



# Accidentally Summoned an Incubus

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**Category:** Romance, Paranormal

**Description:** After throwing a well-deserved hex at a human, 27-year-old Lex is required to return to her coven to await trial. Is it coincidence or fate that she returns to her hometown on the one night a year that a Briar Coven witch can summon her fated mate? But Lex has avoided partaking in the summoning for the last nine years, and she certainly has no intention of doing it this Samhain. Lex is determined to keep her head down and see out this trial... Until she accidentally summons her mate... Who just so happens to be an incubus demon.

Lochran has grown tired of hunting for his meals. Like all the demons of his clan, he returns to the shadow realm on Samhain in the hope that this might be the year he will be summoned by his fated mate. Too bad that, when the smoke clears and the most beautiful witch he's ever seen is glaring back at him, she's telling him it was a mistake.

**Total Pages (Source):** 50

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 7:14 am*

Prologue. Lex

Being a witch, in theory, was great.

Being a witch who was part of the elusive Briar Coven?

Not so much.

We were a special breed of witch. Each of us was born female (except for my brother, the only warlock born to the coven in over three hundred years), and each was an almost exact replica of our female ancestors who founded the coven in the late 1600s.

Our coven wasn't one that had a long-established history. Our female ancestors were the last living members of their covens, which the witch hunts had decimated in Europe. This ragtag group of females had all met on the ship that brought them to the New World, and they founded the Briar Coven.

For any history buffs out there, you might realize that the late 1600s, 1692 to be exact, was a very bad year for American witches. When news broke of the Salem witch trials, witches across the New World, fearing persecution once more, came up with all sorts of ingenious solutions on how to protect themselves, and my great-whatever-granny and her coven were no different. When the local mortal men expressed that they were suspicious of a bunch of single women living independently in the Massachusetts woods, the coven came up with their plan of defense.

Did they pair up with the local shifters for fluffy bodyguards like some of the other covens? No, too crude.

Maybe they cast an invisibility spell that meant no mortal could see them?Pfft, too simple.

No. What my ancestor did was to invoke the powers ofHecate herself.

The mortals were intimidated by single women? No problem! They asked the Goddess to give them husbands. And the Goddess decided that their husbands wouldn't be just any run-of-the-mill men. Oh, no, that would be way too straightforward. Hecate decided that each witch would be paired with an incubus demon.

Incubus... as in a sex demon.

And the “fun” didn't stop there. Each witch born into the Briar Coven since 1692 had a fated mate that was... you guessed it... a fucking sex demon.

Yup. My dad was a sex demon (which was totally gross, by the way), as was my grandfather, and my great-grandfather, and all my male ancestors right back to that fucking curse my great-whatever-grandma put on the coven.

What was worse was that I seemed to be the only witch in the coven who had an ounce of sense to see that it was a curse. No, the rest of them couldn't wait for Samhain to come around so they could summon their fated mate.

Being sired by an incubus also meant that we were all part succubus. As incubus demons don't have DNA on account of being mother-fucking demons born from the shadows, the Goddess-blessed unions just produce clones of the mothers, only the “essence” of the father making the most minor changes, like different colored hair, or a different shade of eye color.

And, yeah, okay, I absolutely adored my dad and my grandfather.

But being part succubussucked.

Since I'd hit puberty, I was horny all the time.

At twenty-seven years old, that was a lot of dick that I'd had to have in my life to try to scratch that never-ending itch. And it had recently got me into a lot of trouble. Which was why I was now on a sex ban.

It'd been twenty-nine days, thirteen hours, and roughly fifteen minutes since I'd entered the self-imposed ban on sexual encounters with other people because the last time I had taken a stranger to my bed had been the worst decision of my life, and I was still living with the consequences of it.

Usually, I was very careful about who I took to my bed. The small part of succubus in my blood was irresistible to men. An accidental touch meant I could easily end up with a stalker and, consequently, a restraining order. Usually, I would drive to a faraway corner of the city and bed someone who had no reason to cross my path in the future.

Which was what I'd done almost a month ago.

I had driven two hours to a little town on the outskirts of Sacramento, booked myself a sleazy motel, slipped into a revealing dress, and gone to the closest dive bar.

Before I'd even taken a sip of my vodka cranberry, a sculpted, kinda-hot-if-you-were-into-stock-photos man had slid into the chair beside me.

I had barely caught his name—Chad—before I was guiding him out of the bar to my motel.

I had him screaming my name within minutes.

Too bad that the next day when I'd started my new job, my boss happened to be the aforementioned Chad.

## Chapter 1. Lochran

"Lochran," a smooth, velvet voice called from the shadows. Devlin was in his natural form, sans his shadow horns and tail. Tall and broad, Devlin had chestnut hair that glowed like embers when the light hit it, and dark, whiskey-colored eyes. He looked like if he put a hat on and took off his shirt, he could be a cover model for an erotic rancher novel.

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In my natural form, I had inky black hair and violet eyes. But, while roguishly handsome, I certainly had my flaws. I definitely wasn't the cover-model kind. A chipped left canine, a scar on my temple that caused my hair to grow in the wrong direction (which was why I now wore it cropped at the sides), and a crooked shadow wing to name a few. But our natural forms were insignificant for the most part. When we appeared to mortals—the ones who wanted to fuck us, that is—we took on whatever form they most desired. The number of times I had appeared as a variation of Henry Cavill was sickening. The only time we didn't have to change our form was for our mate.

Which was the reason why I, and most of the other incubi and the handful of succubi of our clan, had returned to our shadow realm. Tomorrow was Samhain, the one night of the year that our fated mate could summon us.

And I desperately hoped that my witch would summon me this year.

I dropped into the seat beside Devlin. His warm eyes fell on mine as he mused, "I had started to think that you wouldn't be coming to the summoning, Lochran."

I reached out toward the empty table, a glass of bourbon materializing in my hand. That's one thing I loved about the shadow realm—think it, and it happened.

One would think that would make for an interesting realm, a place of endless possibilities. But the reality was most of us were that exhausted from searching for our food that by the time we got back to our realm, we couldn't be bothered getting creative. The bar that I sat in right now was a prime example. It was based on a mortal dive bar, except the walls were bare, there were only a handful of tables, and

the jukebox didn't even play a real song, just a soft, indistinguishable melody. A haunting blue light barely illuminated the bar, not reaching the depthless shadows cloaking the corners of the room. It was as if the demon who had first imagined this bar had only thought as far as needing a place to come and gather his lonely thoughts and hadn't had the energy to think of the decor.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world," I said, downing the bourbon in one, only for the glass to refill itself. My stomach gave an almighty rumble, and Devlin eyed me knowingly.

"You still got the whole 'sex ban' thing going?" Devlin asked.

Ah, the sex ban.

A few years ago, I decided I would not have penetrative sex again until I'd met my mate. I mean, I still had to feed, so of course I had to do other things. But penetrative sex? For me, that was the most intimate kind of sex, and while I was starving and exhausted literally all the time, it felt good to hold something back. It made me feel like I had a choice.

"You're one to talk," I muttered.

"Actually, I've given up on the whole mate thing," Devlin said.

I narrowed my eyes at him. Devlin had been just as desperate as me to be summoned by his mate. It was all we'd talked about for years. And Samhain after Samhain we remained here, unsummoned by our witches.

Devlin shrugged. "I dunno what's changed for me. I think the longer I've waited, the more desperate I've become. It was almost becoming an obsession. I think I'm going to take a break from waiting. Maybe just wander the mortal realm for a while. Focus

on just me, y'know?"

I felt a twinge of pity for my friend.

The mating bond was both a blessing and a curse.

A few centuries ago, a bargain had been facilitated by the goddess Hecate between our clan of incubi and a coven of witches. It was welcomed wholeheartedly by our clan. Finding your fated mate out in the world was a tough task for any magical creature, so the opportunity for them to simply be able to cast a spell when they were ready to summon us was too good to pass up.

Most were summoned within the first year or two of their mates coming of age, but both Devlin and I had been born to the shadows twenty-seven years ago, meaning our witches had had nine years to summon us and yet had decided not to.

I placed a hand on Devlin's shoulder. "I think some time focusing on yourself would be good."

Devlin's lips pulled into a smile that didn't match the sorrowful look in his eye. He downed his drink and stood up. "Well, I guess there's no time like the present." With that, he disappeared into nothingness.

I sent a silent prayer to the god Erebus for my friend and thought maybe he had the right idea. If I wasn't summoned tomorrow evening, perhaps I might take a leaf out of Devlin's book.

## Chapter 2. Lex

I glanced at my clock and nearly cried.



Shit! I was late!

Grabbing my notebook and whichever pen my hand landed on first, I practically ran to the conference room. Usually, I set an alarm to go off ten minutes early—ten glorious minutes where I could pick the furthest seat away from the head of the table where Chad would be. It wouldn't stop his eyes from undressing me every time he glanced in my direction, but he wouldn't have the chance to physically touch me.

As I approached the conference room, I straightened my oversized blouse and sucked in a deep breath. The door creaked open, and I took a quick glance around.

Billy, my best friend, looked hopelessly up at me from one end of the room, mouthing "Sorry" as she flicked her eyes to the hulking form of Brett, Chad's second-in-command and ultimate "bro." Chad had obviously seen that Billy had been trying her best to reserve the seat for me, and so he'd sent his lumbering minion to take it.

Reluctantly, I let my eyes slide up the table and, just as I expected, the only available seat was right beside Chad.

"Alexis." His voice skittered over my skin, making me shiver involuntarily. "So glad you could finally join us. It's not like you to be late. Tut-tut. Come and take a seat beside teacher"—he tapped the empty space beside him—"so I can keep an eye on you."

Every woman in the room—not that there were many, as most quickly left the company—let out an involuntary shiver.

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Oh, how I wanted nothing more than to hex his dick off.

As I walked around the table, I flicked my eyes at Billy. Her lips were pulled into a silent snarl, her eyes slowly turning a glowing, ember red. I shot a look at her, and they quickly turned back to her normal ice-blue irises.

Having a wolf-shifter best friend had its benefits. I could guarantee that she would be the first to leap across the table and tear Chad's throat out if he made one wrong move. But then we would have to deal with the absolute nightmare that would inevitably follow shifting in front of a room full of mortals. My coven had extreme punishments for performing magic in front of unsuspecting mortals, so I could only imagine that Billy would be in for just as bad a ride from her pack if she shifted.

I reluctantly took a seat, and Chad glared down at me, a poor attempt at a sexy smirk on his face.

Like, seriously? This guy? I'd voluntarily had sex with this guy? Man, being part succubus was the worst.

The meeting lasted all of fifteen minutes. Chad talked at warp speed, only stopping to look at my cleavage. Even though my shirt was purposefully loose and buttoned up to my neck, his eyes narrowed as if he could see straight through the material.

With a final deep breath, Chad sighed and said, "Well, folks, thank you for your time. I hope you got all that." He glanced around as everyone was still furiously taking notes. "Lexi, can I see you in my office?"

Brett grinned from the other side of the table.

“Oh, actually,” Billy called from Brett’s side, causing his smile to falter, “Lex and I have a meeting.” For good measure, and with the slightest tinge of venom in her voice, she added, “A meeting with HR.”

God, I loved Billy from the bottom of my heart.

“This will only take a minute,” Chad said, rubbing a hand over (though not actually touching) his sculpted blond hair.

I flicked Billy a look. I could hold my own against someone like Chad. Of course, I would have to be careful—cursing a mortal wasn’t something that should be done lightly, and I’d have to report it to the coven immediately should it come to that. Which it shouldn’t. So far, the last month had just been filled with Chad undressing me with his eyes, often making suggestive comments, and occasionally placing his hand on my back, shoulder, or thigh for a moment too long.

“Fine. A minute,” I barked, causing a few of the men to snap their heads up at me, matching looks of horror on their faces as if I should feel privileged that I’m allowed in the conference room at all and not shackled to a kitchenette making them coffee.

Urgh, I fucking hated working in a boys’ club.

So, I followed Chad down the clinical, gray corridor to his office. He opened the door for me but didn’t move far enough back. Reluctantly, I shimmied past him, careful not to touch him, and held my breath, though the sharp tang of his aftershave still found its way up my nostrils.

