

Inferno (Revised)

The sudden urge to get air in her lungs was her first reaction. The panic set in when the tightness in her chest wouldn't go away after she did. Then when she finally felt the dampness of her body from the heat continuously building in her room, she realized she was in a fire. The fight to live was her last reaction.

There was something about Wyatt that made me feel guilty inside. He never wanted me to cook, clean, or do any chores for that matter. He preferred me to relax and let him take care of everything.

"I made one of your favorites for dinner, spaghetti!" He told me and shoved a plate in front of me.

"Thank you." I wore a strained smile on my face, my cheeks were reluctant to exercise themselves further. I had already seen the spaghetti noodles when he came home from the store earlier. I was probably living everyone's dream, but I honestly just felt felonious.

"Of course, any time." He plopped in his seat across from me with his own plate.

It made me feel like I was being ungallant.

"Wyatt, I was planning on going looking for a job tomorrow."

I noticed his grip on his fork tighten. "Oh really, how come?"

"Well, I thought I could help by getting a job. Since you always do everything."

"I mean, I don't mind doing everything. But if this is something you *really* want to do, I'll support you."

"I appreciate that."

"However...I do think it's something you should sleep on. Going from what we've been doing now is kinda a big jump don't you think."

"I don't. But I'll agree to disagree."

That night I didn't sleep as serene as I usually did. I was tossing and turning all evening. At some point the cool breeze from earlier turned into thick humid air. I eventually got up to close it so I could turn on the fan, but it decided to break down on me instead. So I sat there miserable, stuck to my sheets covered in sweat.

The illuminating marmalade and honey flames continued to eat away at the oxygen in the room as she struggled.

Dawn came and when I opened my eyes, I realized I somehow eventually slept. Wyatt suggested that we should go on a walk to get my mind off of what happened last night. I wanted to protest because I really wanted to get a jump on getting a job, but with no energy from no sleep a walk sounded ten times better. Besides breathing in the smell of the lavender plants growing nearby did help relax my nerves.

"So are you feeling any better?" Wyatt brushed his thumb over the back of my hand, a habit of his when he was worried.

I reciprocated the action as I used my other hand to block out the sun. It seemed like it was shining down harsher everywhere we stood. "Yeah I think so. I did have a weird dream last night though."

"Really? Weird how?" Wyatt pulled us over to a nearby worn redwood bench against the wall. There sadly were no surrounding trees in the area, so the sun was still glaring down on me. He kept our hands together, as he moved them over into his lap.

I looked down at our hands and started tracing little invisible designs on them both. "I don't really remember, but it had something to do with this crazy house fire."

"Woah really? Was your view from the inside or outside?"

"It was the inside. Actually...I think I was the one in the fire." I felt Wyatt's hand tense up in mine. I smiled and took my free hand and cupped his cheek. "Now I should be asking you if you're ok?"

His mouth upturned as he pushed his lips against my hand. "I'm fine. My mind just threw me into a harsh alternate reality."

I gave his cheek a light pat as I stood up. "Come on, it was just a dream. Let's not let it ruin-" All at once, it felt like my skin was burning. I took my hands from Wyatt and put my knuckles to my lips. I felt the same sultriness that started to culminate all around my body.

"Uh, you having fun loving yourself over there?" Wyatt asked me with a raised eyebrow.

I rolled my eyes at him and started fanning myself with my hand. "Do you not feel like extremely hot?"

"No, do you?" Wyatt barely even hovered his hand over my forehead before I felt the heat emanating from his body.

Out of gut reaction I backed away from his touch. His brows furrowed and his lips pursed. I didn't even get the chance to respond as I started to genuinely feel like I was going to pass out from the heat. The perspiration on my clothes felt like it was becoming more and more apparent the longer we stood there.

"I'm sorry, but can we go home? I'm dying over here." I wiped my face in my sleeve, adding to the darker areas forming on my shirt.

The house.

"Are you having a heat stroke?" Wyatt jumped up and shielded me from the sun with his body.

"I don't even know. I just feel like my skin is burning everywhere."

The fire.

"Wyatt, how are you not-" Stopped myself mid sentence because I realized this wasn't normal heat that I would get just from being outside. This heat just felt all too real. Like I was actually being set on fire.

Get out.

"Mia? Are you?"

