



With
HADES



Yolanda Sfetsos

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WITH HADES by Yolanda Sfetsos
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Yolanda Sfetsos

Dear Reader,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for downloading this little eBook I've put together.

WITH HADES was formally known as UNDERWORLD CONNECTION and was published as part of the Aphrodite's Apples Masquerade anthology Volume 3. Since Aphrodite's Apples closed down, this little tale about Hades and Adora has been sitting on my hard drive doing nothing. So, I thought it was about time to share it with anyone who's interested in checking it out.

I really enjoyed writing this story. Hades is one of my favorite gods from Greek mythology, and Adora seemed a worthwhile heroine for him. She's got a few problems and her life is surrounded by darkness, but Hades is just what she needs.

I'd also like to point out that any mention of 'Arcadia Island' and the 'Masquerade Ball', which Adora and Hades attend, are both parts of an Aphrodite's Apples creation. I just didn't edit the story again. This is exactly how the story was published when it was included in the anthology.

Well, I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Cheers,
Yolanda Sfetsos

With HADES
REVIEWS
For *Underworld Connection*

“Yolanda Sfetsos paints a stunning portrait of the Hades’ abode in *Underworld Connection*. Her vivid images bring this often forbidding world to light. Adora is the perfect lover for Hades, as she is a woman now obsessed with death. What better choice for her than the God of Death himself? Yolanda Sfetsos immerses readers into a darkly sensuous world as *Underworld Connection* reaches its dramatic conclusion.”

Anne

CK²S Kvips and Kritiques

--O--

“I was particularly fascinated with Ms. Sfetsos version of Adora’s hell – one of her own paintings. In this way, Ms. Sfetsos makes pain, loss and pure hell very personal! I was impressed with her courage in tackling the subjects of death covered here.”

Cimorene

ENCHANTING REVIEWS

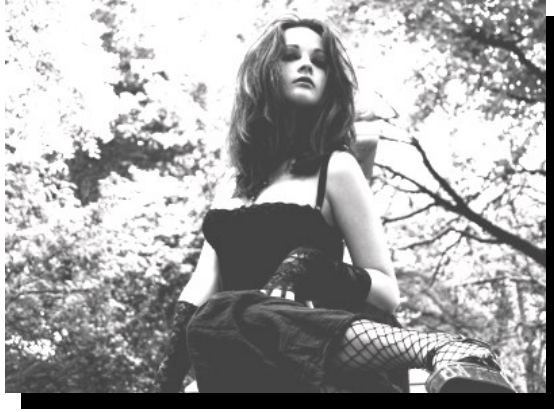
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“This author brings forth both a visual description of the darkness in black and red along with Adora's emotions, that the reader will travel this underworld with her and Hades. The reader will have their heart racing in being so consumed by the sadness within Adora as well as tears to the very end.”

Cathie

EURO-REVIEWS

Yolanda Sfetsos



Arcadia Island... the name whirled around inside her mind as Adora took in the scenery. The golden sand beside the ferry docking station shimmered under the low-riding sun, an array of pigeons squawking away as they flew above the glistening aqua-blue ocean. The waves lazily lapped at the shore, almost forcing her to yield to an impulse to run down the length of the wooden docks until her feet were engulfed by the water.

The exhilaration swept through every one of her senses, setting the fire of excitement deep in her stomach ablaze. Somehow, she knew that on this occasion, anything was possible.

Adora took a gulp of the salt-scented air into her lungs, feeling the wind tear strands away from her upswept hairstyle. Adora wasn't the type of girl who enjoyed dressing up, but for this night she'd made an exception. Her black, straight hair was pulled away from her face in a fancy style she'd paid more than enough for. Her curvaceous body was wrapped in an ebony gown – tight bodice, low cleavage – that flowed down the swell of her hips and trailed on the ground below. It had been tricky getting off the ferry. And even now, making her way towards the Plantation House at the end of the wooden path, she tried to keep the hem from snagging on her heels.

The Masquerade Ball was waiting for her.

A certain buzz from the people walking ahead and behind set her blood on fire to match her stomach. Had they all received the invitation under such mysterious and random circumstances? No one had spoken to her on the ferry ride over, everyone perhaps too nervous to speak, content to have their faces partially hidden from the other strangers.

She didn't mind; small talk was a waste of time anyway.

