

Excerpt: The Darkest Prison

PROLOGUE

Reyes, once an immortal warrior for the gods, now possessed by the demon of Pain and living in Budapest, entered his bedroom. He was drenched in sweat and panting from the force of his workout. Because he could not experience pleasure without physical suffering, the burn in his muscles had excited him. Was exciting him.

As always, his gaze sought out his woman and he palmed the blade they preferred to use during their loveplay. She was sitting at the edge of their big bed, lovely features drawn tight as she studied the canvas in front of her. A canvas she'd propped on an easel and lowered so that she had a direct view. Blond hair fell to her shoulders in wild disarray, as if she'd tangled her fingers through the thick mass multiple times, and she was chewing on her bottom lip.

Sex could wait, he decided then. She was troubled, and he would be unable to think of anything else until he'd solved this dilemma for her. Whatever it was. He sheathed the blade.

"Something wrong, angel?"

Her eyes lifted and landed on him, worry in their emerald depths. She offered him a small smile. "I'm not sure."

"Well, why don't I help you figure it out?" Anything that bothered her, he would dispatch. No hesitation. For her happiness, he would do anything, kill anyone.

"I would like that, thank you."

"Shall I shower before I join you?"

"No. I like you just how you are."

Darling woman. But he didn't like the thought of dirtying her pretty clothes. He quickly grabbed a towel from the bathroom and rubbed himself dry. Only then did he settle behind his woman, his legs encasing hers, his arms wrapping around her waist. Breathing deeply of her wild storm scent, he rested his chin in the hollow of her neck and followed the direction of her gaze.

What he saw surprised him.

It shouldn't have. Her paintings were always vivid. As the All-Seeing Eye, an oracle of the gods and one of their most cherished aides, she could peer into heaven and hell. And did, every night, though

she had no control over what she witnessed. Past, present, future, it didn't matter. Every morning, she painted what she'd seen.

This one was of a man. A warrior, clearly. With that muscle mass, he had to be. A gold collar circled his neck, cinching tight. He was on his knees, legs spread. His arms rested on his thighs, palms raised. His dark head was thrown back, and he was roaring up at a domed ceiling. In pain, perhaps. Maybe even fury. There was blood smeared all over his chest, seeping from multiple wounds. Wounds that looked as if his skin had been carved away.

"Who is he?" Reyes asked.

"I don't know. I've never seen him before."

Then they would reason this out as best they were able. "Was he from heaven or hell?"

"Heaven. Definitely. I think he's in Cronus's throne room."

A god, then? A few months ago, Titans had overthrown the Greeks and seized control of the divine throne. So, if this man was in Cronus's throne room, chained up, hurt, and Cronus was leader of the Titans, that must mean the warrior was a Greek. A slave who had been punished, perhaps?

"You saw only this image?" Reyes asked. "Not what got him to this point?"

"Correct," Danika said with a nod. "I heard him scream, though. It was..." She shuddered, and his arms squeezed her in comfort. "I felt so sorry for him. Never have I heard so much rage and helplessness."

"We can summon Cronus." Cronus wasn't too fond of Reyes and his fellow Lords of the Underworld—the very men who had opened Pandora's box, unleashing the evil from inside. The men who had then been cursed to carry that evil inside themselves. But the god king hated their enemy, the Hunters, more, because Danika had seen Galen, the leader of the Hunters, chop off Cronus's head in a vision. Now the god king was determined to kill Galen before Galen could kill him. Even if that meant soliciting the aid of the Lords. "We can ask him if he knows this man."

A moment passed while Danika pondered his suggestion. Finally, she sighed, nodded. "Yes. I'd like that." Then she surprised him by turning to him and offering the sweetest smile he'd ever seen. Well, all of her smiles were that way. "But it's too early in the morning to summon anyone, and besides, I think you had other things on your mind when you entered the room. Why don't you tell me about them?" she suggested huskily.

He was rock hard in seconds—that's what she did to him. "That would be my pleasure, angel."

She pushed him to his back, smile widening. "And mine."