



Goddess Interrupted (Goddess Test Book 2)

By Aimée Carter

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Kate Winters has won immortality. But if she wants a life with Henry in the Underworld, she'll have to fight for it.

Becoming immortal wasn't supposed to be the easy part. Though Kate is about to be crowned Queen of the Underworld, she's as isolated as ever. And despite her growing love for Henry, ruler of the Underworld, he's becoming ever more distant and secretive. Then, in the midst of Kate's coronation, Henry is abducted by the only being powerful enough to kill him: the King of the Titans.

As the other gods prepare for a war that could end them all, it is up to Kate to save Henry from the depths of Tartarus. But in order to navigate the endless caverns of the Underworld, Kate must enlist the help of the one person who is the greatest threat to her future.

Henry's first wife, Persephone.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Aimée Carter was born in 1986 and raised in Michigan, where she currently resides. She started writing fan fiction at eleven, began her first original story four years later, and hasn't stopped writing since. Besides writing and reading, she enjoys seeing movies, playing with her puppies, and wrestling with the puzzles in the paper each morning.

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When I was a kid, each fall my teachers had the class write and present one of those horrible "What I Did Last Summer" essays, complete with pictures and funny anecdotes designed to make a classroom full of bored students pay attention.

Each year I sat and listened as my classmates in my New York City preparatory school talked about how they'd spent the summers in the Hamptons or in Florida or in Europe with their rich parents, or au pairs, or as we grew older, boyfriends and girlfriends. By the time we reached high school, the same glitzy stories got told over and over again: escapades in Paris with supermodels, all-night parties on the beaches in the Bahamas with rock stars—every student vied for attention with exploits that got wilder every year.

But my story was always the same. My mother worked as a florist, and because most of her income went to paying for that school, we never left New York City. On her days off we spent our afternoons in Central Park soaking up the sun. After she got sick, my summers were spent in the hospital with her, holding her hair back as the chemo attacked her system or flipping through the television channels looking for something to watch.

It wasn't the Hamptons. It wasn't Florida. It wasn't Europe. But they were my summers.

The one after my first six months with Henry, however, blew every single summer my classmates ever had out of the water.

"I can't believe you'd never swum with dolphins before," said James as I drove down a rough dirt road that didn't see much use. We were back in the upper peninsula of Michigan and surrounded by trees taller than most buildings. The closer we got to Eden Manor, the wider my grin spread.

"It's not like we had a ton of them in the Hudson River," I said, nudging the accelerator. We were so far from civilization that there weren't any posted speed limits, and the last time I'd been down this road, my mother had been too ill for me to risk taking advantage of it. But now, after the council had granted me immortality, the only thing I risked was my old beat-up car. So far, I liked the perks.

James bit off a piece of jerky and offered me the rest. I wrinkled my nose. "Suit yourself," he said. "You realize you're going to have to tell Henry about everything we did, right?"

I glanced at him out of the corner of my eye. "I hadn't planned on otherwise. Why? What's wrong with that?"

James shrugged. "Nothing. I figured he wouldn't be too thrilled with the idea of you spending six months in Greece with some dark, handsome stranger, that's all."

I laughed so hard I nearly drove off the side of the road. "And who was this dark, handsome stranger? I don't remember him."

"Exactly what you should say to Henry, and we'll both be in the clear," said James cheerfully.

It was a joke, of course. James was my best friend, and we had spent the whole summer together touring ancient ruins, vast cities and breathtaking islands in one of the most beautiful places on earth. Maybe one of the most romantic, too, but James was James, and I was married to Henry.

Married. I still wasn't used to it. I'd kept my black diamond wedding ring on a chain around my neck, too afraid of losing it to wear it properly, and now that we were only a mile or so away from Eden, it was time to put it back on. I'd struggled to pass the seven tests the council of gods had given me to see if I was worthy of immortality and becoming Queen of the Underworld, and because I'd won—only barely—Henry and I were now technically husband and wife.

With the silence between us for the past six months, however, it didn't feel like it. I hadn't admitted it to James, but I'd spent the summer glancing around in hopes of seeing Henry in the crowd, there even when he wasn't supposed to be. But no matter how hard I'd looked, I hadn't seen any sign of him. Granted, half a year was practically a blink of an eye for someone who had existed since before the birth of humanity. But surely a sign that he missed me wasn't too much to ask for.

I pushed my worries from my mind as the black wrought iron gate of Eden Manor came into view. No matter what had or hadn't happened during the summer, I would have the chance to be with Henry now, and I wasn't going to waste a moment.

"Home sweet home," I said as I drove through the gate. I could do this. Henry would be waiting for me, and he'd be thrilled to see me. My mother would be there, too, and I wouldn't have to go another six months without seeing her again. Everything would be okay.

James craned his neck to look at the brightly colored trees that lined the road. "All right?" he said to me.

"I should be asking you that," I said, eyeing the way he drummed his fingers on the armrest nervously. He stilled, and after a moment I added before I could stop myself, "He'll be happy to see me, right?"

James blinked and said coolly, "Who? Henry? Couldn't say. I'm not him."

That was the last answer I'd been expecting, but as soon as he said it, I realized I was an idiot for expecting anything else. James would have been the one to replace Henry as the ruler of the Underworld if I'd failed, and even though it hadn't come up on our trip, James was undoubtedly still sore about it.

"Could you at least try to pretend to be happy for me?" I said. "You can't spend your entire existence mad about that."