Adora's mask was still tightly in place. She'd chosen a synthetic material that with only two clips was securely held to her hair. It was saving her the task she'd spotted falling to other people, of having to hold the mask up with a stick every time they crossed paths with someone.

With HADES

After all, wasn't that how these kinds of events worked?

She wasn't sure.

Adora Marks hardly ever attended parties. She was a homebody who'd wandered out to her mailbox one day and pulled out the scroll-like invitation for this event. It was the day of an anniversary that practically tore her heart to shreds. If she hadn't agreed to come here, Adora would be drowning her sorrows in some other drug-induced way. But the only true friend she had in the world convinced her to attend.

"What do you have to lose after all the pain you've suffered?" she'd asked with a small smile.

Adora had simply shrugged, smiled and thanked Pat for dropping her off in time for the ferry.

She took another deep breath into her lungs. Adora was sure she'd never breathed in so deeply in all of her life. Ignoring the enchanting way the strands of her hair tickled the side of her chin, where the mask didn't reach, she stepped forward, one high-heeled foot after the other until she was standing inside the most exquisite place she'd ever seen. There were high lavish ceilings painted or coated in gold, flashy chandeliers that probably cost more than her house, crystal goblets sitting along the side tables covered in exotic foods and drink running the length of the large hall.

She'd only ever seen this type of thing in movies, fantasy movies where a princess attended a ball. That's when a sigh escaped through her lips. This was her one and only time to feel like a princess in a make-believe world where everything that haunted her life was left off shore.

A dark princess dressed in black, trying to lose the darkness and gain some color... if only for one night.

She swallowed the excitement, feeling the buzz tighten the inside of her stomach. As she passed by several people Adora offered them a shy but happy smile, always returned with a nod by the men and a chuckle by the women. What was she doing here? She didn't belong. Her world was more about darkness, had been for as long as she could remember. These people with happiness in their lives, riches in their bank accounts and bright auras to match, felt like a fairytale.

Her favorite subject was death, not fairytales.

So many feared it, but she was fascinated. It showed in every one of her paintings. Crimson and black were always splashed on the canvas in a multitude of scenes, with blood and death being the winning combination that caused her bank account to swell temporarily every time she sold one. People were as intrigued with the subject matter as she was. Most just chose

Yolanda Sfetsos

to avoid it because of the pain, grief and darkness it stirred inside one's soul.

She knew all about that and chose not to shy away from it—

“Excuse me,” a charming male voice to her left called as she wandered past in awe. She didn't know where to go, or what to do. It wasn't like there was a guide to help them along. Each person was just free to wander inside this magical and foreign setting.

Adora cleared her throat, turning her attention to the man on her left who had spoken. He stood in front of the buffet table, goblet filled with clear liquid, a slight smoky haze above the rim held in his long fingers. The fingers led to an equally long hand. The sleeves of his silky black shirt were rolled up to his forearms. A grey mask adorned his face, which made him look like a bird because the covering over his nose stretched out like a wicked beak. His dark eyes peered from inside the eye holes, a luscious mouth spread into a friendly smile. His face was pale, only made lighter because he was dressed in black from head-to-toe. Except for the shirt being open to his chest, with a hint of dark hair peeking through, everything else about him evoked the term *somber*.

The stranger looked really good and carried himself with a certain grace she'd never noticed on a male before. His eyes hadn't even wandered to her cleavage yet. She was surprised. With a plunging neckline like the one on this ebony gown, others would've been squawking as loud as the seagulls outside.

He was several inches taller than her – even in these heels – his narrow waist and broad shoulders finishing off the dream-like qualities of his looks.

“Can I get you a drink?” he asked with his rich, throaty voice.

She shook her head. Being this disoriented, it would be a mistake to drink *anything*. A flash of the incident at the gallery the month before teased her brain into submission. That night had ended in total chaos. Adora would have to stay the hell away from *that* place for a while. A real shame, but she'd ruined her own reputation there after only a few drinks. Alcohol and Adora just didn't mix very well.

“Can I get you something to eat, then?”

She shook her head again. Her stomach was in knots; eating would do nothing to unravel them. The situation, surroundings and the intoxicating effect this man was having on her, were making her more lightheaded than she liked to be.

