall as Alex but heavier, more bulk to their muscles. They, like Hades, were bearded but each was fuller. Not the short-cut goatee of the grim god.

One of the guards reached him first. His meaty hands reminded Stephen of Cyrek although this man wasn't nearly as big. His hands tugged at the heavy chains weighing down his legs.

Stephen frowned as the chains came free. He was sure he'd been chained down but the ends jangled in the guard's hand.

With a flick of the guard's wrist, the chains went flying as if they weighed nothing.

Tugging his arms, Stephen tested the security of the chains around his wrists. Tight and strong, the bonds weren't budging. Not that he minded. He'd never done the bondage thing but he suddenly could see the attraction.

"Oil?" The man pushed Stephen's legs up hard. Stephen's knees pushed against his chest, displaying his ass for all to see.

Stephen wrapped his fingers around the chains and gripped them tight. His back and abs protested the position. Being bent in half wasn't something he did often, but his cock grew harder as his muscles strained.

An Amazon stepped forward with a bowl then offered it to the guard.

With a distracted grunt of thanks, the man scooped out a handful of the thick oily substance. Using one massive hand to hold Stephen's ankles, the other slathered oil down his crack.

Stephen's pulse drummed in his head and throat. Shallow breaths left him lightheaded. He glanced around at the others...the audience watching him.

Persephone, her Amazons, the other guard, Hades and Alex watched from different parts of the room.

"Oh yeah..." Stephen rocked his ass toward the burly guard. People were watching him. Were going to watch him as a complete stranger fucked him. Tied to an altar. His breath grew shallow waiting for penetration. His body hummed with anticipation.

A couple of fingers pushed in hard and fast.

"Yes!" Stephen welcomed the heat and the burn. "More."

"He's begging for it. Give it to him rough, Makis," the other guard stood with his cock out, stroking the thick flesh. "And be quick about it. I want a turn."

Makis growled as he shoved his fingers in again. "You'll get your turn, Priam. He's fucking tight. Won't fit if I don't loosen him up."

Rocking into the coarse fingers, Stephen moaned with need. "Someone do something." His body tensed waiting for more. He didn't care if they split him open as long as someone fucked him soon.

"Noisy one, isn't he?" Priam laughed. "I can think of a better use for his mouth though." Priam climbed on the altar near Stephen's head. His cock in hand, he ran the tip along Stephen's lips. "Open up." Priam dug his fingers through Stephen's hair. Pulling tight, he held Stephen's head still.

Stephen obeyed out of delirium built on need. His tongue circled the crown then lapped at the slit. As he suckled the glans, Priam pushed in, his shaft filled Stephen's mouth. Grunts escaped around the man's cock.

His gaze flickered toward the women watching.

One of the Amazons sat on the arm of the throne. Her fingers tweaked one of Persephone's nipples. The pale goddess flushed pink with heat or desire. Her hand dipped between her thighs and out of sight.

Two of the Amazons were caressing the fourth woman. Hands, fingers, lips chased over flesh. The recipient of their actions moaned with little pants of breath.

The idea of people getting off on watching him get off— Sweat broke out on Stephen's skin. His balls tightened as his breath quickened.

Makis' fingers disappeared. His cock replaced them. The stretch and burn came fast as the crown defeated any resistance.

Stephen gulped against the dick filling his mouth. He couldn't stop things if he wanted too. His hands were still restrained by the strange gold chains. Increasing desire raged through his body. He needed someone to touch him. Just a little pressure on his dick and he'd blow. Anything.

Makis pressed forward as Stephen rocked into his stroke. Priam's flesh muffled pleas for relief.

Hands tightened around his knees as Makis slid home. He didn't stop to savor the moment. Pulling back, Makis freed most of his cock then slammed back into Stephen's ass. Each blow was faster than the last, harder than before.

Priam picked up on the rhythm. The head of his cock bounced off Stephen's tonsils. Just as Stephen got his lips around the edge of the crown, Priam pushed in again.

Fucked from both ends. Tied up and fucked. With an audience watching... Tears clouded Stephen's eyes. He needed to come. Desire flooded his body. Anything, something.

He tried to close his thighs. Even if he couldn't catch his cock between them, pressing the crown into his stomach might be all he needed.

Makis' fingers gripped around Stephen's legs tighter, past the point of bruising, denying him even the slightest pressure.

"Having a little trouble here?" Alex's voice drew Stephen's gaze to the left.

With Priam controlling his head with a fist full of hair, Stephen couldn't even nod. He hoped Alex would recognize his silent plea.

"Let me help you with that." When Alex pushed against Stephen's legs, Makis gave ground. Alex's hand slid up and down Stephen's stomach.

Sweat slick, Alex's hand wrapped about Stephen's cock. His touch was light and not enough of what Stephen needed.

Another muffled moan. Priam's cock gagged Stephen. His hand fisted Stephen's hair, pulling tighter. "I'm going to make you eat my seed." Priam renewed his strokes with a little more fury.

The rough growl set Stephen just a little closer to the edge. His hips flexed, pushing his groin up toward Alex.

Hades' smooth, deep voice caught Stephen's attention. "Don't hurt him too much, boys. I have plans for him too."

Alex's mouth closed over Stephen's cock. That was enough.

Tremors racked his body as he came, twisting muscles and tendons hard. His mouth closed around Priam's cock, sealing a tight vacuum over the man's flesh.

Priam yelped a half warning. "Fuck!"

Hot come splashed against the back of Stephen's mouth. Lost in his own pleasure, Stephen swallowed without thought, gulping down Priam's fluids. His natural gag reflex vanished as he welcomed everything Priam had to offer. Giving Alex everything he had left.

Fingers dug deep into Stephen's legs. A hard slam ripped through Stephen's ass as Makis let loose a long growl. His pelvis held tight against Stephen's ass. Little jerks matched Makis's grunts.

"Fucking amazing." Priam slid his dick out of Stephen's mouth. He sat back on his heels. "Never been sucked like that." Priam stepped off the altar. He leaned down, lips near Stephen's ear. "If I were His Darkness, I'd lock you up for good so I could play with you whenever I wanted to. Hopefully, he'd continue to share."

Priam's rough beard scratched along Stephen's neck then hard lips met his for a long kiss. Tongue searched deep.

Stephen's mind cleared long enough for him to kiss Priam back. Then Priam pulled away. A wonderful sense of lethargy settled over him. He wasn't sure he could move.

Pleasure still radiated through his body, but it had gentled from the muscle-popping orgasm.

Hades' face swam above Stephen. A wide grin brightened his gloomy expression. "Your performance seems to have pleased my wife." He nodded toward the throne.

Persephone had a leg on either arm of the throne. Her ass hung off the edge of the seat. One of the Amazons knelt in front of her, face buried in Persephone's pussy.

High breathless moans indicated how much Persephone enjoyed the show. "Glad. To help." Stephen gulped air around each word.

A long laugh and a wide grin split Hades face. "I like you. Maybe I should keep you."

"I hope you won't. I want to keep him with me." Alex's words added to Stephen's euphoria.

"Husband!" Persephone's voice rose above Stephen's rapid breaths and rush of blood in his ears. "Fuck. Him."

"We'll see. First, I shall do as my wife commands." Hades pulled his tunic up to reveal a long, thick cock draped over his undergarment. The crown was dark red with need. Come dripped from the tip.

Stephen glanced over at the god of the Underworld. "Oh yeah. God yes. Please. Fuck me." His words were beyond needy but he didn't care. The idea of being a sex slave to the gods was starting to sound really good. "Please."

The room echoed with Hades' laughter. "Move, Makis. My turn to fuck our guest."

Makis leaned away from Stephen. His cock slid almost all the way out. With the crown still in, Makis flexed his hips a few times, teasing Stephen with a few short strokes. "My lord, may we have him again later? I promise not to break him." He pulled free then backed off the altar with a wide grin on his face.

"Maybe." Hades took his place. "Hold his legs."

The two guards moved into place on either side of Stephen. Another rush of arousal spread through him except his spent cock didn't exactly show any interest.

Calloused hands pulled his legs back toward his chest then holding his knees, spread them wide. His body tensed, waiting for Hades' touch.

A rush of heat teased his hole. The thick crown pushed past any remaining resistance. Warmth suffused Stephen's body starting at his ass then spreading. Like a fever, his body burned then chills shattered the heat.

The dark god's eyes were closed. A frown creased his brow and pearly white teeth worried his lower lip. Deeper his cock pressed.

Stephen gasped for air as the thick flesh filled him. Need whispered through his body like a faint echo, curling through his groin to his spent cock.

Hades' eyes snapped open. A bright flame burned in his gaze.

Turning his head away, Stephen escaped the intensity of Hades' stare. Instead, he focused on Alex.

Blues eyes crinkled at the corners while a big grin spread across Alex's face. Alex leaned toward Stephen. "Having fun?"

"Oh. Fuck. Yes."

The long, slow slide of Hades' cock stopped as his pelvis pressed tight against Stephen's ass. "I see why Makis wants you again. Very tight." Hades made a quick retreat. His cock almost slipped free before he rammed in again. Each stroke a little faster, a little harder.

As empty as his cock was, pleasure still wound through Stephen's gut. Sweat dribbled down the side of his face. Wanting to meet Hades' strokes, Stephen pushed against the men holding his legs.

Alex leaned closer until his lips almost touched Stephen's ear. Hot breath teased Stephen when he spoke. "So you like having Hades' cock filling you."

Stephen's words came out jumbled, so he nodded instead.

Trailing his fingers across Stephen's pecs, Alex stopped to tease a nipple. "I think you'd make an excellent plaything. Nice tight ass for fucking."

More people, more men to fuck him... His mind fogged with the idea. The dark god's cock was like a drug stealing his reason. A hard slam against his ass forced a sharp breath out of Stephen's lungs. Treated like a slut, doing whatever they wanted... The idea was tantalizing. His spent cock threatened a comeback as Hades slammed into him again.

What did he have to go home for? This couldn't be a dream. The people, the feelings were too real.

And what about Alex? If Alex belonged here, then Stephen wanted to be where he was. Except Alex wasn't talking about being with him. Alex wanted him as a toy, a bribe maybe, for the gods.

A little sadness crept under the pure pleasure coursing through his body. Would he want to stay without Alex? And if Stephen went home, Alex wouldn't be there either.

Stephen clinched his fingers around his golden chains as Hades' powered up his strokes. His body scooted up toward the edge of the altar from the force.

Alex's arm slipped around him, bracing him against Hades' onslaught. His mouth dipped close to Stephen's until lips met. The sweetness of the kiss emphasized the rough heat of Hades' strokes.

With a loud growl, the dark god emptied his hot come into Stephen. "Fuck." Hades held his pelvis tight against Stephen's ass. His hands clenched Stephen's legs in a bruising grip.

Stephen's body tightened in a mix of pleasure and pain. The room swam around in circles. Closing his eyes, he let the darkness soothe him.

Alex checked Stephen's heartbeat and breathing. Both were a little fast but normal considering his recent activities. He would make a fabulous slave for the gods. But even

as he thought about it, Alex shook his head. A little pang of jealousy nipped at Alex's heart.

Stephen would have to go home. Keeping him here would be dangerous and possibly change history. No, Stephen could have a little fun on the way to Olympus but he'd have to leave before his presence caused trouble.