Chad gestured that I should take a seat. He didn’t bother going to his side of the desk, but instead sat in front of me. The desk creaked under his weight as he spread his

legs, pointing his crotch directly at my line of sight. He placed his elbow on his thigh and his head on his hand and stared down at me as if I were just some silly little girl who hadn't quite realized just how much of a catch he was... if you could call a wallet with a small dick and no personality a catch.

My eyes narrowed in on him.

“Alexis. Lex. Lexi, Lexi, Lexi,” he mused, each note causing a wave of nausea. “Listen. I know what you’re doing.”

“Eh?” What I was doing was trying my damndest to stay out of his way for the last month.

“Of course. I mean, I’m your boss and we...” His voice trailed off as he made a move to push my hair behind my ear. I quickly bobbed out of his reach, my stomach clenching in revulsion, and he recovered smoothly enough by bringing his hand back to hover over his sculpted hair.

“Look, Lexi. I know you’ve been playing hard to get for the past month. And I’m into it, I really am. But let’s stop playing games, hm?”

I snorted. Was this guy for real? “I can assure you, Chad, I’m not playing games.”

Chad stared down at me, still with the condescending look, as if it would only be another minute before I realized what an amazing opportunity he was giving me.

I sat with my arms crossed. When he finally realized I was serious, his entire demeanor changed. Like a wounded animal, his face scrunched into a semi-feral grimace. Caressing the lapel of his jacket, he snapped, “Alexis. If you want to have any chance of making it within this company, I suggest you stay on my good side. In fact”—he started to unbuckle his belt—“there is a senior position coming up”—he

unzipped his trousers—“that I think you would be perfect for.”

He dropped his boxers, and I tried not to gag as his semi-flaccid cock pointed at me.

I looked from the glistening tip to his soulless eyes, and back again.

His voice was humorless and savage as he said, “Well, it’s not going to suck itself.”

And then I did what any other witch would do in my position.

I hexed his dick off.

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Okay, I didn't hex the entire thing off, but it shriveled up to the size of a prune that had been left out in the California sun all day.

It took Chad a full minute to realize what had happened, and even then, he stared down at his crotch in utter disbelief.

I stood up, leaned in and whispered, "I quit."

Chad's screaming didn't start until I was halfway down the corridor. I couldn't help but smile, then groaned.

I would need to return to my coven immediately, report the hex to the head of the coven, who also happened to be my grandmother—not that she would show me any favoritism despite the fact that I was pretty much her clone—and write a full and lengthy report on every encounter with Chad that had led up to the point where I had no option but to hex him. Not that the paperwork was even necessary for the trial. My grandmother would use a special crystal to project my memories to everyone in attendance. No, the paperwork was a deterrent and made most of the coven think twice before throwing a wayward curse lest they be forced to write a twenty-page essay on why they didn't use their words instead.

Billy was waiting for me in the office we shared, pacing back and forth, her ears slightly pointed and silver-tufted. The moment my scent filled the room, she snapped her head toward me, sniffing the air.

"No blood. You didn't kill him, then?" she asked, almost disappointed.

I punched the side of her arm. “Who’s to say I didn’t strangle him?”

“Not funny, Lex.” She turned to me and placed both hands on my shoulders. Her glowing red eyes flickered with worry as she looked me up and down. Her nostrils flared, assessing for damage.

“You did magic. I can smell it,” she said, voice gruff.

“Dude, chill out,” I replied, squirming free and flicking her on the nose. “You’re starting to wolf out on me.”

“Sorry. And—ouch! Didn’t your mama teach you not to flick an angry wolf on the nose? Besides, I can’t help it,” Billy said, tucking her silver hair behind her still pointed ears. She squeezed her eyes shut and willed them back to rounded human ears.

Billy’s recent, uncontrollable wolfing-out around assholes like Chad wasn’t normal wolf behavior. I mean, it was normal for wolves (and any sane being) to be annoyed at people like Chad. But her wolf struggling to get out and tear him limb from limb, acting like he was a challenger, could only mean one thing.

Billy was becoming an alpha.

The problem for Billy was that while she was still technically part of a pack, she had moved far away under the pretense of college and just never moved back. She was, for all intents and purposes, a lone wolf. And you can’t really be an alpha if you don’t have a pack to follow you.

Billy wasn’t able to tell me much about her pack, and I guessed she’d been spelled to secrecy. Any time she said something about her pack that would give away their position or what they did, a buzzing noise filled my ears, and I couldn’t make out

what she was saying. Very powerful magic indeed. Aside from her dad being a helicopter parent who had pushed her to achieve all her life (which had resulted, instead, in pushing her away to the point where she would only rejoin the pack for major holidays), I didn't know anything about my best friend's life before I met her.

She tossed her icy hair. "Tell me what happened," she said.

And so, I did.

"What a prick!" she shouted. "I wanna tear his throat out." Her growl was inhuman as she started toward the door. With what little sense I could muster, I grabbed her wrist and pulled her back.

"That's not a good idea, Billy. Besides, I'm already in enough trouble with the coven. If you kill him, that'll be at least another ten pages of paperwork I'll have to write."

Billy seethed. "How many other women has he done this to?"

I sighed. I really didn't want to think about it.

But that was the reality of the situation. If he'd done it to me, there'd most likely be others. "I'll report it to the police after I've spoken to the coven," I promised.

The door swung open, crashing into the wall with enough force to bust through the drywall. Brett's heaving form loomed in the doorway. "What did you do to him?" Brett bellowed, his eyes boring into me.

"Do to who? Oh, Chad?" I asked sweetly. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"You did something," he seethed. "Chad doesn't cry over nothing."



“I haven’t got the slightest clue of what you’re talking about,” I said, standing up and grabbing my purse. The good thing about working in such a toxic environment was that I was ready to leave at the drop of a hat.

Brett didn’t move an inch. “You’re not going anywhere until you tell me what you did to him, you bitch.”

I really didn’t want to have to hex another mortal, but Goddess help me, I would if this brute didn’t move.

Fortunately, it was Billy who came to my rescue.

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“She doesn’t workhere anymore, so she’ll go where she damn well pleases.” Billy’s voice was as sweet as a spring lamb—if that lamb had been skinned and fashioned into a coat by an icy-haired wolf.

Brett let out a gruff, challenging laugh. “Neither of you are leaving until I say so.”

In the blink of an eye, Billy’s Doc Martens had connected with Brett’s crotch, resulting in a sickeningcrunchthat made me think she’d kicked him hard enough for his nuts to hit his spine. Brett crumpled to the floor, and Billy grabbed the collar of his jacket. “You should be more polite to ladies. Oh, and in case you haven’t guessed yet, I quit too.” With her inhuman strength, she slid his whimpering form across the room, and he landed in a heap. I had to stifle a giggle as a plant pot with a long-dead plant clattered off the cabinet and smashed on top of his head like something from a sketch show.

“Later, loser!” Billy called over her shoulder as the pair of us flipped him the bird.

The moment we stepped out the front door of the building, it was like a weight I hadn’t realized I’d been carrying lifted from my chest.

### Chapter 3. Lex

Billy gave me a bone-crushing hug as “Last call for flight EZSEAT to Seattle” boomed over the PA.

Our coven had stood their ground through it all: creating a home in an unknown country, the threat of another witch hunt, persecution from suspicious mortal men...

But the moment tourists started flocking to Massachusetts to ogle the site of one of the most infamous witch hunts, the coven packed up and left. For the last century, they lived in a settlement deep in the heart of the vast Seattle forests. Which was where I'd be touching down in just over two hours.

Billy's flight back home was an hour after mine, but no matter how many times I stared at her ticket, the words just looked like indistinguishable squiggles to me. Even when I glanced at the board, there was a single flight three down from mine that just looked pixelated.

"I'm going to miss you, witch," she said into my shoulder.

"I'll miss you too, wolf," I whispered back.

Even though we had only shared an office for a month, Billy had become my best friend. Like, if there was a word for a soulmate best friend, she'd be it. I wasn't quite sure how we'd become so close so fast, but it was like we were two parts of a platonic jigsaw that just fit together perfectly.

"Text me your address," she said, finally letting go of me. "If my dad—" Buzzing filled my ears as Billy continued to talk. "—I'll be coming to stay with you."

"You do know I wasn't able to understand a word of what you just said."

Billy smiled. "I know."

An irate voice called, "Could passenger Cole on flight EZSEAT to Seattle please make your way to gate thirteen. Your flight is about to depart."

I bent over and grabbed my bag, slinging it over my shoulder.

“I’ll text you when I land!” I called back to Billy as I half jogged to my gate.

Just as I got to the gate and the angry-looking flight attendant studied my ticket, I remembered I had forgotten to tell my parents I was coming home.

As I walked down the echoing hall, I pulled out my phone and called home.

“Hello, sweetie,” my father’s gruff voice called down the phone. “To what do we owe the pleasure?”

“Who’s that?” my mother’s voice called from the background. Something clattered, and I prayed to Hecate that Mom wasn’t on one of her DIY binges.

“Darling,” Dad called back to her, “there’s only two women I call ‘sweetie’ and one of them is you.”

“Lex? Is that Lex?” Mom called back.

As much as I loved their banter, I’d just stepped on to the plane. Everyone was seated, and some were staring at me. “Listen, Dad, I don’t have a lot of time as I’ve just got onto the plane.” I glanced down the aisle. Twenty-nine, twenty-eight, ah, row twenty-seven and—ohGoddess—there was an incredibly attractive man sitting in the middle seat.

Shit.

“Plane? Why are you on a plane?”

“I... uh... well, I’m coming home, Dad. I’ll be there in a couple of hours.” I shoved my bag into the overhead locker as the blisteringly hot man unbuckled his belt. I would have happily climbed over him to get to my seat.

“Oh, Lex!” my mom gushed from the other side of the phone. “Are you going to do the Samhain summoning? Ah! But I have nothing prepared! It’s tonight! I’ll need to—”

“No, Mom. I’m not doing the stupid summoning!”

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My plane buddy raised his eyebrow at me, and I mouthed “It’s a Halloween thing” before shuffling into my allocated space.

“You’re not?” The disappointment in her voice was palpable.

“You’re only twenty-seven, dear. You could wait another few years,” my father said, hopefully. Urgh, gross. As if it wasn’t bad enough having an incubus as a dad, the fact that he knew exactly what was waiting for his precious daughter when she summoned one of her very own was disgusting.

“This flight is about to take off. Please remain in your seats, buckle your seatbelts, and put all electronics into flight mode.”

“Listen... I may have done a... thing,” I said. “A well-deserved... thing, but a thing nonetheless.”

“Alexis!” both Mom and Dad bellowed in unison, causing me to hold the phone away from my ear.

A flight attendant glared at me from the middle of the plane and began his way toward me.

“Look, I have to go, but can you pick me up when I land?”

“Of course, darling. Love you,” Dad said.

“Love you too,” I said, immediately clicking off the phone and holding my hands up

for the flight attendant to see that I'd finished.

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I will not join the mile high club.

I do not need to drag the incredibly attractive man into the bathroom and fuck his brains out.

I will not join the mile high club.

This felt like hell on earth. Every time the mortal beside me moved, I felt myself dampen. I'd worn the loosest, thickest jumper I owned, but now I wished I'd put another gazillion layers on—anything that meant I didn't have to feel every time those huge biceps twitched, which was often, as he was reading. Every page he read was one page closer to me combusting.

This must be what hell is like? Surely?

How was I possibly going to spend the rest of my life this way?

A little voice in my head said, But you don't have to! Summon your incubus. You will never have to drive for hours just to fuck some strange guy ever again...

No. Nope. Not going to happen.

Don't get me wrong, it would be a hell of a lot easier if I could satiate my succubus side with sex whenever I wanted. And being mated to a sex demon would be so much better than a mortal man. I mean, credit where credit's due, a few of the mortal men were good lovers. But the majority of my sexual experiences had been...meh.

