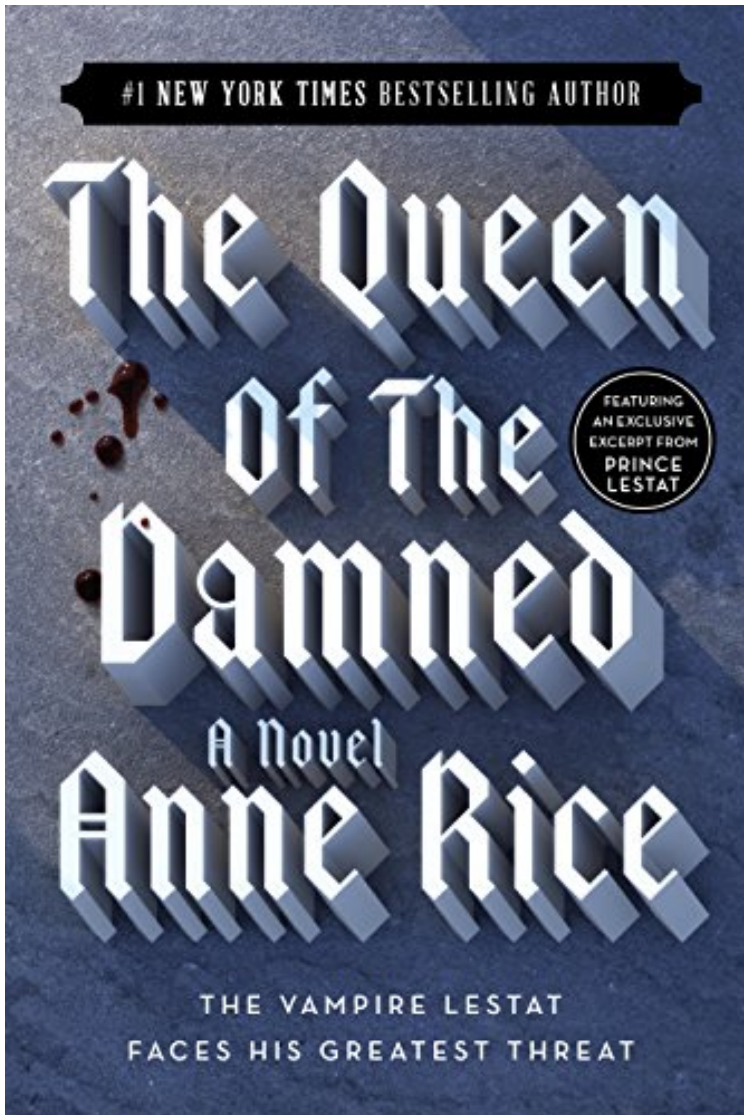


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The Queen of the Damned (The Vampire Chronicles, Book 3)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn a feat of virtuoso storytelling, Anne Rice unleashes Akasha, the queen of the damned, who has risen from a six-thousand-year sleep to let loose the powers of the night. Akasha has a marvelously devious plan to save mankind and destroy the vampire Lestat in this extraordinarily sensual novel of the complex, erotic, electrifying world of the undead.Look for a special preview of Anne RicesPrince Lestat in the back of the book.The Vampire Chronicles continue inPrince Lestat andthe Realms of Atlantis,available for pre-order now.Praise for The Queen of the DamnedMesmerizing . . . a wonderful web of dark-side mythology.San Francisco Chronicle With The Queen of the Damned, Anne Rice has