Hades eased out of Stephen. His gaze still burned bright with flames as he peered down at Stephen. "He alive?"

"Yes, Dread Lord. He's fine. Just a little overwhelmed by your attention."

A self-satisfied smirk replaced his frown. "Good. Very good." Hades jumped off the altar. "He's very good at accepting my attention."

High-pitched moans from the throne indicated Persephone's satisfaction with the show. A wide grin gentled Hades' normally grim face. He fumbled with his undergarment, shoving his cock inside then strode across the room to his wife.

The Amazons surrounding her gave way to their dark lord.

Sweeping Persephone into his arms, he paused. "I was supposed to keep you here indefinitely. Because of the pleasure you've afforded my wife, I won't. You've shown us a new outlet to an old game. While I would enjoy your company again, I bid you good journey. However, I'm not omniscient. Nor can I guarantee you safe passage out of my realm. You know the rules and you must follow them."

Alex bowed low, feeling a bit ridiculous considering his state of partial undress. "You are most gracious, my lord. And I would be more than happy to return for a sanctioned visit when my duties to my mistress are complete." Maybe get a turn on the end of Hades' dick.

From the look of unadulterated pleasure on Stephen's sleeping face, Alex wanted to be the center of the dark god's desire.

"We look forward to your next visit. Be cautious." Hades turned then stalked toward what looked like a solid wall. When he was within a few feet, the wall shimmered into an open doorway.

The Amazons and the guards followed their master and mistress through the opening, leaving Alex alone with Stephen.

Still lying prone on the altar, Stephen's eyes fluttered open. He looked around the room, toward the throne then back again. "Please don't tell me that was a dream."

"Not a dream, but you passed out for a couple of minutes."

"Un-fucking-believable." Sweat gleamed over his body. Red flushed his face and chest. His cock drooped to one side and lay spent on his lower stomach.

"You really get off on being used like a sex toy, don't you?" Alex grabbed his tunic from the floor where he'd left it and felt for the necklace. He'd managed not to get more than a couple feet away from his clothes, but he needed the reassurance.

"Can you walk?" Alex narrowed his gaze at his sated friend. "I don't think I can carry you but we should get moving." The faster they exited the Underworld, the better. A sense of danger raised the hairs on the back of Alex's neck.

"Yeah." Stephen swung his body around until his feet dropped to the floor. Still resting his upper body on the altar, Stephen met Alex's gaze. "You didn't fuck me."

"So? Neither did Priam." Alex ran his hand down Stephen's back. The relief he felt when he knew Stephen was safe resurrected. "Besides, now that we're back together, I'll have another chance later."

"I hope so." Stephen groaned as he pushed off the altar. He wobbled a little but he kept to his feet.

Alex kept quiet. Hades' words worried him. Another chance might not come. Alex pulled his tunic over his head before searching for Stephen's missing apparel. "What did you do with your clothes?"

"Nothing." Stephen walked around the altar peering around the room. "Those damn women did it for me. And they meant..."

A patch of color near a thick cushion led Alex to the tunic. Or parts of it. He held up the shredded material.

"Business," Stephen finished.

Tossing the tunic to Stephen, Alex tried to keep his laugh from bubbling out but he couldn't help himself. "You looked so terrified."

"I was!" Stephen held up the remains of his clothes. "I'd never been with a woman. And being forced to wasn't exactly conducive to Mr. Happy's participation."

"Never?" Alex was a little surprised.

"No. Never wanted to. Why bother when I knew I was queer since I was ten?"

"Really?" Alex had always been interested in women and men. Greek culture almost encouraged people to be bisexual. At least in this era. The future wasn't quite so forward-thinking. The idea made him chuckle. "Well, we need to get out of here. Your performance earned us a get-out-of-jail-free card but I don't want to give the dark one a chance to change his mind."

Stephen's hands gripped the side of the ornately carved stone altar.

Alex found Stephen's loincloth behind a low couch. "You sure you're okay?" He moved to Stephen's side and began wrapping his loincloth around him. "We still have a ways to go before we reach the River Styx. I hope you're still into playing slut when we get there. The ferryman has been known to let people cross back but he usually wants to satisfy some of his kinks first."

"Kinks?" Stephen frowned as Alex tucked his loincloth into place. "What kind of kinks?"

Chapter Seven

Stephen followed Alex down the wide path. They'd been jogging at a fast pace for what seemed like hours. The quick bath before they left the palace was a distant memory. The warm water had soothed some of his soreness but his body complained about the running. Sweat trickled down his back in another too-big tunic Alex had found in an empty room.

"Hold up." Stephen stumbled to a stop. "I need. To. Catch. My breath."

Alex halted then turned toward Stephen. "We need to reach the River Styx before dark."

The pale sun was well past noon.

"How much longer?" Stephen had gotten lazy behind a desk. Not that he was overweight but his muscles had softened with lack of exercise and he'd never been a fan of running. The last two days had been a sharp reminder of his poor physical condition. "I'll try. Not sure how fast I can go."

Alex glanced over his shoulder at the sun. "The moon here is too faint to travel by and I don't want to be caught in the open. There are things wandering through the Underworld that you wouldn't want to meet in the dark."

"Okay, let's go. I'll keep up. Somehow." Stephen wasn't sure he could keep his word but he'd try. While Stephen didn't know what creatures Alex meant, he was willing to believe in the danger. Bent over with his hands on his knees, Stephen gulped air. Sweat trickled down his face.

Alex's forehead crinkled in a frown. "Maybe we can find a place to stop but we need to get past the Plain of Judgment. If we're caught there, we might never make it out of here. The judges have full discretion there. Even Hades can't help us if they pronounce judgment."

"I'll be right behind you." Stephen finally inhaled a deep breath. The implied danger of his not-dream was finally sinking in. Still, the adventure soothed something missing in his soul. And it wasn't just sex.

"We're almost there now. We'll have to go through the woods to avoid judgment." Alex stepped out at an easier pace, leading the way down the wide path. "Once off the trail, we'll have to slow down anyway."

"Okay." Stephen dragged another deep breath into his burning lungs then set out behind Alex.

A few yards down the road, the sound of singing reached past Stephen's ragged breathing and found his ears.

Alex motioned toward the woods then darted into a thicket.

Following, Stephen reached cover as a group of people came around the bend.

Led by an older man, two men and two women traipsed down the path at a leisurely pace. The two women sang at the top of their lungs. As animated as they were, their bodies seemed faded.

"Who are they?" Stephen whispered close to Alex's ear.

"Shades newly dead, judged favorably and on their way to Elysium Fields. We're closer than I thought." Alex peered down the path after the people walked by. "We need to stay off the path now."

"Their appearance...because they are shades now?"

"Yes. They'll live here for a hundred years then they'll drink from the Lethe River before they are reborn into the world."

With Alex's prompting, the old legends came back to Stephen. The ancient Greeks believed in reincarnation. Not something mentioned in most of the myths handed down to modern times.

"Can we rest for a few minutes?" Stephen's body ached from not only the trek but his workout with Hades and his guards. "Just a few minutes?"

Alex nodded then canted his head toward deeper cover. "Let's move a little farther off the road first."

"Thanks." Stephen followed Alex through thick shrubbery for several yards.

Alex stopped without warning. "This will do."

The small clearing had a thick layer of leaves covering the ground. The sun didn't reach past the forest's canopy to disturb the shade.

Dropping to his knees, Stephen huffed out a long sigh as he silently vowed to get back to the gym. If he ever made it home.

His breath caught in his chest as he finally gave up the last hope of waking up to find all this was a dream. Somehow, some way he was in ancient Greece, a pawn and plaything of gods and goddesses. And he could die here. Or worse, spend eternity alive in torment.

He searched the depths of his memory for anything and everything about the Plain of Judgment. Three judges passed sentence on the dead. They could send people to the depths of Tartarus to suffer eternity at the hands of the Erinyes, the Furies, or send them to a life of ease in Elysium Fields.

The seriousness of his situation crashed on him like a brick wall. Fear settled in his gut like a stone.

"Alex." Stephen pushed back nausea as he spoke. "Do you really think we'll get out of here?"

Alex peered at Stephen with narrowed eyelids. "You believe now, don't you?"

"Yes."

Sitting next to Stephen, Alex laid his arm across Stephen's shoulders. "I don't know. But keep in mind, Hades likes you. Perseus likes you—or at least his men do—and Perseus is the kind of master who wants to keep his men happy. If for some reason we should be caught on the Plain of Judgment, don't give up hope. Call out for Hades."

"Bang my head on the ground, right?" A shiver of fear crept up Stephen's spine as he remembered the ancient myths. "And call him by his titles, not his name."

"I'm sure he'd be disposed to help you. At least keep you from being thrown into Tartarus." Alex nuzzled Stephen's ear. "But I don't think you'll escape him again."

A choice between the terrors of Tartarus and being a sex slave to the god of the Underworld? Not much of a choice. Stephen would learn to service Persephone if it kept him out of the pit. Although he hoped she'd stay content to watch. A shudder of fear mixed with arousal as he remembered his performance for the goddess.

Alex leaned in then planted a soft kiss on Stephen's temple. "I'll do everything I can to keep us both safe, but the necklace has to be my priority. The outcome could affect too many people." Resting his back against a tree, Alex pulled Stephen into an easy embrace.

"I understand." Stephen nodded. "And I agree."

"Rest. We need to get moving soon."

Stephen curled into the comfort of Alex's arms. He nuzzled his head under Alex's chin. The slow, steady heartbeat lulled him into almost a doze. Still on the edge of wakefulness, Stephen ran through a list of positive things.

Out of the office. Hmm... Fascinating cultures to study. Hot men. Even hotter sex. New kinks... Alex. The salty musk of Alex's scent.

A smile teased his lips. He hadn't done that in a long time. When he was younger and in an uncomfortable situation, he'd list the good things that had happened to counterbalance the bad. Then things had gotten so fucked up Stephen couldn't find anything pleasant about his life.

Now, with things more dire than a colleague's ridicule, he'd found his way back to his old mantra.

Alex ran his hand up and down Stephen's back. "We should go now."

Looking up from his pillow on Alex's chest, Stephen snuck a quick kiss. "Thanks for everything."

"For stealing you from your time and taking you to someplace you might get killed?"

"Yeah." Stephen pulled away with a soft laugh. "Surprises me, but the last couple of days have been...fun?" He shrugged. "At least vastly more interesting than my normal life."

"You're still euphoric from getting laid. You should try doing that in your own time. Definitely less dangerous."

"But it would never be as erotic. I wouldn't have the nerve to do some of the things I've done here. I thought it was a dream. Anything goes." Stephen stood then held out his hand to pull Alex to his feet. "And as much fun as everyone has been, I'd like another chance with you."

Alex chuckled low as he grabbed Stephen in a hard embrace. "Oh, if we make it out of here, I guarantee we'll have a repeat performance." His kiss was as soft as his arms hard. "I wish...I wish I'd done something about it before we found the necklace."

Stephen was sure Alex had started to say something else. His heart flip-flopped a little. He hated the idea of leaving Alex, but he didn't think he'd be allowed to stay. Would Alex come back to Stephen's time? Could he maybe visit?

After another quick kiss, Alex released Stephen. "Let's get moving."

Yeah, first things first. Get the hell out of hell.