"I'm not mad. I'm worried," he said. "You don't have to do this if you don't want to, you know. No one would blame you."

"Do what? Not go back to Eden?" I'd already passed the tests. I'd told Henry I'd be back. We were married, for crying out loud.

"Everyone's acting like you're the be all and end all for Henry," said James. "It isn't fair to put you under that kind of pressure."

Good lord, he really was talking about not going back. "Listen, James, I know you liked Greece—so did I—but if you think you can talk me into not going back—"

"I'm not trying to talk you into anything," said James with surprising firmness. "I'm trying to make sure no one else does. This is your life. No one's going to take your mother away from you now if you decide you don't want to do this after all."

"That's not—that's not why I'm going back at all," I sputtered.

"Then why are you, Kate? Give me one good reason, and I'll drop it."

"I can give you a dozen."

"I only want one."

I sniffed. It wasn't any of his business. I'd nearly died in my attempts to save Henry from fading; I wasn't going to walk away from him because of the possibility that I might not like the Underworld. "I don't know how you do things, but I love Henry, and I'm not going to leave him just because you don't think he's good for me."

"Fair enough," said James. "But what are you going to do if Henry doesn't love you?"

I slammed on the brakes and forced the car into park so violently that the handle on the parking brake snapped off. The car was a piece of shit anyway. "That's impossible. He said he loves me, and I trust him not to lie to me. Unlike someone else I know."

I glared at him, but his expression didn't change. With a huff, I climbed out of the car, cursing as the seat belt caught on my jeans. After my few failed attempts to untangle myself, James reached over and gently undid it for me.

"Don't be mad," he said. "Please. After what happened to Persephone—I want to make sure you don't have to go through the same thing, all right? That's all."

I wasn't an idiot. I knew part of Henry would always be in love with Persephone. After all, he'd lost the will to continue after she'd given up her immortality to die and spend eternity with a mortal, and he wouldn't have felt that way if his entire existence hadn't revolved around her. But I could give him the one thing she never had—loving him in return.

"If you really are happy and you two love each other equally, then great," said James. "Good luck to you both. But if you don't—if you wake up one day and realize you're forcing yourself to love him because you think it's the right thing to do, not because he makes you happier than you've ever been—then I want to make sure you know you have a choice. And if you ever want to leave, all you have to do is say the word, and I'll go with you."

I stormed toward the front doors of the manor, yanking hard. "Great, so if I ever decide that Henry's life isn't worth it, I'll be sure to let you know. Help me with these, will you?"

James didn't say a word as he joined me and opened the heavy doors as if they were made of feathers. I slipped inside and forced a smile, expecting to see Henry waiting for me in the magnificent entrance hall made of mirrors and marble. But the foyer was empty.

"Where is everyone?" I said, my smile fading.

"Waiting for you, I suspect." James stepped in after me, and the door slammed behind us, echoing through the hall. "You didn't think we were going to stay here, did you?"

"I didn't know there was anywhere else to stay."

He draped his arm over my shoulders, but when I shrugged it off, he shoved his hands in his pockets instead. "Of course there's someplace else. Follow me."

James led me to the center of the foyer, where amidst the white marble was a perfect circle. It was made of crystal that shimmered with a rainbow of colors in the sunlight that streamed in from the windows, and it was beautiful. When I tried to continue to the other side of the hall, he grabbed my hand and stopped me.

"This is our stop," he said, looking down.

I stared at the crystal beneath my feet, and finally I saw it. A strange, shimmering aura seemed to emanate from where we stood, and I hastily jumped out of the circle. "What *is* that?"

"Henry didn't tell you?" said James, and I shook my head. "It's a portal between the surface and the Underworld. Totally safe, I promise. They're like shortcuts so we don't have to take the long way around."

I wiped my palms nervously on my jeans. "The long way around?"

"If you know where to look, you can find an opening into the Underworld and travel through various caves and that kind of thing," he said. "Dark, gloomy, time-consuming, and trouble if you're skittish about having millions of pounds of rock pressing down on you."

"There's nothing underneath the surface except lava and dirt," I said, ignoring the thought of being buried alive. "Every eight-year-old knows that."

"We're gods. We're excellent at covering our tracks," said James with a boyish grin, and this time, when he offered me his hand, I took it and stepped back into the circle.

"What else are you good at?" I grumbled. "Turning water into wine?"

"That's Xander's specialty," he said. "I'm surprised he hasn't turned the Dead Sea into one big keg party by now. As for me, I can find anything or anyone or anyplace you want. Didn't you notice we never got lost in Greece?"

I shrugged. "I thought you knew the area well."

"I did, thousands of years ago. They've made some modifications since then. Close your eyes."

A rush of electrifying power swirled around us, and a roar filled my ears. Without warning, the ground dropped from under us, and I shrieked.

My heart leaped into my throat, and my eyes flew open as I tried to pull away from James, but his arm wrapped around me like steel. We were surrounded by rock—no, we were *inside* rock, and we went through it as if it weren't any more substantial than air. James's expression was as calm as ever, as if slicing through stone and earth and god only knew what else was perfectly normal.

It seemed to last for ages, but only a few seconds later I felt solid ground underneath my feet once more. James loosened his grip on my shoulders, but my legs were trembling so badly that I clung to him even though all I wanted to do was thwack him upside the head.

"That wasn't so bad, was it?" he said cheerfully, and I glared.

"I will get you for that," I snarled. "You won't see it coming, but when it's over, you'll know what it was for."

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From reader reviews:

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