“Can I grant you a wish or desire then, my fair Adora?” he asked, lowering his voice, with a downward tilt of his head. His dark hair was gelled back against his scalp, neatly tucked behind his ears.

Her eyes widened. “How do you know my name?”

With HADES

“Every host knows the name of their assigned guest. What type of deities would we be if we didn’t?” he said with a luscious twist to his smile. His right hand lifted the goblet to his lips as he downed the remainder of the smoky liquid. He kept his eyes on hers, dumping the glass goblet over his shoulder.

She winced, waiting for the glass to shatter. But nothing happened. Once the glass was over his shoulder, it simply vanished.

Adora had no idea what type of illusions this mysterious man could conjure up. She’d seen a few cool ones on the internet, but always doubted their validity. And what the hell was he talking about? Though, as long as she could keep that intoxicating voice rolling off his tongue, she was prepared to keep him with her. It wasn’t like there were other *deities* waiting to snatch her up.

“So you’re one of the hosts, then?” she asked with a small chuckle. If anything, she was willing to play along. It could turn out to be fun for a while.

He nodded. “My name is Hades.”

Adora laughed this time. She couldn’t stop herself. “Right, your name is Hades, as in the God of the Underworld? That’s very cute, matches the decor.”

The smile didn’t leave his face.

“Okay, *Hades*, maybe you can tell me how I managed to swing this invitation. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m not exactly some exotic creature, like many of the other people here,” she said, looking over her shoulder and admiring a petite blonde to her right. That’s when Adora noticed something peculiar. Almost everyone in here was coupled with someone, and occasionally looking around like she was.

“You are as exotic as they come, Adora,” he said, holding out his right hand. “Now, if you care to join me, we will go somewhere else together. To a place more suited to your preferred surroundings.”

She stared at his elegant slim hand, admiring the perfect manicure and length of his fingers. As enticing as this man was, Adora hadn’t come here to be taken out to someone’s car for a quick and easy screw. If she wanted one of those, she would’ve stayed home and waited for one of her regular booty calls.

“I don’t think so, buddy.”

His hand was still outstretched, but the smile was gone when he spoke. “Why not?”

“Look, don’t get me wrong, you’re hot and all that, but I didn’t come here for another one night stand to leave me feeling empty and dirty. I can get one of those anytime,” Adora answered, with a sly shrug. “I came here to have a good time, forget the usual crap in my life. And I’m sorry to say that cheap sex is always on my itinerary.”

Yolanda Sfetsos

The frown darkened; his lips were in a rigid line. "I wasn't implying that we—"

"Right—"

"Adora, why did you really come here tonight, tell me that."

"I told you, because I want to have a little fun. Besides, I had nothing better to do," she answered.

Hades shook his head. "No, you came here because you knew this was the only place in this world that could make your dreams come true."

"Look, buddy, you're really starting to creep me out." She turned on her high heels, ready to walk away from this absurd conversation, when Hades captured her left hand in his. Equilibrium failed her; nausea stirred as the surrounding hall around them shook and disintegrated. The other invitees stood against a black background, frozen in time, seconds before shattering into a million pieces. Darkness filled her vision at every corner as she clung to the only real thing in this nothingness, the stranger's cold hand.

Adora tried to turn towards him, but couldn't move. Her breathing was shallow, just enough to keep her lungs satisfied, as the stifling heat took over from the cold for several seconds and then dissipated again. Her feet were falling through the dark, nothing but this man to anchor her existence. What was going on?

Heart hammering inside her chest, she closed her eyes to the glowing darkness and the biting nausea rising up her throat. Adora was convinced this was death. That inexplicable place she'd center-pieced in so many of her artworks had finally claimed her. Yet, the happiness she thought she'd feel at the end of the tunnel wasn't stirring inside her. There was only harsh cold.

"You can open your eyes now, Adora," Hades whispered in her ear, the weight of his hand still against hers.

She clung to him, opening one eye after the other before turning to face Hades. "Where are we?" And as soon as the words left her mouth, Adora doubled over and threw up what little she'd consumed during the day.

Hades still held her hand, massaging her back, murmuring that everything would be all right. He helped her straighten, moved a little closer to help steady her quivering body. Adora's legs felt like rubber bands, bent out of shape and unable to hold her up.