The thick brush kept them from moving too fast. The sun marched toward the horizon, taunting Stephen with the rapid passage of time. Twigs caught his hair. Dust collected on his sweat-damp skin. The slow pace helped ease his breath but didn't make much difference to strained muscles.

Alex led with a sure grace. The only clue of his tension was the corded muscles in his neck and shoulders.

Voices reached Stephen through the forest. Wails and moans as well as shouts of joy. An ominous screech shredded Stephen's ear drums. His imagination threw a dozen ideas at him, each more frightening than the last.

"Get down." Alex dropped to his knees then crawled under a large bush.

Stephen followed suit, banging his knee on a rock as he fell. "Damn."

"Quiet!"

Stephen crawled until he lay next to Alex.

Panicked shrieks faded with the terrifying screeches.

With a finger pressed to his lip, Alex murmured, "The Erinyes."

Stephen drew each breath slow and shallow. Fear of being discovered sent his blood racing. His heart thudded in his chest until he thought it would pound through his flesh.

"We're too close." Alex's voice dropped to a bare hint of a whisper.

Straining to hear his words, Stephen inched closer.

"We need to move deeper into the woods." Crawling on his stomach, Alex moved away from the noise.

The gathering must be growing. More and more voices clamored nearby.

Stephen moved near Alex's side. His head was even with Alex's waist. Dust ground through the thin material of his tunic, mixing with sweat to create an uncomfortable mud. The awkward crawl tugged at his loincloth, shoveling dirt into his makeshift underwear. Gravel scratched his stomach and lower.

Something crashed through the brush behind them. Alex rolled under a bush, almost out of sight.

Stephen had nowhere to go but up. Springing to his feet, he bolted deeper into the woods. Maybe the attacker would follow Stephen and allow Alex to escape. He could only hope.

More sounds of pursuit pushed Stephen forward. Loud mutters, yells and the sound of limbs breaking spurred him to faster steps. Limbs battered his body, ripping his tunic, stinging his face.

"Halt!" The loud voice seemed just behind Stephen. Another guttural shout, something Stephen didn't understand but assumed was a curse, sounded as if his pursuer was within reach.

Panic aided Stephen's pace. His legs pumped harder. Breath caught in his chest, burning his lungs with each forced gasp. A branch swatted his right eye. Tears clouded his vision as he raced away from—

"Stop!" A large hand caught Stephen's shoulder.

Pain shot through him as his shoulder wrenched hard. Shock filled his good eye with tears. His body fell back. Landing hard, his breath whooshed from his lungs. A shadowy figure blocked his vision.

"Damn." His captor dropped to the ground behind him. "You're fucking hard to catch."

The dialect clarified as the voice rang with familiarity.

Stephen wiped his eyes with dirty hands. The grit left behind only made his vision worse.

"Perseus has had us looking for you since he heard Hades let you go."

"Cyrek?"

"Who else?"

A long ragged breath ripped from Stephen's lungs. As much as Alex needed to get the necklace out of here, at least being captured by Cyrek didn't hold the dread of the Plain of Judgment or the Erinyes.

Then again, they had snuck out of Perseus' palace without so much as a goodbye. Things might not be as easy this time.

"Thank the gods and goddesses!" Stephen let his relief show in his words. "I didn't know it was you. I wouldn't have run."

A cloth dropped on Stephen's face.

"Wipe your eyes then we'll go back for Alex."

While the cloth didn't smell all that good, it did clear the worst of the grit, sweat and tears out of his eyes. His right eye was tender to the touch. Probably have a bruise. "Why were you looking for us?" Cyrek's huge bulk loomed over him.

"We'll talk about that in a minute." Cyrek held out his giant hand. "You ready?"

"Yeah."

Cyrek's palm dwarfed Stephen's hand. "Your scrawny butt can move pretty fast." Cyrek moved his hand down to the small of Stephen's back.

The rush of fear faded into a tingle of desire. A sense of security eased Stephen's racing heart. "Well, you didn't exactly announce your presence."

"I tried. You didn't hear me."

The panicked throb of his heart and the rush of his breath must have drowned out Cyrek's shout. "I'm just glad it was you. I don't want to stand before judgment just yet."

"That won't be a problem. Perseus is here to gain passage for you and Alex."

"What if he can't?" Alex feared Perseus' overconfidence might be their doom.

"He'll succeed. He always does."

Stephen would prefer passage was already secured but he kept quiet. For now, if they could make it past the Erinyes and the judges of the Underworld, they'd be well on their way to Olympus. But how far would Perseus' protection take them? Other things stood between the Plain of Judgment and the River Styx. Not the least of which was the ferryman Charon and his kinks...

"Stephen!" A tree limb pulled back, revealing Alex and Jerzyr. Alex hurried forward, wrapping Stephen in a tight embrace. "Scared I'd lost you again."

The soft whisper teased Stephen's ear. Slipping his arms around Alex, Stephen leaned into the hard body. "Glad to see you too."

"We need to get moving." Cyrek pressed a hand between Alex and Stephen, prying them apart. "Perseus is waiting near the Plain of Judgment." Cyrek's gaze darted toward Jerzyr then back again.

Stephen looked at Alex as they backed away from each other.

The surreptitious glances between the two giants weren't reassuring.

"Okay." Alex motioned for Cyrek to lead the way. "Then let's go see Perseus."

Alex followed Cyrek with Stephen behind him and Jerzyr pulling up the rear. The fact Perseus had sought them out was not necessarily a welcome one.

Perseus wasn't stupid. Self-indulgent and spoiled, yes, but a sharp mind lurked behind his laid-back façade. If Perseus had any idea of what was going on, he might try to blackmail Aphrodite. He'd have to be cautious. Hero or not, if Perseus insulted the goddess, he'd fast find himself in Tartarus.

Alex glanced over his shoulder.

Streaks of dirt lined Stephen's flushed face. His eyes were bloodshot and his right one had the faint beginning of bruising around it. A long scratch, dark with drying blood, striped his left cheek.

He'd done well trying to escape. Far better than Alex had expected. Outrunning Cyrek's long stride would have been almost impossible for someone in shape. Stephen had gone above and beyond all day, pushing himself past his limits.

A soft smile crossed Alex's lips. If only he could stay...

The smile disappeared. Idle daydreams weren't going to help him get the necklace back to his mistress. Stephen had to go back to his own time. With his knowledge of the future—his past—he was a danger to history. Time paradoxes couldn't be treated lightly.

Cyrek broke through a thicket then held the limbs aside for Alex.

On the edge of the Plain of Judgment, Perseus sat under a tree, his back resting against the rough bark. "Good job, boys!" He rose to his feet with an animalistic grace. His hands brushed the back of his tunic.

Alex didn't hesitate, walking straight up to Perseus. "What's wrong? Has something happened?" At the last minute, he decided the best defense was a strong offense. "Why are you here?"

A frown brushed Perseus' forehead then disappeared. "You left without permission."

"Permission?" Alex shook his head. "I didn't think I needed permission. You knew I was on an urgent errand for my mistress. You had your fun. I needed to leave. Even Hades gave us his leave to go. Why should you stand in our way?"

Perseus pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes. "I...ah..."

"I assumed you were here to help me. Of course my mistress would be grateful for our safe return. You know her gifts are quite...unique." Alex raised one eyebrow then let his gaze drop to Perseus' crotch. "As are her punishments." Meeting Perseus' gaze again, Alex let his smile widen.

Men angering his mistress had found their equipment useless for anything more than peeing and sometimes that was a problem as well.

A flush crept up Perseus' face. "I worried you might have difficulty on the Plain. Since I had nothing else to do..."

"I'm sure my mistress will be grateful."

Figures in cowled robes approached with an escort of armed guards. As they drew near, Alex could see the faces beneath the hoods. The three judges – Aeacus, Minos and Rhadamanthys – stopped in front of Alex and Stephen.

Minos was the king of the Minoan ruins in Crete. The palace Stephen studied in the far future belonged to the man who had final say on judgment in the Underworld.

Alex bowed low to the three men. Only a few seconds slower, Stephen dropped to his knees.

"Have ye come to be judged?" Minos' voice was deep and gravelly.

"Majesty, we have not." Alex remained in a deep bow. "I'm on my mistress's business. I ask leave for my companion and I to pass through the Plain unharmed." Straightening up, Alex motioned toward Stephen.

Beside him, Stephen continued to kneel. His behavior was a little over the top but Alex approved. Better to go too far in attempting to appease those in power than not enough.

Minos didn't bother to glance at Stephen. Instead, he addressed Perseus. "And you, my lord, were judged pleasing to the gods. Why have you returned from Elysian Fields?"

"I wished to assist Aphrodite's minions in their journey."

"Do you still seek to ingratiate yourself to the gods? You already have all the Underworld can grant to a hero. Why risk more for less?" A raised eyebrow seemed to underscore Minos' doubt but his words dripped with sarcasm.

Alex wondered if there was bad blood between the old king and the younger hero.

"Because their cause is worthy of a champion."

The words startled Alex. Perseus couldn't know Alex's mission, could he?

Rhadamanthys tapped Minos on the shoulder. A whispered conversation ensued between the three judges.

A word here and there reached Alex's hearing. Some worried him—like trespassing, Tartarus and banish. Alex couldn't tell who was in favor of what. Minos had final say but he was known to seriously consider the council of his fellow judges.

Minos turned back to Alex. "You and your companion as well as Perseus and his men have trespassed on the Plain of Judgment. We need to consult the oracles and maybe the gods to determine the fate of you all." Minos waved his hand then half a

dozen guards circled Alex and his friends. "We'll provide you shelter for the night. Tomorrow we'll determine your fate."

Alex knew better than to argue, but he didn't have to be happy about the judges' interference.

A guard tapped his spear butt on the ground and gave a guttural command. The other guards moved forward, pressing Alex's group toward the promised shelter and yet again an unknown fate.

Chapter Eight

Alex looked around the small room. Much different from Perseus' or Hades' palaces, the furnishings were simple and functional. A chest for clothing, a bed not quite big enough for two grown men and a small table with two chairs took up most of the space. A small fireplace completed the room's amenities.

"I wonder if they have baths nearby." Stephen flopped on the bed, his arms behind him, holding him up. "I could really use one. And some food would be good. It's been over two days."

"Baths we might have access to but we can't eat anything while in the Underworld."

"Oh shit. That's right. Persephone's curse."

"Yes. We don't need to take any chances." Alex moved near the bed. Standing in front of Stephen, he smiled. "You did well today."

"Thanks." A flush of color tinged Stephen's face.

"I can't believe you almost outran Cyrek."

Stephen laughed then said, "Fear is a powerful motivator."

"I guess so." Alex cupped Stephen's jaw. "I don't know what will happen tomorrow."

A slight shudder swept through Stephen. "I don't want to think about it." He tilted his head, pressing his cheek against Alex's hand. "For now, all I want is a bath and you." He turned his head then planted a kiss in Alex's palm. "Preferably in that order but I'll take what I can get."

Alex leaned over to kiss the top of Stephen's head. The odor of sweat and fear lingered on his friend. Alex was sure he didn't smell any better. "Let me find out about the baths."

Crossing the room, he opened the door a small crack. The guard stationed there stood on the opposite side of the small hallway, facing Alex. He didn't speak or even look at Alex.

"We'd like to bathe. Are there baths nearby or could we at least get some hot water?"

The guard finally made eye contact. "I am allowed to take you to the baths."