created universes within universes, traveling back in time as far as ancient, pre-pyramidal Egypt and journeying from the frozen mountain peaks of Nepal to the crowded, sweating streets of southern Florida. Los Angeles Times Imaginative . . . intelligently written . . . This is popular fiction of the highest order. USA Today A tour de force. The Boston Globe From the Trade Paperback edition. Excerpt from THE LEGEND OF THE TWINS Tell it in rhythmic continuity. Detail by detail the living creatures. Tell it as must, the rhythms solid in the shape. Woman. Arms lifted. Shadow eater. STAN RICE from "Elegy" Whiteboy (1976) "CALL HER FOR ME, " HE SAID. "TELL HER I HAVE had the strangest dreams, that they were about the twins. You must call her!" His daughter didn't want to do it. She watched him fumble with the book. His hands were his enemies now, he often said. At ninety-one, he could scarcely hold a pencil or turn a page. "Daddy," she said, "that woman's probably dead." Everybody he had known was dead. He'd outlived his colleagues; he'd outlived his brothers and sisters, and even two of his children. In a tragic way, he had outlived the twins, because no one read his book now. No one cared about "the legend of the twins." "No, you call her," he said. "You must call her. You tell her that I dreamed of the twins. I saw them in the dream." "Why would she want to know that, Daddy?" His daughter took the little address book and paged through it slowly. Dad all these people, long dead. The men who had worked with her father on so many expeditions, the editors and photographers who had worked with him on his book. Even his enemies who had said his life was wasted, that his research had come to nothing; even the most scurrilous, who had accused him of doctoring pictures and lying about the caves, which her father had never done. Why should she be still alive, the woman who had financed his long-ago expeditions, the rich woman who had sent so much money for so many years? "You must ask her to come! Tell her it's very important. I must describe to her what I've seen." "To come? All the way to Rio de Janeiro because an old man had had strange dreams? His daughter found the page, and yes, there was the name and the number. And the date beside it, only two years old. "She lives in Bangkok, Daddy." What time was it in Bangkok? She had no idea. "She'll come to me. I know she will." He closed his eyes and settled back onto the pillow. He was small now, shrunken. But when he opened his eyes, there was her father looking at her, in spite of the shriveling yellowed skin, the dark spots on the backs of his wrinkled hands, the bald head. He appeared to be listening to the music now, the soft singing of the Vampire Lestat, coming from her room. She would turn it down if it kept him awake. She wasn't much for American rock singers, but this one she'd rather liked. "Tell her I must speak to her!" he said suddenly, as though coming back to himself. "All right, Daddy, if you want me to." She turned off the lamp by the bed. "You go back to sleep." "Don't give up till you find her. Tell her--the twins! I've seen the twins." But as she was leaving, he called her back again with one of those sudden moans that always frightened her. In the light from the hall, she could see he was pointing to the books on the far wall. "Get it for me," he said. He was struggling to sit up again. "The book, Daddy?" "The twins, the pictures..." She took down the old volume and brought it to him and put it in his lap. She propped the pillows up higher for him and turned on the lamp again. It hurt her to feel how light he was as she lifted him; it hurt her to see him struggle to put on his silver-rimmed glasses. He took the pencil in hand, to read with it, ready to write, as he had always done, but then he let it fall and she caught it and put it back on the table. "You go call her!" he said. She nodded. But she stayed there, just in case he needed her. The music from her study was louder now, one of the more metallic and raucous songs. But he didn't seem to notice. Very gently she opened the book for him and turned to the first pair of color pictures, one filling the left page, the other the right. How well she knew these pictures, how well she remembered as a little girl making the long climb with him to the cave on Mount Carmel, where he had led her into the dry dusty darkness, his flashlight lifted to reveal the painted carvings on the wall. "There, the two figures, you see them, the red-haired women?" It had been difficult at first to make out the crude stick figures in the dim beam of the flashlight. So much easier later to study what the close-up camera so beautifully revealed. But she would never forget that first day, when he had shown her each small drawing in sequence: the twins dancing in rain that fell in tiny dashes from a scribble of cloud; the twins kneeling on either side of the altar upon which a body lay as if in sleep or death; the twins taken prisoner and standing before a tribunal of scowling figures; the twins running away. And then the damaged pictures of which nothing could be recovered; and finally the one twin alone weeping, her tears falling in tiny dashes, like the rain, from eyes that were tiny black dashes too. They'd been carved in the rock, with pigments added--orange for the hair, white chalk for the garments, green for the plants that grew around them, and even blue for the sky over their heads. Six thousand years had passed since they had been created in the deep darkness of the cave. And no less old were the near identical carvings, in a shallow rock chamber high on the slope of Huayna Picchu, on the other side of the world. She had made that journey also with her