I stood up all at once and scanned everything around me. "This isn't real..."

"What? What isn't real? Mia come on let's go home." Wyatt snatched my hand and tried to drag me along.

"Wyatt stop! Don't you think this is weird?!?" I pressed down on our arms as I fumbled along beside him.

"What's weird is you. I need to get you in bed."

Bed. My bedroom. It was on fire.

Instantaneously, everything around me scorched itself out of existence. Wyatt, the park, the bench. Everything went dark...but then I felt the heat again.

I fought to open my eyes again. This time I knew it was real. I sat up in my room and saw exactly what I thought was just a dream. It was hard to make out anything from the thick layer of smoke, but the little things I could see were enkindled like they had been used for a candle wick. I knew I had to get out fast. I scanned my floor with my hands until I found one of my shirts. I held it up to my nose and floundered around my room until I got to my door. I attempted touching the handle and quickly pulled away from the heat it was emanating.

"Is this seriously how I'm going to die!? Are you kidding me?!" I started banging on the door board and letting out noises that were a mix of cries for help, and coughing as a result of the quickly depleting oxygen in the air. I slowly started to lose my energy, so the pounding started to turn into feeble blows.

"Was it too hard to live with me?" Someone said coarsely. The voice blended in with the crackling of the burning floor boards.

I tilted my head and narrowed my eyes in the direction of it. It was Wyatt, except he was more gossamery. Seeing him in front of me made me remember, I was never in a relationship with anyone. "Wyatt?"

"I tried my best to keep you distracted while you were there. Keeping you happy so you could leave this world peacefully with no regrets. I tried my best to stop you so you wouldn't be where you are now." His voice raised like steam coming out of a kettle.

"You're a hallucination from the fumes."

"I am, but does that make me any less real? You can still come back with me before you burn, it's not too late." Wyatt took hollow steps towards me.

I felt my hands tremble against the shirt against my mouth, but that only made me hold on tighter. I turned my back to Wyatt and started banging on the door again. "Help! Someone please!"

"Stop fighting Mia. Just come back with me and you won't have to worry about dying."

"If I go back I'm already dead don't you get that?!" I screamed. The image I once had of my overly sweet boyfriend was distorted. I was horrified. The only reason I felt the tears running down my cheeks in the midst of the chaos was because they were the only cold thing in the room.

"Taking you outside was my own fault. I promise I can-"

"Hey! Is anyone in here!?" A voice from the other side of the door sounded.

I moved the shirt from my lips, but Wyatt held me back. Wyatt covered my mouth with one hand and held my arm in the other. I kept trying to tell myself that he wasn't real. Nothing about him was real, it was all in my head. When I turned to face him, I noticed the color of his whole body had changed to a mix of carnelian and amber. I screamed underneath his touch, but it only came out as suppressed.

"I'm not letting you leave me." His grip got tighter on my wrist until the pain on my arm went numb. It was like my nerves were being singed.

"Hello!? Hello!? Is anyone else here in this house! Please make any kind of noise if you can so that we can find you!" The voice from the outside sounded further away.

This would be the last chance to get help before I got scorched, so I used my last ounce of strength to move my leg from under me and started kicking the door. I could feel Wyatt's scowl sear into the back of my head as he tried to pull me from the door. I did my best to drop all of my weight to the floor, and even continued to hit my feet against the carpet. If someone were to walk in now it would probably look like I was throwing a tantrum.

Wyatt's actions abruptly came to a halt, giving me the chance to turn free from his grip and crawl back over to the door. My all limbs felt like they were made of lead, but I continued to bash the door. "Help! I'm trapped in here!"

"I gave you a reality where you weren't dying, you weren't suffocating, and yet you still choose to live here. Was being happy with me so hard?"

"None of that matters if it's not real!"

"Is that it? What makes this world so real? The pain?"

I let my weight rest on the door as I tried to regain some energy. "Yes, because it tells me I'm alive." I turned to hold his gaze, but Wyatt was gone. I stared into the dim room, but there was no remnant of Wyatt. The door pushed me forward as a man dressed in bulky clothing covered in soot and a black oxygen mask made his way in. He placed an oxygen mask over my mouth and carried me out of the house.

I realized what I felt earlier wasn't guilt, but instead it was exhaustion. Exhaustion from being smothered by his affection.