"Good. Let me get my friend." Alex pushed the door until it was almost closed. "There are baths. You ready?"

"Yes." Stephen pushed off the bed. "More than ready. I have dirt in my loincloth and it feels like sandpaper on my fucking dick."

"Awww... Do I need to kiss it and make it better?"

"Oh yeah. That's a good idea. Sucking on it would probably help too." Stephen grinned as he crossed the room. "Help a lot." His hand slid under Alex's tunic and cupped his ass. "I could think of a few things that would help out."

"I think we should hurry with the bath." Alex pulled Stephen into a tight embrace. "Then come back here. A nice comfortable bed instead of a table or couch. What do you think?"

"Sounds good." Stephen rested his forehead on Alex's shoulder as his body melded to Alex's.

The feel of Stephen against him was as comforting as it was arousing. His hands ran up and down Stephen's spine. Emotions raced through Alex in a frantic jumble. The idea of losing him, to the Underworld or to the future, left a heavy weight in the pit of his stomach and a knot in his throat.

Alex pulled away with a sigh. "Come on before our guard gets tired of waiting." Grabbing Stephen's hand, he pulled him toward the door. "Okay. We're ready."

The guard did a stiff left turn then motioned down the hall. "This way." Evidently he didn't trust them behind him.

Alex led the way with Stephen in tow and the guard following up the rear.

"Next door on the left." The guard barked the words as if an order.

Behind the door was an ornate bathing room. Almost more opulent than Perseus' palace, the design gave Hades' palace a run for its money. Steam rose from a blue tiled pool about the size of a king-sized bed. Steps led into the pool from all four sides. Small urns were spaced around the bath so that none was more than an arm's reach away.

Six massage tables were set around the edge of the room. Each had curtains that could be pulled closed for privacy. An attendant came out of a door opposite the entrance.

Dark like Hades without the facial hair, the man was very attractive. Wearing only a thin cloth wrapped around the waist, his hairless body gleamed with oil. His full lips looked perfect for cock sucking. "I am Dimitur. May I assist you?"

"Maybe later." As tempting as the young man was, Alex wanted some alone time with Stephen.

Stephen squeezed Alex's hand. A quick glance at his friend revealed a leer of unmistakable interest.

"But don't go too far. We may have need of you later." Never hurt to have a contingency plan. Once back in their room, Alex would have Stephen all to himself. And since recovery wasn't an issue—thanks to his mistress—Alex could have the best of both situations.

Turning to the guard, Alex said, "Please wait outside."

The man's lips drooped from a half smile to pout.

Alex filed his reaction away for future use as he pulled Stephen toward the pool. A desire to please Stephen overwhelmed his need to be alone with the man. He hid a slight smile from him. Stephen certainly seemed to be enjoying the attention. Alex wouldn't interfere.

Once back in his own time, Stephen's carefree sexual exploits would be curbed by the reality of AIDS and the condemnation of a culture so uptight they denounced love as something dirty that needed to be hidden.

Reaching for Stephen's tunic, he helped him shed it. A series of scratches marred his chest. Dirt darkened streaks of blood to black. Faint bruises scattered around his skin. His injured eye had darkened to a full-blown black eye. Red scattered through the white around his iris.

A need to nurse Stephen's wounds pushed aside desire and arousal. His injuries were from his valiant attempts to keep Alex on course with his mission. If only his mistress could hear him in Hades' domain.

Then again, the sooner he found his way to his mistress' side, the sooner Stephen would be gone. Whether stuck in Hades or in the future, Stephen couldn't stay with him.

With his understanding of the culture and religion, he'd fit in without a problem. But his knowledge of the future could be dangerous.

No... Alex ran his fingers across a gash on Stephen's stomach. Stephen had to go. Even staying in Hades wasn't an option. If that happened, maybe Aphrodite could do something to make Stephen forget his time. Drinking from Lethe was usually reserved for shades ready to be reincarnated. But if Stephen forgot his past, he wouldn't remember Alex.

Alex drew a deep breath then let it out slowly. Whatever happened, Alex was fated to lose him. His determination to get him back to his time grew. The least he could do was send him home. But first things first.

After he helped Stephen unwind his loincloth, he led him toward the pool. "Let's get you cleaned up." Alex pressed his hand against Stephen's back. "Go on in and soak a little while I get undressed."

Stephen hissed as he waded into the hot water. Scratches and cuts on his legs stung as the water covered them. In spite of his aches and pains, his cock had already reacted to Alex's tenderness. And the guard and attendant's interest...

Splashing water on his chest, he tested the water on deeper wounds.

He never realized he was such a slut. If Alex hadn't asked them to leave, Stephen would have willingly bent over and taken it from both of them.

A little satisfaction teased his thoughts. Alex wanted him alone, all to himself. That too was a turn-on. Hell, just about everything that had happened to him in the last two days was a turn-on. A return to his old life would be such a letdown after his adventures in fucking.

Stephen ran his fingers over his chest, easing the dirt from his wounds.

Then again, he knew of places around Iraklion where he could find willing partners for all kinds of kink. He didn't have to stay celibate and depressed. He could get fucked and be depressed. His thoughts drew a small snort of laughter.

Water splashed behind him as Alex joined him in the pool. His hands, slick with cold soap, ran across Stephen's shoulders then down his chest. Alex's body pressed against him from behind. His thick cock nestled between his ass cheeks.

Stephen leaned back into Alex. His head dropped on Alex's shoulder as gentle hands traced his wounds, teasing the dirt from his body. "Feels good. You feel good."

Alex's arms tightened around him. His cock pushed between Stephen's cheeks.

"I want you to fuck me." Stephen blurted out the words without thinking.

A soft chuckle huffed breath past Stephen's ear. "I plan to. Here or in bed? I'm easy. Of course, I'd be more than happy to do both."

Stephen laughed. "I'm guessing you have a faster recovery time than I do."

"As a matter of fact...I do." Alex nibbled at the skin just below Stephen's ear. "My mistress has been more than kind in her gifts."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't have a recovery time. If I want, I don't even get flaccid after I've come." His tongue darted out to tease Stephen's earlobe. "If I want, I could fuck you over and over again until you scream for mercy. You wouldn't need anyone else."

Stephen shuddered and his cock grew rigid.

Alex chuckled into Stephen's neck while his hand dipped below the waist deep water then wrapped around his cock. "You like the idea of just me."

His mind too preoccupied for words, Stephen just nodded.

"Or you could have me, the guard and that hot attendant take turns. Each of us fucking you until you scream for mercy." Alex's hand fisted Stephen's cock a few times then let go. He lifted his hand out of the water. Running his fingers across Stephen's lower lip, he whispered, "Or they could take turns with your mouth." His index finger slipped past Stephen's lips. "Fucking your mouth while I slam my cock in your ass."

Stephen almost bit down on Alex's finger as his body jerked with the promise of ecstasy.

"You really enjoyed being bound by Hades and his men, didn't you? I think you like being tied up. Didn't you?"

Instead of answering, Stephen sucked hard on Alex's finger.

"I'll take that as a yes." Alex pulled his finger out a little way then let Stephen suck it back into his mouth. "I could always find Cyrek and Jerzyr. I'm sure they'd love to do you again."

Stephen shook his head.

"No? You don't think they'd like a second chance?"

"First," Stephen mumbled around Alex's finger. "They didn't fuck me."

"Really?" Alex withdrew his finger.

"Almost drowned me by accident. Scared me. I convinced them to come looking for you."

"Then I'm sure they'd love a chance at your ass." Alex pulled Stephen back near the edge of the pool. Dipping his hand in an urn, he slathered the soft soap down Stephen's back. "We need to clean you up first. Then we'll decide who gets to fuck you. Or how many."

Stephen moved around until he could reach the soap. With a handful of the slippery stuff, he began lathering the rest of his body. Skinned knees burned as he washed them clean of dirt. Even pain didn't slow down his out-of-control libido. His cock throbbed with desire. He wanted—needed—sex. He'd always loved the feel of a stiff dick reaming him but something about this world had driven his sex drive into high gear with a definite kink. Somehow he needed more.

Of people watching, of being bound and helpless against other's wishes... Stephen's body tensed with anticipation.

Then there was Alex. Warmth born of affection teased his skin. Alex had caught his attention the first day he walked into the office as an intern. Hard not to. Stephen had dreamed of a golden-haired god for as long as he could remember. When Alex had stepped into his office, Stephen almost came in his pants.

Off-limits, Stephen had controlled his baser urges at work, but his nights had been filled with forbidden ideas and turbulent dreams. However, his dreams were nothing compared to this reality.

Alex's hands joined Stephen's in front. Instead of helping with the washing, his hand slipped down to Stephen's hips. Fingers dug into already-tender flesh then yanked him backward. Alex's thick flesh spread his ass cheeks apart. Pressure teased Stephen's hole.

"I'm going to fuck you first. Hard, fast and no mercy." Alex wrapped his arm around Stephen's neck. His forearm pressed against Stephen's Adam's apple.

"Oh yes. Please." Stephen's words morphed into moans.

Alex twisted Stephen around until he faced a set of stairs. His hands pushed Stephen up one step then another until the warm water was thigh high.

A slight chill pimpled his wet skin. Moving his hand to Stephen's head, Alex clutched a fist full of hair. "Bend over." His voice was low and the words harsh.

Obedying without question, Stephen bent over. His hands clutched the edge of the pool. His body burned with need, trembling with each touch.

"Perfect." Alex traced a finger down Stephen's soap-slippery spine. "Don't move." His words held the tone of a command.

Stephen froze in place, his ass presented and ready just above the thigh-deep water.

Cold oil drizzled down Stephen's crack. Alex's hands gripped his ass. Thumbs pried his cheeks apart then slid down to tease his hole. First one then the other thumb pushed inside him.

His wet body shivered with a combination of a chill in the air and Alex's rough treatment. "Yes. Please. Fuck me." Stephen pressed back, pushing Alex's thumbs deeper.

"I get to decide what we do. And when."

"Yes. Okay. Whatever you say." Blood rushed through his body until his cock was filled to capacity. Hard, aching, waiting for more, expecting more, wanting much more. "Please." Stephen rocked back and forth, trying to push Alex deeper.

One hand disappeared then shocked Stephen with a hard slap on the ass. "Behave yourself. You'll get what's coming to you when I'm ready." The harsh words rang with a sense of authority.

Stephen's body clenched with desire. Another blow from Alex filled his eyes with tears but he didn't want to stop. Heat spread across Stephen's ass.

"Oh yes." A couple of fingers pushed into Stephen and almost at the same time, another sharp slap landed on his ass.

"You like spanking too? You are just full of surprises. Good ones."

Stephen didn't answer but pushed back, impaling his ass on Alex's fingers. He'd never considered spanking. Bondage, yes, but the simple concept of spanking, no. But like all the sexual activities since he arrived in Hades, this one sent his body into aroused turmoil.

"You keep doing that because you want a spanking, don't you?" Alex landed another blow on his ass.

His ass warmed with each hit until his skin burned. His mind looped around thoughts of being tied, bound, whipped and fucked. His subconscious let out hidden kinks because he thought he was dreaming. Now he wasn't sure he could stick the genie back in the closet. Wasn't sure he wanted to.

Pleasure circled through his groin as Alex pressed his fingers against his prostate. "Please..."