father, a year later, across the Urubamba River and up through the jungles of Peru. She'd seen for herself the same two women in a style remarkably similar though not the same. There again on the smooth wall were the same scenes of the rain falling, of the red-haired twins in their joyful dance. And then the somber altar scene in loving detail. It was the body of a woman lying on the altar, and in their hands the twins held two tiny, carefully drawn plates. Soldiers bore down upon the ceremony with swords uplifted. The twins were taken into bondage, weeping. And then came the hostile tribunal and the familiar escape. In another picture, faint but still discernible, the twins held an infant between them, a small bundle with dots for eyes and the barest bit of red hair; then to others they entrusted their treasure as once more the menacing soldiers appeared. And lastly, the one twin, amid the full leafy trees of the jungle, her arms out as if reaching for her sister, the red pigment of her hair stuck to the stone wall with dried blood. How well she could recall her excitement. She had shared her father's ecstasy, that he had found the twins a world apart from each other, in these ancient pictures, buried in the mountain caves of Palestine and Peru. It seemed the greatest event in history; nothing could have been so important. Then a year later a vase had been discovered in a Berlin museum that bore the very same figures, kneeling, plates in hand before the stone bier. A crude thing it was, without documentation. But what did that matter? It had been dated 4000 B.C. by the most reliable methods, and there unmistakably, in the newly translated language of ancient Sumer, were the words that meant so much to all of them: "The Legend of the Twins." Yes, so terribly significant, it had all seemed. The foundation of a life's work, until her husband presented his research. They'd laughed at him. Or ignored him. Not believable, such a link between the Old World and the New. Six thousand years old, indeed! They'd relegated him to the "crazy camp" along with those who talked of ancient astronauts, Atlantis, and the lost kingdom of Mu. How he'd argued, lectured, begged them to believe, to journey with him to the caves, to see for themselves! How he'd laid out the specimens of pigment, the lab reports, the detailed studies of the plants in the carvings and even the white robes of the twins. Another man might have given it up. Every university and foundation had turned him away. He had no money even to care for his children. He took a teaching position for bread and butter, and, in the evenings, wrote letters to museums all over the world. And a clay tablet, covered with drawings, was found in Manchester and another in London, both clearly depicting the twins! On borrowed money he journeyed to photograph these artifacts. He wrote papers on them for obscure publications. He continued his search. Then she had come, the quiet-spoken and eccentric woman who had listened to him, looked at his materials, and then given him an ancient papyrus, found early in this century in a cave in Upper Egypt, which contained some of the very same pictures, and the words "The Legend of the Twins." "A gift for you," she'd said. And then she'd bought the vase for him from the museum in Berlin. She obtained the tablets from England as well. But it was the Peruvian discovery that fascinated her most of all. She gave him unlimited sums of money to go back to South America and continue his work. For years he'd searched cave after cave for more evidence, spoken to villagers about their oldest myths and stories, examined ruined cities, temples, even old Christian churches for stones taken from pagan shrines. But decades passed and he found nothing. It had been the ruin of him finally. Even she, his patron, had told him to give it up. She did not want to see his life spent on this. He should leave it now to younger men. But he would not listen. This was his discovery! The Legend of the Twins! And so she wrote the checks for him and he went on until he was too old to climb the mountains and hack his way through the jungle anymore. In the last years, he lectured only now and then. He could not interest the new students in this mystery, even when he showed the papyrus, the vase, the tablets. After all, these items did not fit anywhere really, they were of no definable period. And the caves, could anyone have found them now? But she had been loyal, his patron. She'd bought him this house in Rio, created a trust for him which would come to his daughter when he died. Her money had paid for his daughter's education, for so many other things. Strange that they lived in such comfort. It was as if he had been successful after all. "Call her," he said again. He was becoming agitated, empty hands scraping at the photographs. After all, his daughter had not moved. She stood at his shoulder looking down at the pictures, at the figures of the twins. "All right, Father." She left him with his book. It was late afternoon the next day when his daughter came in to kiss him. The nurse said that he'd been crying like a child. He opened his eyes as his daughter squeezed his hand. "I know now what they did to them," he said. "I've seen it! It was sacrilege what they did." His daughter tried to quiet him. She told him that she had called the woman. The woman was on her way. "She wasn't in Bangkok, Daddy. She's moved to Burma, to Rangoon. But I reached her there, and she was so glad to hear from you. She said she'd leave within a few hours. She wants to know about the dreams." He was so happy. She was coming. He closed his eyes and turned his head into the pillow. "The dreams will start again, after dark," he whispered. "The whole tragedy will start again." "Daddy, rest," she

said. "Until she comes." Sometime during the night he died. When his daughter came in, he was already cold. The nurse was waiting for her instructions. He had the dull, half-lidded stare of dead people. His pencil was lying on the coverlet, and there was a piece of paper--the flyleaf of his precious book--crumpled under his right hand. She didn't cry. For a moment she didn't do anything. She remembered the cave in Palestine, the lantern. "Do you see? The two women?" Gently, she closed his eyes, and kissed his forehead. He'd written something on the piece of paper. She lifted his cold, stiff fingers and removed the paper and read the few words he'd scrawled in his uneven spidery hand: "IN THE JUNGLES--WALKING." What could it mean? And it was too late to reach the woman now. She would probably arrive sometime that evening. All that long way--Well, she would give her the paper, if it mattered, and tell her the things he'd said about the twins.

From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* Mesmerizing . . . a wonderful web of dark-side mythology. *San Francisco Chronicle* With *The Queen of the Damned*, Anne Rice has created universes within universes, traveling back in time as far as ancient, pre-pyramidic Egypt and journeying from the frozen mountain peaks of Nepal to the crowded, sweating streets of southern Florida. *Los Angeles Times* Imaginative . . . intelligently written . . . This is popular fiction of the highest order. *USA Today* A tour de force. *The Boston Globe*