But the stranger was beside her. She took small, shallow breaths to steady her system after she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. The aroma was different in here. A scent that coated her throat until it felt hoarse. The dryness of this place, and the temporary sickness that made her vomit was slowly fading.

"In the place you have longed to be a part of," he answered, taking her other hand and

With HADES

forcing her to face him.

Adora looked to her left and right; there was nothing but rock around them. Dark rock that looked as if it were painted by charcoal – and at the thought her nerves tightened. The spiky rocks above, the uneven ones below, the dark water with a permanent smoky haze only a few steps away. This was a place she'd painted.

They stood inside one of her paintings.

“I didn't want this...”

“Your body and mind tell a different story,” Hades said, turning both of her wrists over, exposing the underside.

She didn't need to look down to know what he was referring to. The scars of her many attempted suicides were indelible. Vertical reminders of the times Adora tried to join the rest of her family. Why had they been taken so soon – mum, dad, brother and sister? They all had so much to live for, but she'd been the only one who survived. Spent months lying on a hospital bed, somewhere between Heaven and Hell, but still made it out alive while everyone she cared about was six feet under. Adora could still hear her brother and sister yelling, crying as the flames inside the car bit into their flesh as she fought to unbuckle their seatbelts. By that stage it had been too late for mum and dad.

She couldn't save her siblings either.

After waking for the first time, she'd cried for days. And when she got home, to her lonely apartment, she dyed her red hair the darkest shade of black she could find. Adorned herself only in black clothing and dark makeup, and lost herself in her art. People just assumed she was a Goth girl, but she was a young woman permanently scarred by death. And so, her adventure to reach its depths had begun.

And led here... with this man who called himself Hades, magically dragging Adora into one of her paintings.

“I painted this place after...” she whispered, unable to finish the sentence. A single tear rolled down her left cheek. “And I don't need a reminder of my suicide attempts. You could never understand what I've been through.”

“But I do, and it is why you received that invitation,” Hades said with a small nod. The mask was still over his face.

Hers remained in place too. The queasiness in her body was suddenly subsiding. And when he lifted a hand to catch the tear before it rolled off her face, she felt better.

Hades closed his palm around the tear, other hand still clinging to her. “Now Adora, tell me what your greatest desire is.”

She shook her head. “Why did you bring me here? Where is here anyway?”

Yolanda Sfetsos

“You tell me; you painted this place, right? The connection you share with the Underworld isn’t just an imagined notion,” Hades said in his casual drawl.

Adora took a deep breath, coughing as the stench of sulfur stung her lungs. “No, that’s not possible,” she managed, stopping for another bout of coughs. “Are you telling me I’m in the Underworld?”

Hades nodded slowly and precisely, waiting for the truth to sink in.

“But how... why...?”

“This is where you’ve tried to come so many times, isn’t it? If not through your paintings, then through the quest for self-harm.” His eyes were dark and shiny, peering inside hers with sadness.

Adora shook her head. “No, take me back.”

“Is it me you were trying to connect to?” Hades asked, taking a step forward. The length of his body was almost touching hers, sending a warm chill of excitement coursing through hers. One cold hand was suddenly under her chin, sweeping it upwards so their eyes were level.

Adora noticed the desire burning in his eyes for the first time. “No,” she answered, though her body was now quivering for another reason.

“Then what?” his breath washed over her face as he asked the question. Hades closed his eyes, leaning downward until his lips pressed against hers for a sensual touch like none she’d ever experienced.

Her eyes closed involuntarily, the hand still in his clenching harder so he wouldn’t step out of this intimacy. And that’s what he was offering. Even after all the sexual encounters in her life, Adora never felt a sense of true intimacy with any of her partners. There was only detached sex, a physical outlet. No emotion. Why allow emotion out when it resulted in loss? In death... it happened to her family. Even to her first real boyfriend...

Hades moved his lips off hers, barely touching but still connected. “Death surrounds you, Adora, it always has and it always will. You will never be able to get close to a living person without it resulting in death. You were meant to be here, sit beside me in the Underworld that has called you since birth.”

“That’s not true,” she whispered back, wanting his mouth back on hers again. At least then she could relax and he’d shut up about impossible things that just didn’t happen in the real world. But what was the real world anyway?

People didn’t die because of her, did they?

Hades’ warm lips were back on hers, tongue probing inside her mouth until it connected with hers.