Another slap landed on his backside. At least four fingers pushed into his ass, hard and deep, then disappeared.

Alex's cock breached Stephen's ass and slammed home in one stroke. The shock of pleasure mixed with pain robbed him of breath. Stephen gasped for air.

With fingers digging into his hips, Alex slammed Stephen's ass hard and fast.

Stephen took everything Alex gave him and wanted more.

A tight fist circled Stephen's dick. Stephen pumped his hips a few times then sweet release burned through his groin. "Oh gods!" Stephen's body clenched. Every muscle tightened to the point of pain. Pleasure matched the shattering ache of a body used too often with little rest. Tension fled as if running out his fingers and toes, leaving weakness in its path.

Without Alex's strong grip around his waist, Stephen would have ended up face first on the edge of the pool.

Hanging on tight, Alex continued hard, fast strokes, plunging deep into Stephen's body. His grunts kept time for a few strokes then broke cadence. Mumbled words replaced them. Just above a whisper, his words soothed and excited at the same time.

"Gods yes!" With a shout, Alex rode Stephen home. He shoved his cock deep. His arms pulled Stephen up until Alex's smooth chest lined Stephen's back.

"Love you." In the middle of a jumbled rush of words, those two jumped out.

Alex grew still. His rapid breaths punctuated the silence.

Damn... While the outcome of his journey to the past was unknown, Stephen was sure it wouldn't have a fairy-tale ending. One way or another they wouldn't be together. Stephen didn't know which fate would be worse—dying in Hades or going back to his time without Alex. Sadness erased the joy of orgasm.

Suddenly, dying didn't seem like such a bad idea.

Chapter Nine

Alex scratched his chest where Stephen's breath tickled his skin. Without a doubt, Alex had a problem. And it wasn't Stephen's emphatic expression of love.

Love 'em and leave 'em had been part of Alex's nature. Once, he'd had more but after it was over, he swore he'd never get that close to anyone ever again. So far it'd been easy. No one, male or female, had been alluring enough to tempt Alex from his position as right hand to a goddess. As jobs go, Alex had reached the pinnacle. Both in this life and his past. He'd never thought anything could be better than being Aphrodite's right-hand man.

Sex was part of his job. As one of the minions of the goddess of love and sex, people expected him to fuck and flee. As elusive as the gods themselves, their closest servants followed their lead. But Stephen didn't know the rules.

Alex couldn't be blamed for having feelings for him. In spite of everything that had happened, Stephen had done what was needed. Whether fight, fuck or flee, Stephen marched alongside Alex with very little complaint and an enthusiasm Alex rarely saw.

With a soft snort, Stephen lifted his head from Alex's chest. "Whaa..." He took a deep breath. "Alex?"

"Yes. It's me." He ran his fingers through Stephen's tousled hair. "We have a couple more hours. You should get some more sleep."

"Sleep..." Stephen's voice trailed off as he complied.

However tomorrow ended, Alex would lose Stephen. He hadn't lost sight of the importance of the necklace. Nothing could stand in the way of returning the jewelry to his mistress. Tomorrow only had two outcomes. Stephen would either die and be relegated to Hades until his turn to be reincarnated, or he'd be sent home to his time.

Alex couldn't see another way out. His eyes stung with emotion he hadn't felt in centuries. He pulled Stephen closer. Nuzzling the top of Stephen's head, Alex rejoiced in the short hours he had Stephen alone. Even if all he did was sleep in Alex's arms, the warmth of his body comforted Alex.

Stephen inhaled deep, savoring the musky scent of Alex's body. He didn't want to open his eyes. Maybe if he faked sleep the day would pass without disturbing them.

The memory of last night's sex reminded him of his blurted words. The heat of a blush threatened to cover his face.

Alex hadn't said anything about Stephen's admission. And it was an admission. From almost the beginning, Stephen's fascination with the new intern haunted his dreams. Being thrown together in their strange adventure had only solidified his feelings.

But today it would be over. One way or another.

The heavy stomp of footsteps in the corridor signaled the inevitable.

Stephen slipped his arms around Alex for a quick, and maybe final, embrace. "I just..."

"I know." Alex returned his hug with arms so tight it forced breath from Stephen's lungs.

"Whatever happens, it's been interesting. And I'm glad it was with you." Stephen brushed a kiss across Alex's lips.

The door burst open without a knock. Six guards dressed in black tunics with long javelins entered. "It is time."

Stephen ignored the command. Locking lips with Alex, he savored a long, slow kiss. He hoped all the feelings he couldn't explain would come through the single kiss.

"Now." The guard who had spoken before slammed the butt of his javelin on the floor. "Do not keep the judges waiting."

Stephen was pleased when Alex was the last to let go. Maybe Alex had understood his unspoken words.

Clean loincloths were draped over a nearby chair. Stephen didn't remember anyone coming in during the night but he was grateful. All their clothes were still in the bathing room. And more than likely as dirty as they'd left them.

Once dressed in the skimpy attire, Stephen looked for another article of clothing. Unfortunately, he found none. Feeling almost more naked than naked, Stephen nodded to Alex as the guards surrounded them, ushering them out of the room.

Instead of the corridor Stephen remembered, they walked out of the room into a cloud of fog. As they moved forward, the clouds thinned until they stepped into an open field under the cool sun of Hades.

People lined the edges of Stephen's vision. He couldn't quite focus on them. Looking too hard made his head hurt, so he fixed his gaze on the three thrones about fifty yards in front of him.

The guards' posture straightened as they approached the three judges. Even their march grew more formal, synchronizing their steps. They stopped a few feet away from the three formidable-looking men.

Aeacus, Minos and Rhadamanthys sat on thrones of dark stone. Their faces could have been made of the same material.

Stephen dropped to his knees a few seconds before Alex. His heart raced and his throat closed with fear.

Minos glared at Alex. His dark eyes glittered under a hooded brow. "*Mégas Aléxandros.*" He tipped his head slightly.

Stephen jerked his head toward Alex as Minos' words gelled. *Alexander of Macedon? The Alexander the Great? How the hell?*

Minos didn't pause for Stephen's confusion. "Your mistress has been advised of your whereabouts. She corroborated the story of your purpose in serving her. You are

free to go.” He waved an indolent hand in dismissal as his focus turned to Stephen. “Of you, however, she has no knowledge and won’t take responsibility for your fate.”

Stephen’s chest tightened. He tried to remain calm, at least on the outside. The idea of dying had never really bothered him before. What did he have to live for? But faced with imminent death, Stephen changed his mind in a hurry.

“Most gracious king!” Alex moved between Minos and Stephen. “Please allow me to contact my lady goddess and apprise her of my companion and his part in her interests. I’m sure she’ll grant her protection—”

A guard’s hand across his mouth muffled Alex’s attempt to save him. Stephen appreciated the effort but the necklace was all that mattered.

“Silence!” Minos glared at Alex. “Be grateful for your life, Alexander.” He waved a hand toward the guard.

The man released Alex then stepped back.

With another wave of Minos’ hand, the air behind Alex shimmered with a hint of red.

The sound of rushing wind warned Stephen of what came next. The vortex formed just behind Alex. Instinct almost pushed Stephen toward the whirling funnel. Wherever the tornado took Alex would be better than waiting silently to be judged.

Then again, he’d end up without Alex no matter what he did. And if he tried to escape, he could jeopardize what appeared to be Alex’s safe route home.

Stephen remained still, trying to calm his rampaging heartbeat.

On the other hand, Alex moved closer to Stephen, giving him slight hope that the vortex would capture them both.

With a flick of his wrist, Minos killed all hope. A guard grabbed Alex by the back of his loincloth then twirled him toward the red winds.

“Nooooo...” Alex’s cry faded as the vortex disappeared.

Stephen held back his own cry of despair and schooled his face to mirror the placid gaze of his captors. Nothing left but the dying. His throat clogged with emotion and regret. He'd wasted so many years on self-pity. He wished he could have a chance to try again. If his life was a failure, it was no one's fault but his own. Stubborn pride had left misery in its wake.

The gruff face of Minos resembled the image on Cretan coins—curly hair, bearded with a hawkish nose. Slowly, Minos' calm stare melted into something more unnerving. His gaze ran up and down Stephen's body. Lips parted then wetted by a quick tongue.

The transformation seemed artificial. Almost comical. A quick glance revealed the same display of lust on Aeacus' and Rhadamanthys' faces.

A faint whisper teased Stephen's memory. *My mistress has been more than kind in her gifts.*

Would the judges vote in Stephen's favor if he fucked them? Did he want to fuck them?

Stephen let his libido survey the possibilities.

The three judges were all on the burly side and sported beards of various styles. Minos' toga gathered around his waist, leaving his broad furry chest bare. As fair as Minos was dark, Aeacus wore his toga up over his shoulder but low enough to reveal golden chest hair. The last one, Rhadamanthys, wore black leather armor under his robes.

Humor coupled with desire snuck through Stephen's fear. *Bears.* His mind slanted off on a tangent. The three of them would fit in with any bear club in his time. And Stephen wasn't immune to the attraction of the type—heavy-muscled men who prided themselves on their facial hair and furry chests.

Might as well get it over with. "I'm here to be judged, gracious kings. I live to *serve* your will." Stephen's emphasis on serve seemed to work. He ran his hand down to his loincloth then brushed his finger across his crotch.

Minos' face flushed red and his hand dropped into his lap to cover a rising bulge. "I wish to speak to this prisoner in private. We will adjourn until further notice." With a hand gesture at the lead guard, Minos stood.

"I'll come with you." Rhadamanthys bolted from his seat.

Aeacus rose as well. His cock tented his robes.

Another round of hot sex... If it got him out of here, great. If not, he'd go out with a bang. Stephen kept his sigh to himself. He'd rather have the memory of Alex be his last, but if he escaped here maybe he'd see him again. The sudden arousal of the judges left him suspicious. The judges had exhibited no sexual interest in him until a few minutes after Alex left. If Alex had told Aphrodite what happened, she might have interfered with the judges' plans.

"Bring him!" Minos barked the order as he stormed around the thrones with Rhadamanthys and Aeacus following him.

Rough hands dragged Stephen to his feet. Two guards grabbed his arms, lifting him from the ground. They carried him as they hurried after the three judges.

A quick glance confirmed his worst idea. Not only were the judges affected by Aphrodite's spell. The two guards almost reeked of arousal. The thrum of footsteps behind them confirmed others followed.

Can someone be fucked to death? Aphrodite's gifts could have a double purpose to them.

As Minos approached a double doorway, the doors swung open. The three judges scurried through, dropping pieces of clothing as they went.

The two guards carrying Stephen stepped into the room but the doors slammed shut before anyone else could follow.

A small sigh of relief slipped out. His reprieve left him with only five men lusting for his ass.

Minos motioned toward a small stone table with a few bowls and utensils on it. "Clear that." His toga hit the floor, leaving him in a loincloth with a long, thick dick peeking out of the top.

With a sweep of his arm, Rhadamanthys sent everything on the table flying. He'd already lost his robes but left the black leather armor in place. His cock peered out from under the leather strips making up the skirt of the armor. "Put him there and tie him down."

A rippled of need rushed through Stephen. If he survived here, he needed to check out this newfound fetish. Bondage definitely sparked Stephen's interest.

The two guards dropped Stephen on the table facedown. The table was a perfect fit for fucking. He wondered if it had been used for sex before. Did the judges get off on each other between sessions?