I knew how happy my parents were together. In fact, all the witches and sex demons that had mated in our coven had picture-perfect marriages. But it felt... fake. I lived in a town where each couple had their own incredibly filthy rom-com movie romance. Stuff like that just didn't happen in the outside world. And I felt uncomfortable about having to summon a demon predestined to be my mate. What if he didn't want to? And he was just sitting there, minding his own business, pleasuring some mortal, and then—BAM! Summoned! And he was just standing there, confused in my living room, as I looked at him with a creepy smile and said, "You're going to live with me from now on."

I would be no better than Chad and his coercions.

But one-night stands just weren't cutting it for me now. The thought of having to spend the rest of my life trying to scratch the itch of being part succubus was not exactly a delightful thought. I eyed the mortal beside me up and down. I was twenty-seven, with a curvy, cinched body, and not hard on the eye, if I do say so myself. It would only be a matter of a few words and, provided he was straight, single, and horny, I could probably have him in the cramped toilet of this plane if I wanted to.

But what about when I was eighty? What would I do then?

I would have to use my succubus touch to make a man want me. And that in and of itself was exactly what I was trying to avoid. I never touched a mortal man without knowing for certain that he already wanted to fuck me. On one hand, I could summon the demon that had been fated to be my mate, not knowing if he was actually willing or not. On the other hand, I would have years of sex ahead of me, then turn into a withered old crone on the lookout for men with granny fetishes.

But, Dad was right, I was still young and could spare a few more years before making up my mind.



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It took me the entire journey through the airport and into the cool Seattle air before I finally rid myself of the mortal's scent.

After much searching, I eventually saw my mom in the short-stay car park, waving frantically the moment she recognized me. She was almost my exact replica, except two decades my senior. She had the same full, ruddy lips, the same big doe eyes housing slightly too large, mossy green irises. The only difference was our hair color. Where Mom had billowing curves of blonde, slowly turning silver, hair, I had the same thick russet hair as my father.

I waved back, sucked in a breath, and marched my way over. Of course, my mom was happy to see me. And I was sure her joy at having her only daughter back home would last a full three minutes before she started berating me, switching between trying to convince me to make the Samhain summoning and demanding to know what in Hecate's green earth I had done to have to induce a coven trial.

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Surprisingly, Mom's good mood lasted a full five minutes before she glanced over at me, her knuckles slightly white on the steering wheel, and said, "Okay, dear. Give it to me. What have you done?"

When I told her how Chad had propositioned me, she turned the color of hell-flame, her brows knitting together. This was, fortunately, short-lived as I told her about the hex I'd cast.

"You hexed his penis off?" she sputtered, trying desperately not to laugh.

"Only a little bit," I said. "I didn't have much to work with to begin with."

She was practically howling with laughter. "Oh, Goddess, I wish I could have seen that. Oh! I will, at the trial!"

I was not looking forward to that part. When the head of the coven finally finished reading over my paperwork, as I supported my carpal tunnel wrist, everyone would have the chance to watch a blow-by-blow account of my ordeal before they passed judgment.

I knew Mom would be okay watching it. She would know I was never in any real danger, and I could have done a hell of a lot more than hex his favorite appendage off. But it was my dad who I was worried about. He could get a little... feral... where his family was involved. There was one time where we went on holiday to Disney World, the last place you'd think of someone trying to take advantage of a lone woman. Dad had taken me on the Haunted Mansion ride, while Mom, who'd queued with us despite having an intense fear of haunted houses (which was insane, given

where we lived), made a last-minute claim that she had to use the bathroom. Dad had rolled his eyes and said to meet us at the exit of the ride. When we got off, she was nowhere to be seen. Dad immediately followed his mating pull to the nearest toilets, where he found Mom around the back, a look of determination on her face as a drunk man in some Mickey Mouse ears told her things my then four-year-old ears couldn't understand. But I knew they were bad, because just as flames crackled in my mom's palms, my father had closed the gap between them, his shadows creeping in tendrils from the surrounding foliage as he lifted the drunk man by the neck and hissed, "Apologize to my wife."

"S-s-sorry!" the man had slurred, but my father still stared into the drunk man's wide, fearful eyes. My father's eyes glowed like brimstone as he squeezed.

"Arch," my mom had pleaded. "Put him down. He's apologized."

My mother had been about to throw witchfire at the man, but whatever was brewing in my father was terrible enough for even my mother not to want him to use it. Finally, the tendrils of smoke crept back into the depths of the foliage, and my father dropped the man to the floor, casually straightening the strings of his vest top. "If you so much as look at my wife again, I will kill you.Slowly."

If my dad saw what Chad had attempted to do to me, I hadno doubt that he would be on the first plane to Sacramento, and all that would be left of dear old Chad would be his shriveled up dick.

I chewed the inside of my lip. My mom had summoned my dad, and he loved her fiercely enough to kill for her. He loved her beyond fiercely. I truly believed he would burn this earth to the ground for her. It didn't seem forced. He didn't seem to be in servitude to her.

"Mom?" I asked tentatively.

“Yes, honey?”

“How does the summoning work?”

Mom’s grin literally stretched from ear to ear. She quickly righted herself, settling her face into a studious pose, even though she’d been waiting for this day since I’d turned eighteen and could legally perform the summoning.

“Well, you know how the summoning works, dear. You know the spell and what it entails. You just pop all the herbs that appeal to you into a cauldron of boiling water, and before the midnight bell ends on Samhain, simply drop a—”

“I know the technicalities, Mom, of course I do.” I tried my best to think of what exactly I was trying to ask my mother. “I mean... I know that our ancestors had made a Goddess-blessed bargain with a clan of incubi. And I know part of that bargain means that the demon we summon will be our mate. But...” Goddess, this was incredibly hard to articulate when I had to say it out loud. “But do they have a choice in it?”

“Hm?” Mom asked, her brows knitting in confusion.

“I mean, we have the choice, Mom. If I never partake in the Samhain summoning, then that is my choice. But the incubus we summon, they don’t have that luxury. What if they don’t want to be summoned? And then one day they’re just ripped from all that they know and love and forced into a bond that they never wanted?”

Mom’s eyes flicked to mine, and before I knew it, she was indicating and pulling onto the sidewalk.

She bit her lip. “Sweetie,” she said cautiously, “do you know how the mating bond works?”

I snorted. “Yes, Mom. You meet someone who is your other half in every other way. The ying to your yang, the Bill to your Ted, the Kermit to—”

“I get your point, dear. But do you know why we have a mating bond? Did you ever wonder why it travels between species and across realms?”

I thought for a moment. “Uh... no... I don’t.”

“It’s because all mating bonds are fated. As in, Goddess blessed. Just because we summon our mates from the shadow realm doesn’t make the bond any less special. It’s fated, dear. As in, it was already fated that our ancestor would make that bargain, and that every demon in that clan was destined to be mated with one of our witches. It had been planned for eons. The how, where and why might be different, but it will happen regardless.” Surprisingly, my mother smiled. “Did your grandma ever tell you how she met her mate?”

I shook my head. My grandfather was a sex demon like the rest of the coven’s mates, so I’d always just assumed that she’d met him with the summoning.

“You get your stubbornness from her. She had the exact same notions as you, that if she summoned her mate, it wouldn’t be a real bonding. And so, like you, she went far, far away. And yet she still met him randomly in some grungy punk bar in London.”

My mouth hung open, and I didn’t know what to be more shocked by—the fact that the mating had happened regardless of the summoning, or the fact that my grandmother, head of our coven and never without her frilly white apron, had once been a punk.

“My point is, dear, do the summoning or don’t. It doesn’t matter. Your mate is fated to find you, regardless.”

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I never realized how much I missed my childhood home until I was staring up at it. It was somewhere between a mansion and a log cabin, with overlapping wooden slats painted black, offset by the thousands of flowers and creeping vines, all miraculously still in full bloom, even though it was the end of October.

The door creaked open, despite no one being there to open it. My mom ushered me inside, and I dropped my bag to the floor. I stared at it stupidly for a few seconds, but it didn't disappear. All the houses in Briar Coven were magicked to cater to your every need. Or, at the very least, what they thought you needed. Usually, the moment my bags hit the floor, the house would have magicked them up to my room and unpacked everything for me.

“Is there something wrong with the house?” I asked Mom.

“Literally moments before you rang, a pipe burst in the bathroom and your room got flooded, honey.”

I groaned. Great! Where was I supposed to sleep? Of the three spare bedrooms the house had, one was an office, one was a gym, and the other was my mother's spell room.

Mom shrugged nonchalantly while directing me toward the living room. “Your grandma said she'd sort something out for you.”

“Is that you, sweetie?” my dad called from the kitchen.

“Which one?” my mom answered.

“Either!”

I walked into the kitchen, and it was exactly the same as I remembered it, miraculously untouched by one of Mom’s DIY binges. The floor was a mismatch of ancient stone. The cupboards were shaker style (“A classic,” my mom had said when she won the coin toss against my dad when picking the cabinets over a decade ago), the black marble countertops flecked with gold, and a small table with four chairs. We only ever used the main dining room across the hall when we had guests, but this small table held so many memories, most of which usually involved my brother staring blankly into space while chewing with his mouth open.

The air was filled with the smell of rosemary and thyme, making my mouth water.

Dad pulled off his oven mitts and crossed the room in a flash, pulling me into a bear hug and smacking his lips against my cheek.

“I missed you very much, Lex,” he said, cooing down at me before finally releasing his death-grip. “I hope you’re hungry—roast chicken dinner!”

“I could literally murder one of your dinners.” Squeezing his hand, I said, “I missed you too, Dad.”

Dad beamed from ear to ear. “Okay, go get your brother and we can catch up while we eat.”

My brother, I did not miss. Jake was the most annoying little shit to ever walk Hecate’s green earth. I swear, he was only put on this earth for the sole purpose of annoying the shit out of me. Two years my junior, he quickly learned every way possible to annoy me, from slurping loudly to making it his life’s mission to learn every secret I

possessed, only to hold it against me like some fucking spy years later.

Male witches were rare in our coven—like, think shiny Charizard rare. About one in one thousand rare. Jake could get away with murder, and he knew it.

“Jake!” I called up the stairs.

“What?” he cried back, over the sound of whatever genre of noise he considered “music” coming from his bedroom.

“Dinner!” I yelled back.

I was met with nothing but louder music coming from his room.

I stared into the empty hallway. “Help me out, House? For old time’s sake?”

A split second later, a series of loud curses emanated from Jake’s room, followed by angry footsteps and the slamming of a door. Jake, nostrils flared, stomped down the stairs like a moody teen instead of the twenty-five-year-old PhD student he supposedly was. He was covered head to toe in his underwear, which he peeled off with every step, the house magicking them back to their drawer above the moment they touched the floor.

“Seriously, Lex? Getting the house to do your dirty work for you? I hate you,” he grumbled, slinging an arm over my shoulder in a half hug.

“Hate you too,” I replied sweetly.

## Chapter 4. Lochran

It was the day of the Samhain summoning, and I struggled to open my eyes. Finally, I



pried them open, but remained in my bed, staring up at the smoky ceiling. I never had the energy to imagine this room as anything more than a square box with a bed. Occasionally, I'd conjure a kitchenette. Not that I needed mortal food to survive, but there was something relaxing about just getting in from an exhausting day in the mortal realm, pulling out the flour and milk and making an imaginary breakfast of pancakes and bacon. It felt homey.

The moment I got out of bed, I was fully clothed. Today, in a white T-shirt, jeans, and a leather jacket that made me look like I was auditioning for a part in Grease. My legs felt like lead as I crossed the room and made my way into the small bathroom. I didn't have to brush or floss in this realm, but it felt grim not to, especially as I had to do it so often in the human realm.

The door to my bedroom opened directly onto the dark street as I couldn't be bothered imagining the rest of the house. A few of the demons walking slowly toward the town hall nodded enthusiastically at me. Some wore optimistic smiles, hoping that today would be their day to be summoned. Most, however, were indifferent. These were the young demons, all born of the shadows less than eighteen years ago and whose fated mates weren't yet legally allowed to summon them.

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Without warning, a mass of shadows engulfed me, settling into arms that draped over both my shoulders.

“Evening,” Ambrose said, his midnight eyes twinkling mischievously.

From my other side, Blaise poked me in the ribs, hard enough to make me wince.

This pair of demons was somewhat unusual for our realm. Most sex demons were solitary beings, but this pair did everything together, including feeding.