With HADES

She shuddered, the electrifying feeling surging through her system, caressing her heart. And suddenly his arms were around her, no more room left between them. Hades held her as if he'd never let go. All Adora wanted was to give in to the comfort. Move her lips to the harsh pace he was setting. Allow the hand that caressed her waist to move higher until it cupped one of her breasts.

"All you have to do is say the words..." he whispered in her ear, taking the lobe into his mouth, sending delicious sensations along her skin.

But as good as he made her feel Adora knew that to say the words would be a mistake. Her body was betraying her, chest heaving so much she thought her breasts might commit the ultimate betrayal and slip into his eager hands on their own.

"I can't," she returned.

Hades was pulling the length of her ebony skirt upwards, with his fingers. She allowed the motion, nipping on his bottom lip with a smile plastered to her lips. But when his cold hand ran up her inner thigh, Adora pulled away. It was an unsteady step that had the heel of her shoes catching between the harsh rocks below. Yet, she somehow managed to steady her stance.

That's when she noticed the gondola sitting on the edge of the water, the river that would lead her to the belly of the Underworld. *Oh my God, this really is Hades!* she thought. Her eyes widened when Charon took his position at the top of the gondola. He was a wretched, rail thin man with a large paddle in his hands. He looked more like an animated corpse than a man, and she shivered when the hollow black eyes settled on hers.

"Adora, let's not keep Charon waiting," Hades said, holding out one of his hands in an inviting way.

She shook her head.

"Continue the journey with me; let's cross the river together. Become the Goddess that sits beside me." The invitation, falling from those luscious lips, made her sway.

Adora shook her head again, trying to fight the lure he used so well. "Don't you already have a Goddess?"

He sighed, made a motion as if to dismiss the rumors.

"Persephone grows tired of me. She doesn't spend all her time here anyway. It gets a little lonely. Besides, she's taken up with someone else at the moment...I've been searching for a replacement. And you, my dear," he made a dramatic sweep of her body with his hungry eyes, before continuing, "are perfect for the role. Never have I met anyone so in tune with death. Why, the reaper should fear you."

"As flattering as that all sounds, I think I'll still refuse."

"Can I tempt you with food? Surely you're hungry by now?" Hades pulled out a large

Yolanda Sfetsos

red fruit from thin air. It was laid out in between his palms.

She recognized it, was all too familiar with the legend. “I don’t think so, I know what that is—”

“Damn Persephone and Demeter, telling the world about the Law of Abode. You have no idea how hard it is to tempt anyone with pomegranate nowadays,” he said with a sigh. The red fruit tumbled from his grip, disappearing before it reached the rocky ground.

Adora wrapped her arms around herself. “I don’t understand why you need to tempt anyone in here. You’re a mighty hot guy—”

“God—”

“Yeah, alright, whatever, but why don’t you try scoring your own chick for once?”

“That is precisely what I’m doing.”

“But you just tried to trick me,” she said.

“Surely you know the loneliness of isolation, Adora.” Hades took a step forward. He was standing in front of her again, the back of one finger tracing the curve of her face. “You’ve lost everything and everyone... I thought the Masquerade Ball would allow you to shed all the inhibitions and troubles in your life. I thought I could take you to my abode, we could become one and happiness would find you again.”

“What about my family,” she choked on the words. The admission of her greatest desire tore at her heart. Several tears slid beneath the mask. The wretched mask – she’d almost forgotten it was still on her face. Adora reached up absently, ready to tear it off, but he caught her hand.

“No, do not remove it. It is the mask that allows you to see the magic I can weave. Without the mask, you will wake on a ferry, back home. Nothing from this adventure will remain in your head,” Hades warned.

“So you’re telling me that I can pull this off at any time and I’ll be back in the real world?”

He nodded, dark eyes begging her not to do it.

Her free hand shook at the possibility. What better way to leave all this nonsense, the reminder of the pain in her life? If that’s all it took to stop the absurdity from his mouth, then she would rip it off. But not now; when he least expected it.