His legs dropped off one side, presenting his ass for all comers. His upper chest and shoulders rested on the other side, leaving his head as accessible as his other end.

The guards passed a silken cord under the table. Securing Stephen's hands together under the table, they stood back with their hands on their cocks.

With so many so aroused, Stephen knew both ends would be busy. Oil appeared from somewhere. The cold liquid drizzled down ass. A stiff, cold rod slipped into his hole.

"What..."

Chilled oil filled his passage as the rod pulled out. *Interesting*. His body shuddered from the cold and heat. He was glad Alex had used him so hard last night. He wasn't near as tight as he would have been otherwise. Minos didn't seem interested in much preparation.

A hot cock pressed against his opening. Without hesitation, Minos pushed in the tip of his dick. The crown popped past the tight anal muscle. Oil oozed out, drizzling down Stephen's balls as Minos pushed harder.

Heat flushed through Stephen as flesh filled him. "Oh gods yes..." Lust clouded his mind and chased away fear. The slight pain of entry disappeared as pleasure overwhelmed his body. "Fuck me..."

Minos pulled free then slammed into him again. "More, eh?"

"Yes." Stephen rocked his body to meet Minos' thrusts. "Feels. Good."

"You talk too much." Rhadamanthys waved his cock at Stephen's face. His armor still intact, the scent of sweat and leather added to Stephen's arousal.

"Give it to me." Stephen strained his neck, angling his mouth toward the feast Rhadamanthys offered. His last word was barely out when the judge's thick dick stilled his tongue. Too thick to do more than suck, Stephen let Rhadamanthys take the lead.

Quick strokes plundered his mouth. Stephen strained against his bonds, trying to move to match the rhythm of the two men fucking him. The cord cut into his wrists. The sting added to his ecstasy. Another figure entered his peripheral vision.

Aeacus stroked his dick near Stephen's face.

If his hands had been free, Stephen would have reached for the erect flesh. Helped Aeacus with his not-so-little problem.

Minos' hot dick battered his ass in ever-harder strokes. His groans of pleasure helped fire Stephen further.

He, Stephen Liatos, mere archaeologist from the future, had gods, a goddess and the semi-divine craving his ass, his mouth. Although he was trussed like a turkey and taking a stuffing on both ends, a little surge of power jolted through his body.

With a loud yell, Minos slammed to a stop, grinding his pelvis against Stephen's ass. His hands dug into Stephen's already-bruised hips, pulling him tighter, closer. Falling forward, Minos' brushy beard scratched against Stephen's back. "Damn."

A flood of heat washed through Stephen. His cock ground against the cold table. Need filled him but even with pressure from the table, he couldn't come.

"My turn." Rhadamanthys' cock pulled out of Stephen's mouth.

Stephen didn't have time to catch a breath before Aeacus' dick filled his mouth.

Minos didn't seem to be in any hurry to move but Rhadamanthys insisted.

"Get off. My turn to fuck him." Taller and broader than Minos, Rhadamanthys rocked Minos as he tugged at his shoulders.

"Let go of me. I'm moving." Minos buried his bearded face in Stephen's neck and whispered, "But I'll be back." Then the welcomed weight of him was gone. He dragged his cock over Stephen's ultrasensitive prostate in a single slow pull. Then that too was gone.

The emptiness was almost too much to bear, but he didn't have long to examine regret. Paved with oil and Minos' come, Rhadamanthys pushed into Stephen's ass without any real resistance.

"Damn. He's a fine piece of ass." Rhadamanthys kept his strokes slow, unnerving.

Still bound, Steven couldn't move. With Aeacus' dick plugging his mouth, he also couldn't complain.

"Not a bad mouth either." Aeacus moved back and forth with strokes opposite Rhadamanthys' movement.

The asymmetrical rhythm almost annoyed Stephen. He rocked in small motions, trying to even the pace. He had more men waiting to fuck him. He didn't have time...

A shudder passed over Stephen when his thoughts dwelled on the crowd outside the room. Was this his punishment? Was he already judged and would spend eternity with cocks fucking him, never reaching satisfaction? Was it a curse or endless ecstasy?

He pushed the darker thoughts away and focused on Alex. In the last few days, Stephen's feelings for Alex moved past general lust. Years had passed since he'd loved someone...or thought he'd loved someone. Each time the relationship didn't last. Each time with someone blond and fair, much like Alex. They all looked like Alex. Maybe in some strange twist of fate, he was looking for Alex.

With strangers fucking him from both ends, worrying about a permanent relationship seemed ludicrous. If only...if only he could have escaped with Alex. But what use would that be? Stephen couldn't stay here. And Alex belonged in the past. What would Alexander the Great do in the future?

Thinking wasn't helping. Concentrate on pleasure. Life as a sex slave should have some perks. If only Alex were one of them...

Hard and fast, Rhadamanthys plowed his ass in a fevered rush. Each deep plunge added to Stephen's need. His prostate took a bruising assault. Liquid pooled on the table under Stephen. His cock wept with pre-come. Stephen eased his hips back and forth. His dick rolled against the stone table.

Aeacus' length plunged in and out of his mouth. Bitter come painted his tongue with each stroke. Stephen moaned around the hot flesh.

Almost...

With a flurry of grunts and harsh breath, Rhadamanthys slammed his pelvis against Stephen's ass. His hips jerked as he emptied his come inside him.

Almost...

Stephen clenched his ass around the hard flesh filling him. The pressure teased his prostate but not enough. He flexed his hips down.

Without warning, Aeacus pulled his dick free of Stephen's mouth. "My turn."

"Please..." Stephen mumbled. His cock pressed against the table. "Need to come." Frustration was making him crazy. He had to come.

"Untie him! Turn him on his back." The guards jumped at Aeacus' growl then put their dicks away. One knelt by the table then tugged at the rope. They peeled the rope off Stephen's wrists.

A stinging burn started as soon as the ropes were gone. He hadn't realized he'd been pulling so hard. His body ached all over as the guards rolled him off the table.

Each strained tendon and pulled muscle disagreed with the rough handling, but his cock grew harder.

Grabbing his arms and legs, the guards tossed him on the table. Landing hard, the air rushed from Stephen's lungs. Stephen crossed his arms across his chest as he gasped for air.

Aeacus pushed the guard away from Stephen's legs. His fair skin flushed red and sweat glistened off his face. He pulled Stephen's legs up, and without so much as a hello, he shoved his cock into Stephen's well-used ass.

The change of angle increased the pressure on his prostate. When the first stroke slammed into him, every muscle tensed with anticipation. Ignoring his rope burns, Stephen grabbed his dick. By Aeacus' second stroke, Stephen clenched his hand around his cock. The hard pressure combined with Aeacus' length ramming home again did the trick.

Every muscle and tendon froze as come spurted across Stephen's chest. White come splattered on his neck and chin. His ass tightened around Aeacus' cock. His legs cramped as he twisted them around Aeacus' waist. "Argh!" His throat closed as wave after wave of ecstasy flooded his body.

As the tremors subsided, his muscles went weak and limp. The light around him dimmed. His last conscious thought was of Alex, wishing he could have been with him.

* * * * *

Alex fell onto a glossy tiled floor, shaking from the violence of the vortex. A pair of perfect feet stepped near him.

"Are you well?" Aphrodite's soft voice contained concern. "Did you get the necklace?" Fleeting concern for Alex.

"Yes. I need to get back to Hades. I can't leave Stephen there." Alex struggled to his hands and knees. The necklace in the pouch at his waist cut into his stomach.

"He is of no concern. And with the necklace back in my hands, all is well in our world."

Alex tugged the pouch free, handing it up to his mistress. "He's my concern. He's..."

As she took the pouch, she wrapped her hand around Alex's. Her eyes grew glassy and her gaze seemed to look into nowhere. "I see. Your companion satisfied your carnal lust for men." Aphrodite opened the pouch. The blood-red diamonds fell into her open hand, glittering in the light of Olympus. "For this, you may have your pick of the servants on Olympus for whatever you want. Your companion, however, must be eliminated. He knows far too much to stay here and just enough to cause trouble in the future."

"Please, mistress..." Alex stopped himself. He wasn't one who begged. His pride clashed with his compassion. Or maybe a different emotion... "I...I think I love him."

Eyes as blue as the ocean from which she'd risen searched Alex's soul.

Still on hands and knees, Alex's arms and legs gave out. Sprawled across the cool tile, Alex tried to speak but his lips wouldn't cooperate. Drool drizzled out the side of his mouth as his immovable gaze fixed on his mistress's feet.

As his mistress released a long sigh, Alex's muscles regained strength. He struggled to his knees. "Please, mistress. He is in imminent danger."

She shook her head. "I've made sure his judges have become interested in him for something besides judgment." Crossing the room, she stopped in front of a mirror. Her fingers traced the jewels in the necklace before she put it on. "He cannot stay here. Olympus is for immortals. His knowledge of the future is too vast, too dangerous for him to mingle among mortals. As much as a war between Hephaestus and Ares, your lover's presence could change the future. What would you ask of me?"

She would take his request seriously. Whatever Alex asked, she might grant. He must be sure. But how much time did Stephen have? How much time would

Aphrodite's magic grant him? If he were already judged, sent to Tartarus or even killed and sent on as a shade...

"Lethe. He could drink from Lethe. Stay here with me with no knowledge of his life before."

She turned from her mirror to face Alex again. "And you would want him? With his memory wiped clean, how do you know he would be the same person you fell in love with?" Her smile curled only the slight corner of her lips. Her usually clear eyes glimmered with sympathy.

Alex looked up at Aphrodite's exquisite features. I..." Inhaling deep, Alex closed his eyes. "I don't."

"Besides, he must die before he can drink from the river of forgetfulness. The omniscience given to the living who drink would make him even more of a danger than he is now."

"He helped me get the necklace to you. We didn't end up in Hades by accident. Someone redirected the vortex there. If it weren't for him, I'd probably still be hidden in the depths of the Underworld."

Her gaze narrowed and tiny lines marred her perfect brow. "How do you know this?"

"Hades implied as much but didn't give me any indication of who had interfered."

Aphrodite's face hardened. "Someone from Ares' household?"

"The dark king wouldn't explain further. His only assistance was setting us free."

"The twins." She stormed across the room then back again. Her pale complexion flushed red. "My own offspring would see Olympus in turmoil."

Deimos and Phobos were offspring of Aphrodite and Ares. One of the many proofs of her infidelity, the twins were gods of dread and fear.

"They would take Ares' side against you?"

"They adore Ares and lust for war more than their father. They feed on the harsh emotions a battle brings." Aphrodite stopped in the middle of the room. "And I caught them lurking outside my quarters the day your journey began."

"What? You've known from the beginning the plan was jeopardized?"

"I didn't want to believe. They claimed they'd been drawn to me in my time of need." Her head dipped down, chin almost touching her chest. "I let them flatter me, believing they were merely here to comfort me."

While his mistress was a goddess, she was first and foremost a woman. And a vain one at that. As goddess of beauty and love, she knew she was the most exquisitely perfect woman ever created. Probably ever will be. But she was so gullible to simple flattery.

As much as Alex wanted to scold her like an errant child, he chose his words carefully. She could turn on even one as favored as he. "My lady, as you are free from baser emotions, how could you recognize them in others? No fault of yours for not suspecting your own children. Besides, had you found them out for the rogues they really are, you had no way to reach me in the future."