“I heard about Devlin,” Blaise said, his golden eyes flashing in the eerie streetlights.

“If we’re not summoned this Samhain, we should go and find him. See if he’s okay,” Ambrose said. His dark skin practically glowed in the soft blue street light. He reminded me of a cattail swaying peacefully, haloed by a swollen full moon, his eyes the soft glittering of a depthless black lake. Calmness. Serenity.

His partner, Blaise, was the midnight owl, golden eyed and always on the hunt.

The four of us had been born of the shadows at the same time and had all spent our early years prowling the mortal realms together. While Devlin and I had become almost consumed with the thought of meeting our mate, the bond between Ambrose and Blaise had spurred them forward, and neither had yet tired of the hunt.

The pair rarely ventured back to the shadow realm these days. Instead, they remained in the mortal world, and had even started to pick up some work as supernatural bodyguards for the less physically strong magical creatures.

“I think he needs some time to sort his shit out,” I said.

Ambrose nodded, and the pair finally unlatched their heavy arms from me as the town hall materialized in front of us. It was nothing spectacular—a simple stone building with white, wooden shutters and a bell tower on top that looked more in keeping with an ancient British church than a town hall. The first demon of our clan to have imagined it into existence was the demon that made the bargain with Hecate. The twin of this town hall lay nestled in the mortal realm in the town the Briar Coven witches resided in. Though the location of the coven was a closely guarded secret from all non-mated sex demons, apparently when the witches had moved from their original settlement, the buildings had moved with them. Something about magicked houses, if the older demons were to be believed.

The doors to the town hall swung open. It was one of the few places in this realm that was draped in color, the excitement from all the incubi and succubi fueling the thought of this place. Garlands of herbs hung from the rafters, tapering down the furthest wall and engulfing a stone statue of Hecate upon the small dais. In the middle of the hall was a table creaking under the weight of food.

I took the same place I did every year, Devlin’s seat noticeably empty beside me.

The room filled with noise and chatter. It was a rare occasion that so many of the clan were together at the same time. Stories were exchanged—most of sexual exploits, which mortal TV shows they’d recently watched, or adventures they’d happened upon in the mortal realm.

Ambrose and Blaise were talking excitedly to a succubus, Sasha, who was swearing on everything unholy that she had been bedded by a kraken-like creature and was explaining in depth the benefits of having so many tentacles.

A clock on the far wall tick-tick-ticked loudly in my ear, my heartbeat slowly

increasing with every moment it crept closer to midnight. Finally, as the first midnight toll echoed, the entire room hushed, and I could feel all eyes glancing excitedly around.

Nothing happened.

The second, third, fourth, and fifth tolls sounded.

From the far end of the room, shadows pooled around a grinning incubus. In the blink of an eye, he was gone.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth bells tolled.

Shadows engulfed Sasha, her face impassive as she disappeared into nothingness.

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh bells tolled, and my heart sank.

Another year of hunting. In a split second, I decided I would do everything within my power not to think of my mate this year. Scrap the daydreams of Samhain summonings and focus on me for a while.

The toll of the twelfth bell echoed around the room.

The hairs on my arm stood up as the ringing filled my ears. Just as the chime began to fade, shadows swirled around me.

## Chapter 5. Lex

Dinner was a cheery affair. For the rest of my family, at least.

I, however, had started to feel the prickle of dread skitter over me in anticipation of

going to meet my grandmother. While my grandmother was loving, kind, and doting usually, tonight, I would be addressing her as the head of the coven.

I would be treated as any other wayward witch in the coven, our blood ties set aside for the evening.

Finally, my mom escorted me the short distance to my grandma's house. Each house in the coven was different, molded by the magic within. We passed houses that looked like they'd been pulled straight from a suburbia catalog, chalets, log cabins, and gothic houses that looked like the Addams family resided within.

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My grandmother's home resembled a Victorian London townhouse. It looked like it should have been nestled between a continuous block of identical, red-bricked houses, but it sat solitary, tall, narrow, and reaching for the stars.

The acid green door swung open the moment our feet touched the first step, welcoming us into the narrow hallway.

"Come in," my grandmother's voice echoed from deep within the house. The door to the left slowly swung open, revealing a dark room bathed in swaths of velvet and sheer material from floor to ceiling. Hundreds of candles flickered, reflecting off the massive crystal ball in the center of the room, making it look like it might combust at any moment.

Grandma sat on an ornately carved black chair, her face impassive. A necklace of bones and twigs hung down her chest, clashing with her floral blouse and bright white apron. She held her cane by her side, carved into the shape of a snake with bright ruby eyes that bore into me.

"Alexis Cole." Her voice was steely and bore no resemblance to the grandmother that would sneak me cookies before mealtimes. "You have performed a hex on a mortal and will be judged by your peers in four nights' time. Until then, you will perform no magic." Her cane clashed to the ground, and it felt like cold water had been thrown over me, prickling all over my body as I felt the last wisps of magic fade. "You will not leave the confines of the coven." Her cane cracked against the hardwood floor once more. "And you will write your confession, as is our way." The cane clattered a final time, and a black, leather book appeared on Grandma's knee.

She picked it up and flicked through it. Voice back to her usual doting self, she cooed, “Oh! Look at this. Only thirty pages, sweetie. Not too bad at all.”

Thirty pages (technically sixty, as it was front and back) wasn’t too bad, but the most I’d had to physically write out since high school was my name at the bottom of Yuletide cards. I would definitely be sporting carpal tunnel by the time the trial came about.

Grandma pulled the bone necklace off over her silver bob, dropping it unceremoniously onto the chair behind her. She gracefully made her way over to me, her cane an accessory as opposed to an actual walking aid.

Grandma threw her arms over me, planting a wet kiss on my cheek. “It’s good to have you back, dear. Even given the circumstances. Now, your mother tells me you’re looking for a place to stay?”

“Yes, Grandma,” I said, my eyes unconsciously glancing up in the direction of the room I would stay in when I slept over.

Grandma chuckled, pushing the leather notebook into one of my hands, an ancient, blackened key into the other. “I have somewhere else in mind.”

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The house was... abandoned.

Like, longtime abandoned.

The floorboards creaked as I walked through the hallway and into the ancient kitchen, the house assessing my every move. Stacks of dusty books littered the old farmhouse-style table. The kitchen cabinets looked to be at least a hundred years old, hand

carved and stained by time. The countertop was a single sheet of copper, peppered with patina and oddly beautiful. This was not the kind of house I'd ever be able to conjure from my imagination, but as I ran my finger over the worktop, tapping my fingertips lightly off the huge ceramic sink, I instantly fell in love.

Heat bloomed in the room, swirling around me, and I knew the feeling was mutual.

"We've left you some supplies, dear, and the house will provide the rest."

"Thank you, Grandma," I said, bidding my voice not to crack.

"That's okay, dear," she said, cupping my cheek. She glanced over my shoulder at an ancient cuckoo clock on the wall. "Dearie me! Look at the time! Almost three hours to midnight!"

I felt my lips purse, knowing exactly what Grandma was about to ask me.

She dropped her hand and casually walked to the door, feigning interest in the stacks of books she passed, before turning to me and asking nonchalantly, "Will you be partaking in the Samhain summoning this evening, dear?"

The house creaked and groaned with excitement.

"You know I won't, Grandma."

The cool air of disappointment swirled around my ankles.

"Ah," she said, her face dropping slightly. "Well, I guess that's that, then."

"Mm-hmm," I mused.



“Anyway, dear, you have a lot to get done before the trial.” Her eyes flicked to the leather notebook. “Goodnight.”

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I spent just over an hour procrastinating and exploring the house. The living room was dominated by a huge stone fireplace, a garland of autumnal leaves and berries atop the mantle, pumpkins of varying sizes littering the ground around it. The house, surprisingly, had electricity. I spied a few old paint-encrusted sockets around, but it seemed to enjoy the authenticity of candlelight instead.

Four bedrooms were nestled upstairs, and after a quick glance in each of them, I naturally settled for the biggest room as my own. It had an en suite, which was shared with the adjacent room, complete with an avocado toilet, sink, and bath.

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The main bathroom was at the other end of the landing, nestled between the two smallest rooms. While this bathroom was decidedly less garish, with a white cast-iron bath and mosaic floor tiles, the avocado one would do me just fine.

When I finally cleared enough clutter off the kitchen table to make space for my notebook, a little candle on a black, cast-iron holder appeared beside me, as did a chewed-up ballpoint pen.

“Thank you,” I said to the house, and the flame flickered merrily in response. I began the arduous task of writing down every minute interaction with Chad that had led up to the incident of the hex. It was slow and laborious, and my wrist ached by the time I finally set the pen down. Five pages. That was all I’d managed in two effing hours.

I rubbed my wrist and straightened in the chair, feeling an ache in my lower back. Stretching, cringing at the series of pops in my back, I decided to sit down on the plush couch with the intention of watching Netflix on my phone as there was no TV in this house.

The cuckoo clock read 11:55 p.m. as I made my way into the living room. I wondered how many witches would be doing the summoning this evening. It had always been exciting over the few days after Samhain to look out for new faces in the coven.

As I settled into the couch, I let out an involuntary moan. It might have been scruffy and threadbare in some places, but it had to be singularly the most comfortable couch I’d ever sat on.

“I bet you’ve seen your fair share of summonings,” I said to the house.

In answer, the fire roared in the hearth, and a large, black cauldron with a crack on the rim appeared out of thin air.

“I will not be summoning a sex demon tonight,” I said, a finality to my tone.

In response, a stream of warm water squirted out of the cauldron, landing directly on my chest.

“What was that for?” I said, jumping to my feet and rubbing my chest furiously. The cauldron squirted at me again, but I managed to avoid it. “Oh, ha ha,” I said sarcastically. “Nice euphemism, House.”

The herbs drying from the ceiling rafters rustled, and a small rose quartz appeared on the mantelpiece. The sneaky house! It was trying none too subtly to convince me to do the ritual. All it would take would be to drop my favorite herbs and spices, along with the rose quartz, into the cauldron as the clock struck midnight.

“No,” I said sternly to the house. “Back off.”

The house seemed to sigh. Whether through disappointment or guilt at trying to pressure me, I couldn’t tell.

I chose to believe the latter, for a moment later, the cauldron had disappeared, and the kettle whistled from the kitchen.

“Apology tea?” I asked, and the whistle became louder.

I crossed into the kitchen and ran my hands over the cups hanging under the cupboard. My fingers clasped around a pretty little china teacup with a chip in the rim. I placed it in front of the kettle, and the cupboard door above me swung open. My grandma’s idea of supplies was an entire cupboard dedicated to tea. Unsurprising,

as it was a witch's favorite brew.

My nailsclinked on the glass as I ran my fingers over the jars, checking the cardboard tags for the contents. I really should have gone for a lavender and chamomile based one to help induce sleep—Goddess knew I would need the rest if I was ever going to finish the notebook. Instead, I settled on my favorite tea, a blend of cinnamon, cloves, and orange rind. I tipped a healthy measure into the tea strainer and poured the hot water over it. The spices filled my nostrils, and a deep feeling of home settled into my bones.

“Thank you,” I said to the house as I made my way back into the living room. I took a deep swig of the tea before setting it down on the side table and pulled out my phone, making quick work of searching for the Netflix app.

The midnight bell tolled from somewhere deep in the heart of the village, matched by the trill of the cuckoo clock in the kitchen. Smiling, and settled, I reached out to grab my cup of tea, but my fingers were met with empty air. I glanced down at the side table, confused. The cup of tea wasn't there.

Flicking my eyes over the room, I finally spied it on the stonehearth. The rose quartz glinted mischievously above it, and my stomach dropped.

“Oh no you don't!” I warned the house, standing up and holding a cautionary hand out. I was taking a step forward when a number of things happened simultaneously and in painfully slow motion.