Hades closed the distance between them and covered her mouth with his, kissing her so deeply she couldn’t breathe. His mask tickled the top of her nose, bending naturally as if it were a part of his face. Her lips didn’t care though; as the air was torn from her lungs, she responded. Her body was all fired up, ready to take the next physical step this hunk of a man wanted. Her

With HADES

skin was on fire, wanting his hands all over it. As if in response, Hades' hands roamed over the top of her bodice, down the line of her stomach, and stopped at her waist, his mouth never leaving hers. He made a sweep to capture her in his arms, as if they were bride and groom entering their bedroom for the first time. And Adora wanted it, fought the disorientation by closing her eyes, and allowing his strong arms to sweep her off her feet and dump her inside the gondola .

Thoughts were a jumble inside her brain. All that mattered was the physical.

Her eyes snapped open, her back pressed against the velvet cushion of the lavish seat beneath. Hades instructed Charon, and the old man looked at him with watery eyes, palm extended as if waiting for something.

“You procedural fool,” Hades cursed under his breath as he flicked his fingers.

A dark round coin appeared in Charon's palm. His dried up lips curved into an obscene smile. The ferryman pocketed the coin and turned towards the task of setting off down the river Acheron.

Adora was entranced, spidery thoughts tugging at her brain, telling her she wasn't thinking properly. Her brain was fogged by the attention Hades paid her, by the way he lay down beside her, thumb twirling around the material of her dress, just above the nipple.

She moaned in pleasure. This man was making her hotter by the promise of what was to come, than any of the men she'd been with while naked.

“You will be my Goddess bride as soon as we join,” he whispered against her lips. Soft breath made her goosebumps rise to the surface as Hades kissed the side of her neck.

“Join?”

“Yes, when our bodies join, we will forever live here. There will never be another problem for you to bear in that other place,” he answered.

The bodies joining bit sounded better by the second, but living down here in this dark cavernous world made the hair at the back of her neck stand to attention. This was a place of nightmares, a place of art...Adora could feel the charcoal in her hand, the muse guiding her along as she worked on what she considered her best work. The one she'd never sold, or even showcased.

Cold fear gripped her heart, causing her lips to numb to his kiss. Adora sat bolt upright, looking around. It was too late; he'd bewitched her and now it was too late. Her eyes narrowed as she spotted the white outlines of souls standing at the edge of the river, all crying to be carried through. The hum of tortured begging stung her ears but she was stuck uselessly... couldn't move.

“Who are they?” she asked.

Yolanda Sfetsos

“Those are the poor souls that weren’t sent with the proper payment into the Underworld. One obolus is all it takes. Charon won’t take anyone without enough passage to cover the trip. It’s procedure and he’s a very procedural man,” Hades answered, pressing his lips to the side of her neck.

“What happens to them? And why couldn’t I see them before?”

Hades shrugged. “I created a filter, didn’t want them cramping my style. And to answer your question, they’ll simply stay there for a hundred years. It’s their purgatory.”

“That’s terrible,” Adora whispered, pulling her eyes away from their transparent bodies to concentrate on Hades’ bird mask. It was starting to bug her. “I want to go back,” she whispered, reaching for her mask again.

He caught her wrist, “Don’t!”

“What’re you doing to me?”

“I’m only doing what your body wants me to do,” he answered, running his hand up the length of her leg, pulling the thin material of the dress upward with the caress. Hades was so quick and swift, leaving a trail of heat along her skin, that before she realized it, he’d popped his hand around her underwear and stuck a finger inside her. He pushed the length of his body against hers, finger probing inside as she lay motionless.

The pleasure was instant. He must’ve been using his magic, because before she realized it, her body was convulsing with an orgasm that dotted her vision.

“Stop doing that,” she said, breathless.

“Didn’t you like it?”

“It wasn’t that,” Adora managed. “I don’t appreciate being taken advantage of, Hades.”

“I’m not taking advantage of you—”

“Then what do you call this? You’re taking me against my will.”

“Am I? You can remove the mask at any time—”

“You keep stopping me.”

“I won’t stop you now.”

She lifted a hand upwards, poised in midair. If he could do that with a single touch, she was curious to find out what joining bodies would do to her. The truth was, Adora was a lost soul and had been since the death of her family a year ago. She was easy prey for this God, and as tough as she liked to make herself out to be, she was at his mercy.

There was nothing left topside but her art.

His eyes were glistening, a smile spread along his full lips. “One thing I failed to mention to you is that you’ll get something out of this, too.”

With HADES

“What do you mean?” she asked, her heart beating a little faster.