Aphrodite lifted her head. A beauteous smile made her face glow. "You are so right." She held out her hand to Alex. "Rise, dear Alexander. You are my most faithful servant."

Obedying, Alex scrambled off the floor then took her hand. First kissing the back then the palm, Alex schooled his features into a wide smile. "My most perfect lady, is there any way you would grant my lover a reprieve so I may celebrate your most precious gift of love?"

"He must not remember his past, our future. Nor may he enter Olympus."

Alex ran through several scenarios as fast as he could. The only one that seemed to fulfill Aphrodite's requirement was one Alex dreaded. But it could work, leaving Stephen in his own time and hopefully no memory of how he returned. If Aphrodite

agreed, Alex would return to the future as well. "There may be a way..." If only he could explain the plan to Stephen.

Chapter Ten

Stephen ached all over. The narrow bed in his cell wasn't exactly comfortable to begin with. Add getting fucked by several men for hours, and Stephen was surprised he didn't hurt more.

His sexual escapades had ended with him passing out. At least his part in it had ended. No one had bothered to explain his fate – was he sex slave, prisoner or destined to die?

He had received a reprieve of sorts. He was still alive. Maybe Alex could find a way to get him out of here. Leaning back on the hard mattress, he let thoughts of Alex distract him from the reality of his situation.

"Alexander the Great... Who'd have thunk it?"

Most scholars of Alexander's reign were convinced the warrior king was homosexual or at the very least bisexual. Alex had proven the gay part true. Some of what he'd said made him think bisexual was closer to the truth. Labels didn't matter.

Stephen rolled over to face the wall. He might as well accept his fate. Doomed to be a sex slave was at least alive.

Keys rattled outside the cell. Almost too tired to care who entered, Stephen sat up slowly. The key clicked in the lock and the door squeaked open.

Perseus and Cyrek entered, both with grim expressions.

"I'd say I was glad to see friendly faces but, uh, you two don't look all that friendly."

Cyrek shook his shaggy head, a glimmer of moisture sparkled in his eyes. "Sorry."

"I hate to see you leave." Perseus' hand held the hilt of his sword in its scabbard. "And I wish I weren't the one Alex laid this duty on."

"Duty?" Stephen's throat squeezed tight with fear. He crabwalked up the bed until he crammed his body into the corner. "Alex?"

With a loud rasp of metal on metal, Perseus drew his weapon. "There's no other way. Alex hopes you understand."

"Understand what? That he's sent you to kill me?" Stephen drew his hands up to ward off a blow. Confusion and disappointment welled up. His eyes stung with unshed tears.

Perseus pointed toward Stephen with his glimmering blade. "Cyrek, grab him. I want this as clean and neat as possible. It won't hurt that way."

Moving fast, Cyrek reached the bedside. His large hands grabbed Stephen's wrists.

With his feet free, Stephen kicked as hard as he could. Already-aching muscles protested but adrenaline gave him an extra boost. He wasn't just going to give up, even if this was something Alex wanted. His cooperation ended when Alex was sent back to Aphrodite with the necklace. Alex's betrayal hurt more than his body.

"No!" Stephen screamed as Cyrek rolled him over on the bed. With his arms twisted behind him and Cyrek's massive weight pinning him down, Stephen's only resistance was his screams. "No!"

"I'm sorry." Perseus' words held no comfort.

"Please! No!" A sharp, blinding pain seared through the back of his neck.

"Motherfucker!" Stephen moved away from the grisly sight of his death. Blood soaked the bedding, sprayed the walls. He averted his gaze from the headless torso or the blank stare of the eyes in the head. He pressed his back against the wall. Instead of reassuring solidity, he found a mushy consistency.

Perseus turned toward Stephen. His eyes narrowed as he peered into the shadows of the room. "Stephen?"

Afraid of another attack, Stephen froze on the spot. Another attack? How could he... His body lay a few feet away. The shakes engulfed his body. His knees threatened to give out on him.

But I'm dead...

Cyrek and Perseus both turned in circles, as if searching.

"He has to be here." Cyrek's seeking gaze stopped in Stephen's direction. "Shades always stay near their bodies at first."

Perseus did another full circle. "He'll solidify some soon. Give it a minute."

Shades... Stephen glanced at the gruesome remains of his body. Well, what else would he be? He suppressed a small giggle. This justified all his faith in the old ways and old gods.

But why were they still looking for him? As a shade, they could do no more. Except take him before the judges again. In his current condition, he wouldn't be completely corporeal. He should be able to touch things. His hand pressed against the wall but didn't push through.

Stuck in Hades for who knew how long... *How long...* Some scholars argued of the number of years shades had to wait before reincarnation. Alex said a hundred.

Not that it mattered much. Reincarnation came after drinking from the River of Forgetfulness—Lethe. All of his adventures would be erased. The memory of Alex would be obliterated from his mind—and heart.

Anguish washed through him. In spite of Alex's betrayal, Stephen couldn't keep regret from tossing butterflies through his stomach. Strange how—as a shade—his body could still feel torment. His breath caught in his throat with a gasp.

"There!" Cyrek pointed toward Stephen then rushed toward him. "Come on, you. We need to get to the Plain of Judgment soon."

Stephen pressed against the wall, wishing he would melt through it. "You killed me! What do you plan to do now? Have me thrown into Tartarus?"

"No." Perseus motioned toward the door. "Alex made a deal with someone higher up. I have to get your shade to the Lethe by dawn tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" He didn't know if he wanted his memories erased so soon.

"Come, we'll talk as we walk. Otherwise we'll be late."

Still distrustful, Stephen kept his eye on Cyrek as he followed Perseus. "What kind of deal?"

"You're to be reincarnated as you."

"Do what?" Stephen wasn't sure he heard right as they started down a long hall.

"You will be reborn as you on your birth date three thousand or so years from now. But it's a limited-time offer. We need to get there quick."

Stephen picked up his pace. "Jeez, you couldn't have explained first and killed later?"

So Alex had him killed to get him back to the future. His future. But would Alex be a part of it again? Didn't make sense that he would. Everything would repeat again. But Stephen wouldn't remember any of the past. His past or rather his future. He wouldn't be able to make changes to his life, make better choices about men in his life, about his career. He'd just do it all over again.

"What if I don't want to? No one asked me what I wanted before you chopped off my fucking head."

"You didn't have a choice. And you don't really have a choice now." Perseus flung open the door to the outside. "The pantheon of gods refused to let you stay in the past knowing the future. Too dangerous. And you couldn't be sent back to the future with all your memories intact. So it was this or total obliteration." Perseus took long strides toward the Plain of Judgment.

Keeping up wasn't a problem. Stephen's body was light as air and almost floating although his legs and feet worked at walking.

As before, the three judges sat in their formidable thrones. Their expressions were closer to embarrassed than grim. As if their lapse in judgment yesterday was something they'd rather forget. No one seemed to be able to make eye contact with Stephen. Considering how well they'd gotten to know his ass, they should at least give him a smile. *A kiss goodbye?* Stephen kept his smirk hidden.

Minos spoke in a loud monotone. "We are here to send this shade on its way. He has been judged and found worthy. Perseus, you shall escort him to the River of Forgetfulness." His craggy head dipped in a slight nod. "May your journey be fruitful and without peril."

Unsure of what to do, Stephen bowed. The scene wasn't what he expected. Maybe some recognition of what had happened. Maybe killing someone in Hades wasn't unusual.

When Stephen raised his head, Minos' lips cracked half a smile then went back to stern as he winked. "My grateful thanks, most gracious judges."

"Let's go." Perseus' gruff whisper hovered close to Stephen's ear.

Stephen backed away from the thrones before he turned to followed Perseus. "I'm still a little miffed at you."

"For what?"

"Dude, you killed me!"

Perseus led him toward a pair of horses. "But I did it quick! It didn't hurt, did it?" He grinned as he mounted a huge black horse.

"Well a little warning would have been nice." Stephen grabbed at Perseus' offered hand then climbed up behind him.

"But you would have tried to argue your way out of it, maybe tried to get away. It could have been a real mess."

As if it wasn't. He shuddered at the memory of the blood and his decapitated body.

The giant steed took off at a fast pace. Cyrek followed close. No wind touched Stephen's hair, the ride was as smooth as if they flew. Only seconds—or what seemed like seconds—passed then the big mount pulled up to a halt near a river.

"Lethe," Perseus said as if introducing him. He pulled Stephen close before they dismounted. "Stephen, try not to drink much and think about Alex."

The terse whisper murmured against Stephen's ear didn't tease or tickle. Stephen couldn't feel it at all. Nodding, Stephen slid off the horse.

Hope welled up in his chest. Did this mean Alex would return to Stephen's time? Would it be that easy? With a last glance at Perseus and Cyrek, Stephen waded into the waters of forgetfulness. If only he didn't forget.

* * * * *

Stephen stumbled out of the bar backward. His flapping arms kept him on his feet. Mostly. "I don't need help." He turned, shuffled down the sidewalk, mumbling, "Life sucks. Work sucks. Drinking is good."

"But hangovers aren't."

Jerking to a stop, Stephen glared at the man walking just behind him. "Don't need help." A small burp stretched his words. The taste of ouzo reminded him of his choice of poison.

"Not offering."

"Whadda ya want?" The words slurred over his tongue. The faint glow of a street lamp cast little light on the man. Familiar. "Do I know you?" Stephen leaned forward to get a better look.

"Maybe. In another lifetime." A wide grin set off the stranger's face.

Stephen tried to stop his smile but couldn't. Something about the man made Stephen feel better. "I'm drunk." He shook his finger at the man.

"I know. Remember. I mentioned the hangover."

"Are you drunk too?" Stephen hiccupped. "'Cuse me." Blinking his eyelids several times, Stephen struggled to make out the rest of the man's features. Blond hair? Hard to tell. Too dark. Something familiar.

"Nope." The stranger waved his hand toward the sidewalk. "You live around here?"

"Yeah. Over there." Stephen flapped his hand toward his house. His hand seemed to be too loose on his wrist. He shook his hand again to make sure it wouldn't fall off.

"May I walk with you?"

"Huh?" Blinking hard, he looked at the man again. "Oh sure." Stephen raised his hand as he started forward. "But I don't need help."

A crack in the sidewalk caught his foot. He pitched sideways, bumping into the strange man. The stranger man. Whatever. His arm wrapped around the guy's waist. "Sorry—" Nice waist. Nice muscles. With a sigh, Stephen leaned his head against the broad chest. Smells nice too. "Wha'sh your name?"

"Alex." He pulled Stephen closer, shoving a shoulder into Stephen's underarm. Laughing, he dragged Stephen forward.

"Alex. Alll-ex... Ali...sander. Alexander the Great!" Stephen slipped out of Alex's embrace, stopping in front of him. Giggling, he asked. "Are you great?" He ran his hand down Alex's stomach, stopping at the top of his jeans.

"Well, maybe I'll let you find out." Alex wrapped his arm around Stephen, pulling him along. "When you're sober."

"I can duck frunk." Stephen scowled into the darkness. That's not right. "Fuck drunk..."

"I'm sure you can, but will you remember it in the morning?"

Stephen sniffed. "Pro-bly not." With Alex's help, he turned down the sidewalk to his house. "I live here."