Acrackechoed from one of the shelves, and a glass jar full of marbles that I hadn't noticed before broke open, the balls of glass clattering to the floor and spreading in all directions. I couldn't seem to stop my already descending foot from standing on a concentrated pool of said marbles before I was cartoon-like stumbling toward the fireplace, automatically reaching out for the mantelpiece to steady myself. I managed

to grasp hold of the soot-stained oak, saving my face from connecting with the wall, but inadvertently shook it, causing the rose quartz to teeter. I managed to reach out, just as the quartz began its descent toward my cup of tea—tea made from my favorite blend of herbs—but it was too late. The quartz slipped through my fingers and landed with a softplop.

Shadows erupted from the cup, coiling around me before pooling on the couch.

“What have you done?” I hissed at the house as the finalcoodied from the clock in the kitchen.

I turned to glare at the shadow smoke that was clearing from the form on the couch. The outline of heavy, black shadow wings, one slightly crooked, was the last to disappear and—

Wow.

I mean, I knew sex demons were all devastatingly beautiful. But this one, he looked asif he’d been crafted from my wildest dreams.

His dark hair was long on top and cropped at the sides, revealing a thick scar that ran across his temple and toward the base of his skull. His face was chiseled, and he dressed surprisingly casually for a demon whose sole purpose was seduction.

His angular jaw was clean shaven, and something in his thick neck pulsed as he turned his violet eyes toward me.

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Heat pooled in my innards, and I resisted the urge to reach up and fix my hair, which was surely sticking out at ridiculous angles in its messy bun.

Holy fuck, I was in trouble.

My unwanted sex demon was hot as hell.

### Chapter 6. Lochran

My shadow smoke pooled around me as I felt a softness beneath envelop my ass and thighs. A couch. The softest couch I'd ever sat on. As the smoke began to clear, I searched the room for my mate—my wonderful, kind mate who had finally decided to summon me.

Finally, I saw her.

I didn't quite know what I'd been expecting. Perhaps someone glamorous, ready to be wined and dined by her new sex demon before having her brains fucked out. Or maybe even a witch in sexy lace lingerie, wanting to skip the meal part and get straight to the fucking.

What I hadn't expected to see was a curvy, petite little witch in her slobbiest house clothes, russet hair in a messy bun with a few loose strands brushing over her shoulders.

Something pulsed in my neck, and my dick twitched.

Of all the images I'd ever conjured of my mate, dressed like we were about to spend the evening snuggled up and watching Netflix was my favorite.

I sucked in a deep breath and tried not to shiver in delight as the smell of pent-up desire filled the room. It was... unlike anything I'd ever smelled before. Words had not yet been invented that could describe the mouthwatering scent of my mate's desire, but cozy, primal, and addictive came close. She smelled as sweet as Samhain spices, like she should be falling into my arms and resting her head against my chest just so I could bury my face into her messy bun and breathe in more of her scent. I could practically feel my treacherous stomach churn in anticipation of feasting on her.

I could easily imagine bending her over the kitchen table, pulling those sweatpants down and feeling my way into her oversized sweater with one hand, grasping that messy bun in the other, as I fucked her—

“Fuck!” she screamed at the ceiling.

“So soon? But you haven't even asked me my name,” I said, determined for my voice to remain sultry. Confused, I was unsure what I'd done wrong in the split second I'd been here, but I sure as hell wasn't about to let my mate see my insecurity. Maybe I wasn't what she'd pictured? We appeared in our true forms to our mates, but maybe she was expecting someone more like Henry Cavill. The thought that my mate might not be attracted to me made an odd stabbing sensation in my gut. I unconsciously moved my head to the side, so she'd see less of the scar running across my scalp.

“Not you,” she growled, her brows furrowed in annoyance. “This fucking house.”

Okay...

“Look, why don't you just go back to wherever you came from, while I find a match

and some gas to burn this house to the ground,” she hissed. Her eyes narrowed, glaring from side to side before finally spying a box of matches on a side table. She lunged, but the moment her hands clasped around it, the little box disappeared, reappearing on the mantelpiece. She lunged again, her hands grasping around empty air as the matchbox appeared on the armrest beside me.

“Look, as entertaining as”—I waved my hands at her—“whatever this is, you summoned me, witch. And I can’t go back. We’re... mates.” I stumbled at the last word, my voice inflecting and making it sound like a question.

Perhaps it was a question. She didn’t seem to be quite as excited to meet me as I had been for her. Another glance at her and I realized that was an understatement. Her full lips were pursed, her thick, sculpted brows furrowed... yeah. My mate definitely wasn’t happy that I was here. So why had she summoned me?

“I didn’t summon you, demon,” she snapped, narrowed eyes searching for the matchbox. “And don’t use the M word.”

Taking a calming breath, I willed myself to play it cool. I’d waited too long for this moment to tap out without a fight. And I would fight for our mating bond, even if she wasn’t willing to.

I held up my hand in a defensive nature, certain she could hex me into oblivion given the mood she was in. “Okay. Well, if you didn’t summon me, then why am I here?”

She placed a hand on her hip, her sweater riding up ever so slightly to show the supple curve of her waist, the slight indent from the band of her underwear—shit, were those girl boxers? I tried my best to will my dick to stop twitching. This was clearly not the time or place to picture running my teeth over the elastic band as my fingers slid between—



“This treacherous house,” she said, her voice venomous enough to bring me back to reality, “tricked me into summoning you.”

“So, you did summon me... just not on purpose.” I stood up, unsure of what to do with myself. She didn’t want me here, but she had to know that I couldn’t go back to the shadow realm once I’d been summoned.

My mate let out a sigh, as if she’d just come to the realization that, for now anyway, she would be stuck with me.

“What’s your name?” she asked curtly.

“Lochran,” I answered, matching her tone. “You?”

It was a moment before she offered me her name. “Alexis. But you can call me Lex.NeverLexi.”

I took a step forward. Her oversized sweater fell from her shoulder, revealing skin that looked soft and inviting. A strand of loose, russet hair billowed out of the bun, cascading over her naked shoulder. Unconsciously, my hand reached out to brush it away—

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“Ouch!” A sharp pain seared through the top of my hand, and I instinctively pulled it into my chest, rubbing the red welt furiously with my other hand.

The handle of a broom that wasn’t there a split second ago waved furiously at me from her side. I reckoned if I took another step, the magicked broom would undoubtedly beat me to within an inch of my life.

“Oh, now you want to be on my side?” she called to the house, swatting the broom away. The broom simply dodged each of her swats before dashing over to the corner and idly brushing the same spot in slow, laborious swirls.

“Look,” she said, pulling her narrowed gaze from the broom to look directly at me. “I know it’s not your fault this house summoned you. And I know you can’t go back now. But let’s get a few things straight. I didn’t want to summon you here. I have some very important things to do over the next few days, and then we can figure out what to do with you. Until then, there will be no touching of any kind, unless it’s a mutual decision.”

“What if you fall down a well and are unconscious? Can I touch you then to rescue you?”

She glared at me, though her attempt at annoyance didn’t settle fully on her features.

“You’re the one that wanted to discuss boundaries!” I chided.

Ignoring my comment, though with somewhat more softness to her tone, she continued, “We’ll be sleeping in separate rooms.”

“What, no sleepovers? But I wanted to braid your hair,” I said, my voice sultry. I couldn’t seem to help myself. I wasn’t usually a tit-for-tat kind of demon, but there was something about this witch that made me want totathertit. And if she didn’t want to be swept off her feet in an all-consuming romance with her fated mate, then I guessed friendship it would be. Friends-to-lovers was a romance trope, right?

Now I wished I’d paid more attention to Devlin when he gushed about his latest romance read.

Rolling her eyes, she said, “Let’s be clear. I didn’t mean for this to happen. Let’s just respect each other’s boundaries, and while we’re figuring out what to do...” She trailed off, and a moment later, said through gritted teeth, “We can get to know one another.”

Getting to know one another wasn’t quite what I had in mind, but it wasn’t an out-and-out rejection, which I guessed was something.

She looked at me, her brow raising in a did-you-get-all-that gesture.

“NoMword. No touching. Separate rooms. Become besties.” I ticked each one off with a finger, and she rolled her eyes again. “So, if you didn’t summon me to give you the best orgasm of your life, what do you want to do?”

Her face softened, as if she hadn’t thought that far ahead. Finally, she said, “Want a cup of tea?”

## Chapter 7. Lex

The seat creaked under Lochran’s weight as he settled down at the cluttered table. The house magicked away the dusty books from the space in front of him and stacked them on a shelf at the far side of the room. The kettle whistled merrily as I pulled two

floral teacups off their hooks and set them in front of me.

“What kind of tea do you want?” I asked, opening the cupboard and glancing at all the labels. My hand automatically grasped for my favorite blend. Remembering what happened the last time I had cinnamon and clove tea, I instead opted for the lavender blend.

“English breakfast,” Lochran said as his head whipped from side to side, examining the kitchen. “One sugar, a drop of milk.” A silver sugar bowl appeared in front of me, as did a ceramic jug of fresh milk. I poured the hot water into the cups and turned to face the demon while I waited for the tea to brew. He’d removed the leather jacket, and my first thought was I need those huge arms around me. Now.

His nostrils flared and a slight grin twitched at his lips, but he remained focused on examining the kitchen.

“Nice place you’ve got here.”

“There’s no need to be sarcastic,” I snapped back at him. While the house was ancient and filled with all sorts of crap, there was an unusual charm about it. Despite its treacherous ways, there was something deeply endearing about the house, and I felt a strange protectiveness over its crooked walls and copper worktops.

“I wasn’t being sarcastic, witch. I meant it. I feel like I could explore this place for days and still not have seen even half of what it has to offer.”

His answer seemed to please the house, for the broom swept its way over to him and tentatively leaned over his shoulder as if examining the welt it had given him earlier. Lochran reached his shovel-like hand behind him. With more gentleness than I thought possible for a demon his size, he crooked a finger and tickled the handle. The broom quivered, butting its handle further into the demon’s touch.

“Traitor,” I whispered to the house.

In response, the broom, as if breaking from its trance, zoomed off to the corner and began idly sweeping up once more.

After a few moments of awkward silence, I dropped a splash of milk into Lochran’s cup and brought the tea over, pushing his across the table to him. He took a sip and said, “Not as good as they make it in England, witch. But it’ll do.”

I had an uncontrollable urge to kick his shins under the table. Imagine! Telling a witch that someone else made tea better than them! I mean, there might be an argument that British witches did make better tea than the American witches, but it was a faux pas to point it out.

As I took a deep breath to restrain myself from physical assault, his eyes drifted down and landed on my notebook. “Oh, someone’s been a naughty little witch,” he said, reaching a hand out.

I was quicker. I pulled my notebook out of his grasp, causing a malevolent smile to cross his lips. “And here I was, thinking a little goody-two-shoes had summoned me. I do like a little wicked on the side.”

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My traitorous heart fluttered, and heat pooled in my stomach. “For the umpteenth time, I didn’t summon you. It was the house.”

“Tell me.” He leaned slightly over the table, his voice soft, like glowing embers. “What wicked things have you done, little witch?”

I leaned toward him and, in as sweet a voice as I could muster, said, “Fuck about and find out, demon.”

Lochran’s eyes widened, and after a very brief moment of silence, he threw his head back and laughed. Each deep peal rippled through me, and I thought I might genuinely combust at any moment.

Finally, as his laughter died, I stood up and said, “Anyway, it’s late. I’ll show you to your room.”

He stood, cup of tea forgotten, and made a gesture for me to lead the way. “Witches first.”

I led him into the hallway, the little candles on the sconces bursting into flames, illuminating the stairs and second-floor landing. Despite being well ahead of him, as I took the stairs two steps at a time, his face was directly in line with my ass. Somehow, I felt his hot breath curl around me, sending yet another jolt of desire through my core. I heard a soft groan from behind me and prayed that he could only feed while having skin-to-skin contact. I’d done everything within my power not to learn too much about the feeding habits of sex demons because it was fucking grim to think about the non-witch side of my family doing that. But now I had an uninvited

incubus spending the night, I wished I knew more.

The stairs seemed to take forever to ascend, but finally, we reached the landing. I had debated giving him the second-biggest room—the one that faced mine. But that would mean sharing an en suite, and I had no desire whatsoever to do that. I directed him to the room furthest away from mine and reached out for the doorknob. The brass was cool beneath my fingers as I twisted, but the door remained steadfastly shut.

