

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER

JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD

by Lally Pia

I answered the phone and a robotic voice said, "Congrats, this is to inform you that you have been selected for an all-expenses paid trip to the underworld."

"Round trip?" I asked.

"That depends."

"Depends on what?"

"Ma'am there are others waiting. You have ten more seconds. Do you want this trip or not?"

I paused. A trip of a lifetime... if I made it back, that is. Imagine the stories I'd have to tell? Heck, at age eighty-four, with just a cat in the home, who'd really give a shit if I didn't return intact?

"Er... I'll do it," I said impulsively. "When does it kick off?"

"Be ready to depart in thirty minutes. Someone will knock at your door."

"Thirty min...? Er, okay, I'll be right back... I'll just... er... drop my cat off next door," I responded, a tremor edging my voice.

The robot said nothing and the phone went dead.

The knock on the door startled me, even though I'd expected it.

I had on a thin blue summery dress and the most comfortable walking shoes I owned. Figured the underworld would be like hell—damn hot. The man at the door was drop dead gorgeous, with wavy brown hair, and muscles that bulged out from his gladiator style leather clothing. I'd have given anything to be sixty years younger.

Reassured by mesmerizing blue-green eyes and a heart-stopping smile, I shut the front door behind me and accepted his outstretched hand. I relished the warmth that flowed up my elbow and into my chest when we made that tenuous connection.

Outside, the whole neighborhood had vanished. I inhaled the delicate fragrance of lilacs. We were enveloped in a swirling purple-white fog, which blotted out everything but my gorgeous comrade and his enveloping grasp...it was the only thing that anchored me to reality. A gleaming black chariot lay before us with a noble mahogany stallion in a bronze harness. My companion gallantly hoisted me up on the shiny leather seat and fastened my seatbelt before he jumped into the driver's seat. The horse galloped off at top speed and paused in front of... *Nordstrom??*

My gladiator shepherded me past expensive perfumes and handbags. When we made it to the lingerie section, he smiled, bowed low, and produced a theatrical flourish.

"Welcome to Nordstrom Lingerie—we now begin our tour of the Under-World."

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