"I know."

Pulling away, Stephen squinted to see Alex's face. "How'd you know where I live?"

"You told me. Back there." Alex pointed toward the bar.

"Oh. Okay." Stumbling a few steps, Stephen pulled his keys from his pocket. "Are you coming in?"

"Sure."

Stephen fumbled with his keys. Too many fucking keys. His job required too many keys. Too many things needed locking up. Like his needs—wants. The jangle of metal hit the wooden porch with a half crunch, half thud. "Shit."

Instead of kneeling, Stephen plopped down on the porch. Easier to figure out which key.

"Comfy?" Alex knelt next to him.

"Yep. Sleepy too." He held up the key ring to the distant street lamp. Look at one key then another. "This is it! I think." Handing the key to Alex, Stephen lay back on the porch. "I'll wait here."

"Very trusting of you." Alex stood then tried the key in the door. "I could be a thief ready to rob you blind." His tone was almost...humorous.

Scowling, Stephen struggled to a sitting position. "Are you laughing at me?"

"Never."

"Are you going to rob me?"

"Nope."

A thrill of desire interrupted Stephen's alcoholic high. "Rape me?"

"Nope. Unless of course you want me to."

The front door opened then the porch light blinded Stephen. He shut his eyes against the brightness. Alex's footsteps circled around then hands grabbed his armpits from behind. "Come on."

Stephen concentrated on his feet, willing them to cooperate with the nice stranger—Alex. Not that he felt like a stranger...

"Which way to the bedroom?" Alex's breath teased Stephen's ear.

"This way." He slipped out of Alex's grasp. Pulling his shirt over his head, Stephen wrestled with the sleeves until he was free. He tossed it toward the couch as he passed.

From behind, Alex slipped his hands up Stephen's chest, teasing his nipples.

"That's nice." Stephen stopped just inside the doorway. Leaning back against Alex, he let out a long sigh. Really nice. Maybe Alex would stick around for a little while. Been awhile since anyone really cared about Stephen one way or the other. Sometimes he felt as if he were a shade of Greek mythology, biding time until reincarnation. Drink from the River Lethe and forget. Sounded good.

The thought sobered him a little. A familiarity rang through his bones. As a believer that the old gods did exist, Stephen was in a very small minority, but something about the old legends and myths... He couldn't help believing.

Alex pressed his body against Stephen's back. His hands dropped to the waist of Stephen's slacks. "Need some help with these?"

"Yeah." A hard ridge pressed against Stephen's ass. Nice size. Stephen closed his eyes. A sense of déjà vu penetrated his foggy brain. Knew Alex from somewhere. Not being able to figure out where was annoying. Thinking too hard was messing up a perfectly good drunk. "Are you staying?"

"Do you want me to?" Alex shuffled them both forward, toward the bed.

"Yes." A niggling thought in the back of his mind warned him of danger. Being around this guy could be bad luck, maybe even get him killed. Killed... Where'd that come from?

Stephen clutched his neck then ran his hand around to the back. The idea triggered a memory of a...dream. Of a blade. Shades wandered through the underworld until their waiting was over. Waiting for reincarnation... A hundred years?

Shaking his head, Stephen let Alex slide his slacks and underwear down his thighs. His cock was at half-staff but ready to be persuaded in spite of his blood-alcohol level.

Alex tugged Stephen until around until he faced him. A smile teased his face. Something comforting about his smile... Stephen leaned in, lips opening to catch Alex's.

"Sit."

Pulling away, Stephen blinked to refocus. "Huh?"

"Sit on the bed." Alex's fingers pushed at Stephen's chest. "I need to get your shoes off."

"Oh." A flush of heat rose on Stephen's chest and neck. He shouldn't have assumed. He sat down on the edge of the bed. His cock wilted a little. Maybe Alex wasn't interested in men...

Alex pulled Stephen's shoes off then worked his slacks over his feet. "What's the matter?"

"Huh?"

"You look like you lost your best friend."

"Nope. Don't have a best friend to lose..." Sad but true.

Hands ran up Stephen's bare legs, fingernails teasing through the thick hair on his calves. "This looks a little forlorn." Alex brushed his hand against Stephen's cock.

The brief touch renewed Stephen's interest. "You like men?"

"Yes. Some more than others." Alex's fingers curled around Stephen's reenergized flesh.

"You like me."

"Very much."

Stephen leaned back, his arms behind him to support his torso. "But I don't know you."

"You did. In another lifetime."

Just his luck to get the crazy guy. Hot crazy guy, yes. "Where did we meet?"

"At the museum."

"My museum?" Stephen reined in his sodden brain and focused his bleary gaze on Alex. The light behind him shadowed Alex's face. "When?"

"Tomorrow."

Tomorrow. A new intern was arriving tomorrow. Stephen needed to be sober for the new guy's orientation meeting. "How could I meet you tomorrow when I met you today?"

"Do you dream about places and people you've never met?"

Strange question. Stranger guy. One of the reasons Stephen buried his head in a bottle was dreams he couldn't block out. Dreams of a blond man, of the gods... And lots of hot sex. Definitely not his real life. "Sometimes. Everyone does."

Alex leaned over to the lamp on the bedside then flicked it on. Light flooded his face. "Do you remember me?"

A cold shudder whipped down Stephen's spine. "You!" The face was from his dreams. Dreams he'd had most of his adult life. He'd never kept a relationship for very long because he kept looking for this man.

"Now do you remember me?" Alex's grin spread wide, carving dimples into his cheeks.

"How? Why?" Stephen ran his fingers down the side of Alex's face. Light stubble. Felt real.

"Tomorrow. We'll talk about everything tomorrow." Alex's grin softened as he leaned toward Stephen.

The lightest touch of lips in the briefest of kisses left Stephen hungry for more. His alcohol-soaked brain warned him of hallucinations. Maybe he was already asleep and this was just another dream. He'd wake alone, hung-over and reeking of ouzo.

"Not a dream. Not this time."

"How'd you know what I was thinking?" Stephen pulled away from Alex's closeness. His breath was almost as intoxicating as the alcohol.

"Your face is so easy to read. For me anyway." Alex lifted off the floor then followed Stephen's retreat.

Another kiss, not quite so gentle, stopped Stephen from saying anything. Alex's mouth molded against his, soft and hard at the same time. A sweet peace settled in Stephen's stomach. All the years of looking...could his search be over?

He'd always been attracted to blond men. Of Alex's build. Of Alex's coloring... No. Couldn't be this easy. Life didn't play that way. Not for him.

Alex pulled away from Stephen's mouth. Resting his forehead against Stephen's, Alex whispered, "I thought I'd never see you again. Or you wouldn't want me."

"Wouldn't want you?" Alex looked like a Greek god descended from Olympus. How could anyone *not* want him?

"You never know how life will twist and turn. This lifetime, you might have found what you were looking for without me."

What was he looking for? Someone who looked like Alex and a necklace everyone said didn't exist. If Alex really wanted him, he'd have half of his life's wishes come true. "I...yes...you look like someone—probably someone I've met before." He didn't want to admit he'd dreamed about him. Desire twisted through him. Must be a dream.

Alex leaned in, forcing Stephen down onto the bed. "So you'd let me do this." He pulled back until his mouth was level with Stephen's cock. Alex captured the head, suckling the tip.

"Oh shit." Stephen dug his fingers into the mattress. If this was another wet dream, it ranked as one of the most vivid. Need flushed heat across his chest, rising up to his neck.

"Like that, eh?" Alex stroked Stephen's length with a short, easy motion.

"Yes." Stephen exhaled hard then tried to relax. If he was going to have a wet dream, he might as well enjoy it. And this was his favorite kind of dream. Just him and

his blond Adonis. Some of his dreams were quite kinky. Multiple partners, people watching.

Alex stood up.

"Don't leave yet!" Stephen rose up from the bed, swaying with dizziness. "Please."

"I'm not leaving. Just getting comfortable." Alex yanked his shirt over his head then tossed it on the floor near Stephen's slacks.

"Oh yes..." Stephen fumbled with Alex's button and zipper. No underwear. Just like his dreams. He yanked the denim down Alex's hips, leaving them to drape off his thighs.

Alex's thick length waved in front of Stephen's mouth, hard and ready to go. Unable to resist, Stephen swiped at the tip with his tongue. The salty taste exploded on his tongue. "Oh yeah..."

Stephen wrapped an arm around Alex's lean hips, pulling his groin closer. He fluttered quick kisses along the seam between Alex's hip and thigh. "Want you." Stephen reached the base of Alex's cock. His tongue teased the wrinkled scrotum.

"I want you too." Alex's hands rested on Stephen's head. His fingers flexed in a gentle massage.

Sucking Alex's length into his mouth, Stephen took him deep aided by a yank of Alex's hips. His head spun with Alex's musky scent. The salty taste and smooth texture of his cock seemed too familiar. Stephen felt as if he'd come home after a lifetime of searching.

Working Alex's hips, Stephen set a quick rhythm, fucking his face.

"Damn." Alex curled his fingers into Stephen's hair. "Maybe you should get drunk more often."

Stephen didn't miss a stroke as he hummed a laugh. It was just another dream. Life didn't like him and wouldn't be so kind as to send him the perfect man. But it was a damn good dream.

"Slow down." Alex's fingers tightened on Stephen's hair then tugged. "We have all night."

Releasing Alex's cock, Stephen leaned his face against Alex's stomach. Dizziness forced his eyes closed. "Uh-huh..."

"Come on." Alex pulled away. His hands dropped to Stephen's shoulders. "Crawl up on the bed."

"You'll stay?" Of all nights to get blotto...

"Yes." Alex backed up the soft word by crawling under the covers. He held up the edge of the blanket. "Come here."

Stephen slid into the spot next to Alex. A strong arm curled under his neck, pulling him close to the warmth of Alex's body. "Oh yeah..." He rested his head on the broad chest. A heartbeat thrummed deep in his chest, singing like a lullaby for Stephen's weary, sodden head. "You'll be here tomorrow?"

"Yes. Forever." Alex snuffled Stephen's hair then planted a soft kiss on his head. "And I'll show you something in the ruins. Something you'll like—a lot."

Ruins? Another quirk of his subconscious—dreams of the stupid necklace he'd searched for most of his professional life. In his dreams, his golden lover showed him the way to the necklace...

Alcohol and the late hour forced his mind to shut down further speculation. The heat of Alex's body warmed Stephen's soul. Strong arms held him tight as sleep settled on him.

"I love you."

Stephen murmured a soft response. "Love you too..." His eyes drifted shut. Looks like tomorrow would be different.

About the Author

By day, Shayla Kersten is a mild-mannered accountant. By night, she's a writer of sexy romances. Torn between genres, Shayla writes erotic stories about hot heroes and their sexy women as well as hot men and their passionate heroes.

A native of Arkansas, Shayla spent four years in the Army as a missile specialist, stationed in Germany and Oklahoma. After her enlistment was up, she spent eleven years in New York City taking a bite out of the Big Apple. Even her love of theater and the nightlife of the big city couldn't cure terminal homesickness for the Natural State. In 1995 she returned to her roots in Arkansas.

Shayla now divides her time between her mother, her spoiled-rotten dogs, her dratted day job and her obsession – writing. And no, her mother doesn't know what she writes. That's between Shayla, her dogs and her readers!

Shayla welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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