After a few more twists and a too-hard shove with my shoulder that did absolutely nothing, I turned my attention to the smallest room. Again, the house refused me access.

“Having trouble there, dear?” Lochran called, amusement tinging his every word.

“Not at all,” I said, spinning on my heel and marching down to the other side of the landing. Tentatively, I stood, staring at the room opposite mine.

“You’ve had your fun now, House,” I whispered. “But I’ll never forgive you if you make him share a room with me.”

In answer, the door swung open.

The house had dressed Lochran’s room with home comforts to the best of its ability. Knotty rugs littered the floor, candles and tattered books covered the surfaces. A closet door was ajar, showcasing an array of clothes. Where it got them from, I had no idea. The bed was covered in an assortment of quilted duvets and crochet blankets and—I blanched—attached to each of the bedposts was a length of black silk.

“Oh,” he said, crossing the room to the bed, a wickedly handsome grin on his face. He ran the silk over his fingers before turning to me and saying, “I like these.”

And that was my cue to leave.

“Goodnight!” I called over my shoulder, not giving him the chance to respond.

I spent the next ten minutes walking aimlessly around my room, trying desperately to rid myself of this pent-up energy that was pooling below my stomach. I’d changed into three different pairs of pajamas before settling on a skimpy string top and a pair of shorts. A bit more marching around, and I finally decided it was no use.

I slipped into bed and wiggled into the middle. The bed was hot, as if another body had been settled underneath where I lay just moments before. I narrowed my eyes at the ceiling. This house was devious in the most subtle of ways.

A sigh escaped my lips as I traced my fingers up and down the inside of my thigh.

If I were going to have any chance of not barging into the sex demon’s bedroom, ripping my clothes off, and begging him to take me here and now, I was going to have to do something.

My fingers moved to lightly trace the hem of my boxer shorts.

I bit my lip and glanced at the door. There were two doors and a landing between us. And he was most likely asleep by now.

My fingers dipped under the material, fingering gently over the narrow strip of hair. My clit pulsed, despite not touching it. It wasn’t going to take me long to come. With a final glance at the door, I traced my fingers between my aching folds, wetness coating them in the first stroke.

An image of Lochran pinning me to the bed, his thick arms either side of me as his dark flop of hair fell over his forehead, bubbled to the forefront of my mind. Yeah, it



was totally counterintuitive to masturbate to the image of the man I was resolutely trying not to take to my bed, but my mind's eye just wouldn't let me conjure anyone else.

I could almost hear Lochran's gentle groans as I pictured his hands dipping between us, the heat of his touch scorching as he ran his finger through my folds for the first time, his fingertip gliding slowly in exploration.

Was he the kind of demon who would take it slow? Worshipping every inch of me and wringing out every ounce of pleasure my body could muster? Or would he drive himself into me, fucking me into oblivion until I was screaming his name over and over again?

Tonight, I opted for the second mental image, my desperate need to come undone nearly overwhelming.

I plunged a finger inside me, my walls hot and yearning for more. I remembered his shovel-like hands and added a second finger. My thumb grazed over my swollen clit, desperate for more friction as my fingers plunged in and out of me. The sound of my wetness was almost deafening, but I couldn't stop. I was so close.

The image of Lochran crooking his finger as he gently stroked the broom flashed in my mind's eye, and my fingers curled inside me, grazing over that sensitive spot that had me biting down on my duvet to stop from screaming.

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My other hand unconsciously pulled my vest top up and caressed a heavy breast before pulling on my nipple tightly—not enough to hurt, but just enough to send a jolt of energy straight to my apex. I bucked into empty air, plunging my fingers deep inside me as my thumb roughly ran over my clit in frantic flicks.

My teeth ground together in a desperate attempt not to scream Lochran's name as my orgasm washed over me, wave after wave, each clench of my walls around my slender fingers telling me I needed more. I needed a thick incubus dick inside me, and I was only one room away from him.

No, Lex! Remember the sex ban!

It felt like forever before I could uncurl my toes and my muscles unlocked. With a deep sigh, I rolled over and pulled the duvet up to my neck. Just the thought of Lochran's fingers had given me the quickest, most powerful orgasm of my life. For the first time in averylong time, the succubus side of me was satiated.

Shit.

My resolve to not have sex was really going to be put to the test.

### Chapter 8. Lochran

The sound of Lex pacing the floor of her room kept me from falling asleep. I wasn't even using my supernatural hearing—the walls in this place must be really thin. Or maybe it was just the house's doing, like it wanted me to hear her angsty march.

If she would have let me, I would be next door right now, my head between her legs, eating her deliciously wet pussy and helping to rid her of all that pent-up desire.

I tossed in the bed, feeling my heavy balls roll across my thigh. What was the little witch thinking? Why summon a sex demon if not for sex? I mean, I knew there was the whole it-was-the-house-not-me! debate, but the truth was that we were fated mates, fated being the operative word. This pairing was inevitable.

A Goddess-blessed union.

Not that it meant I felt I was owed anything. Far from it. And aside from the odd sexual innuendo—I was an incubus demon, after all—I certainly didn't intend to lay a finger on the witch without her explicitly asking for it. Nope. For as long as it took the witch to sanctify the union, I'd be keeping my hands, tongue, cock, tail, and every other part of my anatomy to myself. I would try my best not to think about the fact that I'd never cast my eyes on anyone more attractive in my life, or the fact that I'd been flitting between a semi and rock-hard dick from the moment the shadows cleared.

Unable to take much more, I undid the drawstring of the ancient pajama bottoms the house had left out for me and pushed my hand past the hem. I ran a finger over the length of my solid dick. While finding pleasure by myself wouldn't be nearly enough to fill me, I would have to do something if I was to survive in this realm without having sex.

My hand grasped around the base of my cock. If I was super quiet, she'd never know I was jerking off a room over.

I mean, a guy's got to eat, right?

And I certainly wouldn't survive off cups of English breakfast tea.

I heard Lex's bed creak. Thank the Goddess, she'd finally stopped pacing.

My stomach gave an almighty rumble. I could probably hold out for a few more minutes until she fell asleep. Then I could milk my balls dry and hope that would be enough to get me through another day.

But the house had other ideas. It heated the mattress where Lex's body touched her bed in the other room. The heat settled directly beneath me, warming me to my bones and making my cock ache. Within moments, her desire washed over me in waves. Not quite the feast I'd be having if I were between her legs, but I'd take whatever morsel I could get. The sound of her wet pussy and the Samhain-spiced smell of her arousal filled the air. I swear the house was pumping the smell through the vents just for me.

With a sigh, I pulled my hand from my pajama bottoms. It was bad enough that I was shamelessly feeding off her desire, though I couldn't exactly help that. We'd been connected since the summoning, and I doubted there was a corner of this earth I could escape to where I wouldn't be able to feel my mate's desire.

Lex didn't want to take me to her bed... yet. Her succubus side obviously had needs, and touching myself while she was trying to quell her succubus seemed like taking advantage.

I crossed my arms resolutely, and when a box of tissues and some hand lotion magically appeared on the nightstand, I groaned and turned my back to it.

"Stop it, House," I hissed. While Lex's desire was taking the edge off my cramping stomach, it caused a deep ache in my balls the likes of which I'd never felt before.

My teeth gritted as I tried and failed miserably to push back images of Lex between my legs, her tongue licking purposefully slow up my length before lapping the

precum off the head of my cock, the tip of her tongue flicking into my slit, greedy for more.

As Lex's movements became frantic in the next room, I thought of her taking me deep into her mouth, gagging slightly as I hit the back of her throat. I imagined her wandering hands sliding up and down my thighs, her slender fingerscupping my balls, rolling them—

The shock of Lex's orgasm crackled through me as if Hecate herself had thrown a lightning bolt my way. My teeth ground together as my own orgasm pulsed through me uncontrollably, my cum hot and sticky as I spilled in my pajama bottoms like I was fresh from the shadows.

I felt my cheeks flush, and embarrassment settled into my bones. I was a sex demon, for Goddess's sake! I was built for stamina, holding back my own climax as I pleased women for hours. But the first time my mate orgasms in my vicinity, she has me unraveling despite not even being in the same room as me.

For the first time since I was summoned, I was glad my mate didn't ask me to her bed. It would have been an utterly pathetic performance, and I wanted her first time with me to be spectacular. I wanted her to come so hard that she would forget her name and beg me to fuck her over and over.

The rustle of fabric finally pulled me back to reality. I tilted my head enough to see a fresh pair of pajama bottoms neatly folded at the foot of the bed.

I shimmied out of the sticky pajamas and cleaned myself off before climbing back into bed naked. I definitely wouldn't be accepting any more help from the house tonight.

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The house had opened the curtains at some point during the night, causing the first stream of morning light to bore directly into my eyelids.

Waking up in the mortal realm sucked.

I had never spent the entire night with a mortal before, always slinking back to the shadow realm before dawn. If the house intended to wake me, a shadow demon, with blistering first light every morning, that was going to be an issue.

“House, can you close the curtains?” I asked, pulling the duvet over my face. When nothing happened, I added, “Please?”

Finally, the sound of curtain rings scraping against metal filled the air. Unfortunately, the house had decided to open the curtains fully now. I groaned into my pillow before sitting up and rubbing my sore eyes.

“Fine,” I grumbled. “You win.” With a final stretch, I stood up and crossed the room to the window, looking out at my surroundings for the first time. It was an odd little town, with each house being completely different from its neighbor, and yet, not one looked out of place.

The house opposite was like something pulled from a suburban estate, even down to the white picket fence. A succubus with peppered hair, trousers pulled up to her waist, and a light blue shirt was leaning over a flower bed, trowel in hand, planting pansies.

I cringed at the unnaturalness of a demon born of shadows voluntarily being up this early in the morning, to idly tend flowerbeds no less. But then I found myself smiling. If Lex mentioned she thought her flowerbeds needed tending, I guessed I wouldn't mind braving the dawn light if it made those ruddy, full lips pull into a smile. A moment later, a witch with a gray bob, cropped trousers, and a pale pink shirt stepped out onto the porch, two steaming cups in her hand. She handed one to the succubus, who stood up, kissed the witch on the cheek, and accepted the cup with a grin.

As if the witch could sense my presence, her eyes locked onto mine. Grinning widely, she gave me a jolly little wave, which I returned. Then I remembered I was still naked. I just about caught the witch tittering something to her wife as I disappeared back into the depths of the room.

Probably shouldn't flash the neighbors.

I pulled on a pair of fresh boxers and the sweatpants that the house had left for me at the end of my bed. No T-shirt, though. And, as I'd suspected, the door to the closet had suspiciously seized shut.

Unfortunately, I could only conjure things from my mind while in the shadow realm. So bare chest and tatty sweatpants it was.

After a quick wash and brush of my teeth, doing everything in my power not to wake Lex in the connecting bedroom, I made my way down the stairs to the kitchen. While mortal food wasn't enough to keep me going, there was still something to be said about fluffy pancakes, bacon, and a drizzle of maple syrup.

The ingredients materialized in front of me, alongside Lex's notebook. I ran a finger over the leather before pushing it away from me. All joking aside, it was an invasion of privacy to read my mate's notes. She would tell me when she was ready.

That being said, I couldn't help but wonder what such a sweet-looking witch had done to have to write such a long pre-trial commentary. I bet it was something sweetly stupid, like she wanted to pet a cute puppy and accidentally summoned a gazillion hell hounds into her apartment block. Smiling, I started to combine the ingredients together.

A few moments later, I heard Lex's gentle footsteps descend the stairs. She entered the kitchen, eyes shut and yawning loudly, dressed in—

My cock swelled at the sight of her. Who knew that under all those bulky layers, she'd have a figure likethat. Like something from a '50s pinup. A mixture of tight and curvy inexactlythe right places. Her vest top and shorts left nothing to the imagination. Her hair was still in its messy bun, but more of it had come loose. Every ounce of my being wanted to leap across the room and lift each strand from her shoulders, peppering her skin with a kiss for every missing lock.

She had to be having the world's longest yawn, or time had momentarily stopped. Most likely the latter. Finally, she rubbed her eyes and looked me up and down. Her cheeks blushed slightly as her eyes lingered a fraction of a second on my torso, then on the bulge in my sweatpants.