Hades kissed her again, just a soft touch of lips this time. “No good deed goes unrewarded... and since you’re willing to adhere to being my companion in and out of bed, I will grant you one of your heart’s desires.”

“What I desire the most can’t be undone,” Adora murmured, moving her eyes away from his.

“I am the God of the Dead, I can undo anything I damn well please,” Hades said with a smile, running a hand causally up and down her bare arm. “Now, don’t say it out loud, but think of the wish, and I will grant it like a genie. But it won’t come true until we’ve joined. Do you think you can handle that?”

Adora nodded, suddenly so overwhelmed with desire that she lay back against the comfortable plush seat, eyes burning and an inviting smile on her face. Her dress was already around her hips, and she wanted Hades more than she’d ever wanted any other man in the real world. He did things to get her hot and bothered that she’d never thought possible. So when he tore the underwear off her hips, flicked his fingers and was no longer wearing his pants, she closed her eyes to his nakedness.

There was only one thought running through her brain... one thought that was interrupted when he penetrated inside her, altering everything.

Hades plunged inside and her wish slipped through her mind: *I want my family back.*

Adora opened her eyes, head drumming to a different beat that hurt like hell. A hand at her temples, she looked around. Her skin was itchy from the sand below, and now it was also in her hair. As she sat upright, Adora realized this wasn’t the beach of the Masquerade Ball... it was the same one she’d visited with her family the day of the car wreck. When her parents called her apartment early in the morning and invited her out for a day of fun at the beach.

“You fell asleep, silly,” the voice that said those words made her heart ache.

Adora looked up, shading her eyes from the brilliance of the sun. Her sister was looking down at her, freckled round face framed with red hair. Her eyes were smiling, small hands on narrow hips.

“Sandy?” she whispered.

“Yeah, it’s me! Gee Ady, mum wants to know where you got to. We were starting to get worried. You went for a walk ages ago,” her little sister answered.

“Mum and Dad... and Billy?”

“Duh, of course,” she said rolling her eyes. “Now come on, your skin’s all red. It doesn’t go with that new black color you put in your hair.”

Yolanda Sfetsos

“Black color...?” Adora asked pulling on the strands of her damp sand-soiled hair. She glanced at the strand in her hand. It was black. Adora looked down at herself. She was wearing a one-piece bathing suit, the ebony color itching hot, with the sun’s rays beating so hard. “Yeah...”

“C’mon!” Sandy called, starting her trek down the beach. “I’m gonna take credit for finding you! I can’t believe you fell asleep.”

Adora stood up, pressing palms to the moist sand below in the process. She looked around the deserted beach. The water was calmly beating only a few feet from her toes. A bizarre feeling of being watched swept over her in a warm haze. She turned her face towards the rock face on her right. A man dressed in black stood there, arms crossed in front of him. A smile adorned his half-hidden face. He was wearing a strange mask that made him look like a bird.

“You are mine, Adora,” he whispered. The soft wind carried his deep voice to caress her ears. “I have granted your heart’s desire. In return you’ll come and live with me half of the year, and the rest with them.”

She was in shock, tears streaming down her face as she suddenly remembered her amazing time with Hades. Flashes of a fairytale ball flicked inside her mind. A sensual ride in a gondola inside the darkness of the Underworld, bodies entwined as flesh joined with flesh and the feeling of truly belonging captured her very soul.

“Hades...” she whispered, feet anchored to the sand. He was her one and only true love. Adora owed him everything after the enormity of the wish he’d granted. Spending six months with him would be a pleasure, rather than a curse.

“I’ll miss your bed,” she cried. Tears stung her salt-whipped cheeks.

“It’ll miss you too,” Hades said with a smile. “Now run along and enjoy the summer. Come autumn, you’re mine – all mine.”

A tear rolled down her face. Before it slipped away, Hades opened his palm and caught it. Even from this distance he was affecting her. He nodded one last time, hand still in a fist, and vanished.

“Ady! Hurry up,” Sandy called from further up the beach.

Adora stared at the empty spot where her God of Death had stood only seconds before. She shrugged once, and noticed something resting on the top of her head. Thinking it was her sunglasses, she pulled it over her eyes. Only to discover it was a mask.

The black shiny mask she’d need in order to meet up with her Hades again.

THE END

With HADES



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