The kettle whistling broke both of us from our trance, and she quickly grabbed two cups and dropped herbs into the tea strainers.

"Wardrobe malfunction for you too?" she asked, plopping a cube of sugar into my cup.

"The house decided it would be a bare chest day for me," I said, topping Lex's pancake stack with crispy bacon and setting it down on the table.

A few moments later, she slid a cup of tea toward me and picked up her knife and



fork. Just before she took her first bite, her eyes narrowed suspiciously. “It’s strange that you know how to cook. My mom said it had taken my father almost five years before he stopped burning everything in the kitchen, including all the dishcloths.” She shoved a slice of maple-glistening pancake into her mouth and practically quivered all over, making my mouth dry up.

“I like to cook,” I said with a shrug.

A wayward drop of maple syrup hung off her bottom lip. Lex unconsciously swiped a finger over it before her soft lips opened. Her tongue glided slowly over the tip of her finger, and I found myself pinching my thigh to stop myself from begging her to use that tongue on me.

This wicked little witch was going to be the death of me, and she wasn’t even trying.

## Chapter 9. Lex

The moment my tongue swiped over the tip of my finger, Lochran let out an unconscious groan, barely audible over the near deafening grumble of his stomach.

My succubus side roared to life inside me, thrumming with the intense desire to swipe everything off the table and to beg Lochran to feast on me instead of the pancakes.

The wanton voice inside my head said, Lift the sex ban, Lex! Listen to how hungry your mate is for you. Feed him. Feed yourself.

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Another, quieter voice said, Remember what happened last time. Don't rush into anything you might regret.

My head felt all over the place. There were just too many thoughts and emotions to deal with right now, but I was going to have to make a choice, and soon. Like it or not, I was responsible for summoning him. And if my mom were to be believed, even if the house hadn't summoned him, I would have been fated to meet him anyway. Would I have thought differently if I had bumped into Lochran randomly at the bar instead of Chad that night?

I cast another glance at Lochran. He was intensely staring down at his plate, shoveling forkfuls of pancakes into his mouth as if being physically full might stop his stomachache. His head was tilted slightly as if he were trying to hide the scar that ran across his temple. A dusty flour handprint sat atop one pec, flexing with every deep breath.

Yes, I thought. I definitely would have taken him back to mine if I'd met him instead of Chad.

So why could I not bring myself to do it now?

Lochran's knife and fork clattered on his empty plate just as his stomach rumbled again. He winced slightly as he glanced at my plate and asked, "Are you going to finish those?"

I realized that I hadn't been eating while my internal voices warred with each other. His breakfast was delicious, and I had intended to eat it all, but the longing look on

his face had me sliding my plate toward him.

“Thanks,” he said, his tone tight.

“I’m sorry, Lochran,” I whispered, half hoping he wouldn’t hear me.

“Sorry for what?” he asked through a mouthful of pancakes.

I let out a breath before replying. “I’m sorry that I accidentally summoned you. I’m sure I’m not what you were expecting, and I’m sorry that I’m just not in...” I bit my lip, struggling to find the words. “... not in the right headspace to... y’know... to feed you.”

“Number one, Lex, you don’t need to be sorry about the summoning. It was an accident, and what’s done is done.”

The house creaked in apology, and we both dutifully ignored it.

“And as for the feeding? You really don’t have to worry about that. I’m happy to take things as slowly as you want and to wait until the time is right. And if you decide that the time is never right, then that’s okay too.”

His stomach let out the loudest rumble yet, causing Lochran to hiss in pain, and Goddess damn it if it didn’t break my heart a little. It was nice of him to say it, but never feeding again definitely wouldn’t be okay for Lochran. I wondered how long sex demons could go without feeding.

“And if you don’t want me to stay, just give the word and I’ll find somewhere else to go.”

A door slammed in annoyance at Lochran’s suggestion of leaving, and I was

surprised that simply asking him to leave hadn't yet crossed my mind.

"Of course you can stay. It's the least I can do seeing as I'm the reason you can't go home," I said. "Besides, I don't think the house would let you leave."

As if in agreement, the cups under the cupboard swayed on their hooks, clattering together. One clattered so enthusiastically that it shattered, the shards of ceramic disappearing before they hit the worktop.

"Thank you," Lochran said, relief lacing his words. His broad shoulders flexed once before the tension left them. He took the final bite of pancakes and settled back into his chair.

From this angle, I could just about see the tip of his dick bulging in his sweatpants, threatening to push past the hem. My mouth instantly watered, heat pooling in my core. Lochran stiffened, his eyes defiantly not meeting mine as his nostrils widened, drawing in a deep breath.

Ah, shit. I guessed it didn't have to be skin-to-skin contact to feed after all.

I felt my cheeks pinken. I wondered if he'd sensed me masturbating last night. As if sensing my embarrassment, Lochran said, "Sorry, Lex. I didn't mean to... I know you weren't offering..." he trailed off awkwardly.

"It's okay," I said. I mean, if I were starving and someone placed a donut under my nose, I wouldn't be able to stop myself from taking a bite. A thought occurred to me: I didn't have to be his donut. Before the little voices in my head could protest, I blurted out, "You could feed off someone else if you wanted to."

The moment it had passed my lips, I regretted saying it. The thought of someone else tracing their fingers over those broad shoulders made nausea rise in my stomach.

Lochran's neck pulsed, his eyes darkening as he growled, "No."

Something akin to pride swelled in my chest. He would rather starve than feed off anyone else. And, more importantly, I didn't want him to feed off someone else.

I almost giggled at the absurdity of that realization.

Me. Lex. Who, up to a few hours ago, wanted nothing to do with summonings and mates, was becoming protective and possessive over an incubus. An incubus who, sexual innuendos aside, was prepared to starve himself rather than make me move at a pace I was uncomfortable with.

Maybe this summoned-mate thing wasn't the curse I'd convinced myself it was.

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Maybe, if we moved slowly enough, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world to give it a shot. I mean, Lochran seemed to welcome the summoning, so my fear of coercing someone into a bond was abating.

If I could just work through whatever it was that had me reluctant to satisfy my succubus side, and if Lochran was still interested in me, then maybe this summoning might just be a good thing.

### Chapter 10. Lochran

Lex had kicked me out of the house.

Well, not kicked out, per se. She'd said she needed to concentrate on writing her trial notes and I was welcome to sit quietly in the house or go for a wander. I'd decided to stay. But after three ill-timed sexual innuendos, she'd handed me a wad of cash and told me not to come back until sunset.

And that was how I found myself wandering down the small village center. The shops that lined it reminded me of the Shambles in Yorkshire, England. Crooked shops with rooms stacked atop one another loomed over a narrow cobbled street, each window brimming with every ware a witch could think of.

But stacks of cauldrons and spell books only went so far in distracting me from the memory of the awkward breakfast encounter.

Eventually, my thoughts tumbled to the forefront of my mind. Lex was clearly attracted to me. Her desire was potent to the point that I couldn't help but drink it in.

But then she'd suggested that I go and feed off another. I'd had to fight back the repulsion bubbling inside me at the thought of ever taking another to my bed now that I'd met my mate.

Thankfully, I wasn't afforded long to dissect breakfast, as countless witches and sex demons made a point of introducing themselves to the new face in the village. Each asked the same two questions: "Who's your new mate?" and "Where is she?"

When the bell tolled three—only another few hours until sunset, thank the Goddess—I made my way into Declan's Teashop.

The teashop was quaint, with a bell that tinkled as I entered, mismatched chairs and tables, and an entire wall dedicated to different tea blends.

A middle-aged incubus looked me up and down before spinning on his heel and grabbing a jar off the wall. By the time I reached the counter, he already had the tea steeping. The scent of cinnamon and cloves made my mouth water, and all I could think about was my mate and her Samhain-spiced scent, which must have been evident on my face as the barista grinned knowingly. As I made to pull out the wad of cash, he gestured a circle with each hand, before holding out his left hand. He swiped the knuckle of his bent finger against his outstretched palm as if swiping a card.

No charge.

Matching his grin, I placed my right hand flat to my chin before bringing it down and outward. "Thank you."

His grin widened as his angular eyes flicked over my shoulder. Following his gaze, my eyes settled on the familiar form of the succubus who had been summoned seconds before me. When the shadows had pooled around her, she had looked indifferent, as if unconvinced that a mate could bring her as much enjoyment as

hunting for her meals could. It was safe to say that was no longer the case. Sasha's grin was spread from ear to ear, mirrored by a stunning androgynous-looking witch sitting opposite her, both holding each other's hands over the table.

"Lochran!" Sasha said, her smile not once flickering. She turned to the witch and said, "Ashley, this is Lochran. He's my friend from the shadow realm. Lochran, this is Ashley. They're my mate."

Ashley afforded me a single nod before their attention was once again consumed by Sasha.

"Lovely to meet you, Ashley."

"Nice to meet you too," Ashley said, unable to take their eyes off their mate.

"Where's your witch?" Sasha asked.

I recited the same line I'd said to countless couples throughout the day. "She's at home, as she has some very important work to finish, so I'm exploring my new surroundings."

"Ah," she said, as if unable to form any further words through her smittenness.

"Anyway, you two enjoy the tea," I said.

"You too," they both replied, neither looking at me.

I took my first sip of tea just as I reached the door. It was like an herbal party in my mouth, causing warm, fuzzy feelings to seep deep into my bones. I turned to the incubus and kissed my fingers, causing him to grin.



The tea was divine. Unlike anything I'd ever tasted in my life. I would absolutely be coming back here for more.

I wandered down to the next shop along. A simple sign saying Handywitch hung above the door.

A witch with siren-like black hair opened the door forcefully. She would have been beautiful if it weren't for the seemingly permanent scowl etched into her face. She looked me up and down, then sneered. Desire rolled off her in waves, though this desire smelled like rotten peonies. It was the scent of someone who coveted what they couldn't have.

"Another witch, another summoning," she seethed.

My talons itched to get out. What was this witch's problem?

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“Oh, fuck off, Priscilla!” came a voice from inside the shop. “Stop bothering my customers. And don’t bother coming around here again!”

The witch’s eyes practically glowed green as she threw a final, villainous stare into the store before barging past me. She attempted to throw me off balance by bashing her shoulder into mine, but I had expected it, and she almost went tumbling back to the ground. Blue flames licked up her arms as she regained her posture, which I matched with shadows of my own. Finally, she flicked her head, her hair moving in unison over her shoulder, and said, “You’re lucky I don’t have the time to deal with the likes of you.” With that, she glided past me and down the street.

It took a few long breaths for my shadows to coil back. For the second time, I was glad my mate wasn’t with me. If the witch had barreled into Lex the way she had me, I wasn’t sure I could have stopped myself from tearing her throat out with a single swipe of my claws.

And killing coven-mates probably wouldn’t help me woo my witch.

A bell tinkled as I opened the door to the Handywitch shop. I scanned the shelves and was surprised to see that it was a hardware shop. For some reason, I’d been expecting gloves. I made a mental note to make a list of things that needed fixing around the house... if the house was amenable to letting me do some DIY.

A witch with loose brunette curls sat behind the counter, her Converse-clad feet resting on the countertop. She was blowing an iridescent bubble, her cheeks red with the effort, as she held up a finger in a gesture that she would be with me in just a minute. I waited patiently, scanning the workshop behind the witch. I had expected to

see some wood-crafting items, maybe a half-finished bird box or something, what with this being a hardware shop and all, but surprisingly, there were only cauldrons, each brew containing a self-stirring spoon. Some frothed, while others sparked, but all of them smelled sickly sweet, like candy.

I wrinkled my nose at the too-sweet smell, and my eyes landed on a photo on the wall. A middle-aged blonde witch smiled, as did the black-haired incubus beside her, the picture of blissful matrimony. The teenage witch between them didn't share the sentiment. While she looked almost exactly like her mother, she had the same thick black hair as her father. Her side fringe swooped across her kohled eyes, blending into her black, oversized hoodie.

Though she wore a frown, the young witch looked almost identical to the bubble-blowing witch in front of me, and I wondered if they were sisters.

Said witch gave a final, squeaky blow, and my head snapped toward her just in time to see a bubble the size of a hoppity hop explode into shooting stars, each zooming in different directions. I threw my hand over my head, but the sparks merely tickled my skin where they landed.

The witch excitedly punched the air. "Finally!" she cried.

"What the fuck was that?" I asked, panting heavily.

"Oh, just a thing I've been working on," she said absentmindedly as she clicked her fingers and a notebook and pen appeared in front of her. She stuck her tongue between her teeth as she wrote furiously. I glanced at the notebook, but all the words looked like squiggles. "The ink has crushed-up, ethically-sourced dragon scale in it. It's spelled so only I can read it. Had to take extra precautions since Priscilla took an interest," she said without glancing up.

My eyes wandered back to the photo as I let the witch curate her thoughts. On second look, the teen witch looked even glummer than before.

“Cousin,” the witch said, her face sobering as she set her pen down. “I’m just looking after the shop until she gets back. In the meantime, I’m working on my real passion.” She jabbed a finger in the direction of the cauldrons behind her. “Magicked candy.”

While her tone was friendly, it was clipped enough for me to realize follow-up questions on either topic weren’t invited. Instead, I asked, “Who was the witch in here before me?”

The bubble witch rolled her eyes. “Priscilla Raisin,” she said, voice laced with boredom. “She’s been trying to find out how I make my candy for months.”

“I—” But I didn’t get the chance to find out more.

The doorbell tinkled, and I sucked in a breath, momentarily thinking Lex was plowing her way toward me. It took a full second for me to realize this witch must be her mother.

“As I live and breathe!” she cried, exultant. “I knew! I just had a feeling she’d do the summoning!”

“Nice to meet you, ma’am.”

“Lovely to meet you too, sweetie,” she said, her eyes glancing around, searching proudly for her daughter.

“She’s not here. She’s working on her trial notes.”

“Well, that is disappointing. Sensible, but disappointing. Oh, hi, Caitlyn, honey,” she

said, giving the bubble-gum witch a wave.

“Hi, Ms. Cole!” The witch waved back.

Ms. Cole looped her arms into mine. “Come, Lochran. I want to get to know my new son-in-mating over a nice cup of tea.”

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“Honey, I’m home!” I called from the door.

Lex poked her head from around the kitchen doorframe, a pretty scowl on her face. She’d fixed her bun and was now in a different set of pajamas from what she’d had on this morning—though no less scanty. My heart skittered in my chest. I didn’t think I’d ever get used to how beautiful she was.

“How was your day, dear?” she said, every word laced with sarcasm.

“Before I tell you, take this.” I held out a cup of tea that I’d let the incubus at the shop pick for me.

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Her eyes widened, and she reached for it greedily. She moaned as she took a long sip, causing my dick to stiffen and my stomach to growl.

“Thank you,” she said.

“Ah, well, don’t thank me yet. I might have bumped into your mother while I was out—”

“No!” she ground out. “Urgh, she’ll never let me live this down.”

I’d guessed as much from her mother figuratively spilling the tea on Lex when we were at the tea shop. I now knew everything about my mate, from the time she was four years old and was too stubborn to admit that she needed to use the bathroom on a long car journey to Disney World, resulting in her pooping her pants and her parents having to find the nearest detailer, to her best friend being a wolf shifter. I should’ve felt bad knowing so much about my mate, but I just couldn’t quite bring myself to feel repentant. Especially not when I’d had the privilege of listening to how my fierce and independent mate came to be.

Also, her mom was quite intimidating. I didn’t think she would have let me leave even if I had wanted to.

“She told you the car ride to Disney World story?”

I nodded, and she groaned.

“You had better have an equally embarrassing pants-pooping story to offer in

exchange for that one.”

I held my hand to my heart, an exaggeratedly somber look on my face. “Alas, I do not. I was born fully formed, albeit painfully immature, but fully potty-trained nonetheless. Can I offer you a struck-by-lightning-and-falling-out-of-the-sky story instead?”

Her eyes widened, then narrowed. I might have played the worst day of my life off with a bit more humor than was warranted, but it was worth it to see the twitch of a smile as Lex said, “Not a fair exchange, but I’ll think about it.”

“There’s one more thing,” I added, getting an odd sense of enjoyment at Lex’s only half-serious annoyance. “We’re going to have dinner with your family tomorrow.”

Surprisingly, instead of seeming annoyed, she snorted a laugh. “Good luck.”

“Good luck? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Oh, you’ll see,” she said with a finality that told me that, even under torture, she would not reveal what awaited me tomorrow.

“I might take the apology tea back,” I said, my eyebrow cocking at her.

She held it defensively to her chest. “It was a gift. No take-backsies on a gift.”

A huge relief settled over me. This was nice, the banter and jokes. It made me feel better about being the weird sex-demon couch surfer.

My stomach gave a rumble, and I winced at the stab of pain deep in my gut. I’d literally eaten three lunches at the three different restaurants the town had to offer, and it’d hardly made one iota of difference.

“I’ve been thinking about our situation,” Lex said. “You don’t have to have full-on sex to feed, do you?”

I shook my head. She already knew the answer from our exchange at breakfast, but I clarified, “Well, what constitutes as full-on sex is different for everyone. But, for me, it’s penetrative sex. And I haven’t done that in years.”

Lex snorted. “Be serious. So... you can feed in other ways?”

Now wasn’t the time to tell my mate about the sex ban—which had been fully and gladly lifted the moment she’d summoned me. “I can survive off being near someone with strong sexual desires.” Lex’s face flushed and, yeah, she totally knew I’d been feeding while she masturbated last night. “It’s enough to keep me alive.”

“Staying alive and being full are too different things,” she said, her voice quiet but inquisitive.

Okay... my mate was definitely leading up to something. I couldn’t help my voice becoming raspy and seductive as I took a step toward her, breathing in her spiced desire as I said, “I’m usually full if I’m the reason someone orgasms.”

Lex gulped, and I suddenly realized that this might be a bit too quick for her.

I stepped back. “But... I mean... desire from afar will be enough for now... if that’s... something that works for you.” Had I just asked my mate out loud to feel free to rub one out in another room so I could feed? Urgh, I’d never felt so awkward talking about sex before. This was supposed to come naturally to me. I’m a motherfucking sex demon! I’ve done this for the last decade of my life, and never had an issue. But the moment I meet my mate, I’m stumbling on my words and cumming in my pants.

Thankfully, Lex didn’t balk. “Anyway,” she drawled out, determined to ignore my



last statement, “I have had some time to think and, while it wasn’t my intention to summon you, it’s my responsibility that you are here.”

“Lex, you don’t have to do anything you—”

Lex held up her hand. “I know I’m not obliged to do anything. And neither are you. That being said, I am part succubus, and while my...needs... are nowhere near as potent as yours, I would like to see them... satiated.” I didn’t know how or why, but Lex talking like a lawyer was really doing it for me. “If you are interested, I am open to exploring this”—she gestured her hand between me and her—“further, in a slow and mutual way.”

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I wanted to throw her over my shoulder, take her upstairs and mutually fuck the brains out of her. Instead, I curbed my baser needs and said, as calmly as I could, “I would be agreeable to those terms. How do you propose we... commence?”

“I thought that, maybe, we could... I dunno... Maybe we could get ourselves off in the same room as each other? That way, we both get release. You can feed, and we don’t have to touch.”

“I... agree.” I’d take what I could get from my mate. Even if I wouldn’t be the one getting her off, the proximity would be close enough that it would be the first proper meal I had since being summoned.

### Chapter 11. Lochran

We walked up the stairs in awkward silence, broken only by the crackle of sexual tension. I could feel the desire radiating off her in waves but tinged with the slight edge of embarrassment. On second thought, it wasn’t quite embarrassment, but awkwardness, as if she wasn’t sure what had brought her to the decision to finger fuck herself in the same room as a sex demon she’d accidentally summoned, but she kind of wished she was doing more. At the same time, she was conflicted and wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page, which I respected. There were quite a few times that I’d set my boundaries very clearly with mortal women—all I was offering was to get them off. I didn’t want to be touched in that way by them. There was a surprising number who just didn’t care, grasping for me, trying to undo my trousers, then cussing me out when I wouldn’t oblige.

So I was fully on board with clarity and boundaries.

I opened the door to my room and felt my lips twinge. The house had littered every surface with candles, casting a delectable glow over the room. The bed, which had been a double just this morning, seemed to have widened into a king-sized bed. Enough room for us to spread out for our masturbatory activities.

“How should we do this?” I asked.

“I dunno. Top to toe?”

I nodded in agreement. I’d secretly hoped we’d watch each other get off, but I’d take anything at this point.

“Okay. You lie with your head at the foot of the bed, and I’ll take the top,” she said with slightly more authority in her tone.

Doing as the little witch asked, I lay flat on my back, gazing up at the ceiling. I felt the bed dip from the other side. Just the thought of Lex in the bed beside me was enough for my dick to stiffen, and I prayed to all that was good and holy that I could get my head back into the game and at least last until Lex had climaxed. I would literally sacrifice my left arm to Hades if it meant I wouldn’t embarrass myself and come too quickly. I needed our first mutual experience to show my mate that her satisfaction would always come first. Maybe it was for the best that Lex didn’t ask me to sit up and watch her fingers glide in and out of her tight pussy. That would definitely be too much for the heightened state I was in. So, staring at the sun-bleached ceiling it was.

My body froze as I heard her shuffle and, a moment later, the soft thud of clothes hit the ground. The scent of her wet pussy filled the air, and I took a deep, glorious breath of it. It was the sweetest scent. Not like the sickly candy scent from the hardware shop. But homey, and spiced, with a hint of floral. I would bet that even the goddess Chloris couldn’t find a flower that smelled more delectable than the scent of

my mate—

“Lochran?”

“Sorry,” I said, heat flushing to my cheeks as I shuffled out of my clothes. What is wrong with me? My mate was turning me into a fucking eighteenth-century dandy from a historical romance. Next thing you knew, I would be dressed in frilly laces and quoting Romeo and Juliet at her.

I mean, I absolutely would, if that was what it would take to woo her. But that wasn’t quite me. Before the sex ban, I was usually the did-you-want-a-whip-with-your-shackles kind of sex demon, not the should-I-compare-thee-to-a-summer’s-day kind.

Head in the game, Lochran. Not too fast, don’t scare her off, and absolutely no sonnets.

“I... um... I guess we should start,” Lex said as my jeans hit the floor.

“I guess so,” I replied.

This totally wasn’t awkward at all.

But, regardless of the fact this was not how I’d pictured my first mutual interaction with my mate to be, my mate needed satiated, and this was how she chose to do it. The need to please her overtook the primal need to feed.

I could just about see the strips of black fabric on the bedposts from this position. Someday, I was going to tie my mate to the bed, gagged and blindfolded, and show her just how filthy a full-blooded incubus could be.

But only when she was ready.

For now, if all she was comfortable for me to do was to jerkoff in the same room as her, then that was enough.

I could hear the moment her fingers parted her folds. My mate was drenched already. I wondered if she'd been drenched all day as she waited in anticipation for me to return so she could tell me of her plan. Had she played with herself to try to take the edge off? Or had she saved all that desire up for this very moment?

I did my best not to groan as I grasped the head of my stiff length and rolled my thumb through the slick precum. My balls tightened. The sound of my mate's slickness alone had me close to an orgasm. I cursed myself for the sex ban. What a stupid idea it had been to have only found my pleasure with myself for the last few years. I should have spent that time preparing myself for the potency of my mate, so that I could show her my virility. The demon I once was could have easily gone for hours, ensuring that she came time and time again before I let myself give in to pleasure.

Slowly, Lochran, I reminded myself. Take it slow, and you can hold on until Lex climaxes.

Her Samhain-spiced desire filled my nostrils, making my balls tighten in anticipation of release. I allowed myself one deep lungful of her scent before holding my breath. Denying her scent might take the edge off.

My thumb rolled over the head of my dick once more before gently pumping my shaft. A slight wisp of calming air escaped my lips. I could do this. I would show my mate that her pleasure came first—

A low moan escaped Lex's lips, and my cock exploded, my held breath pouring from my lips with as much force as the cum spurting from me in thick, powerful ropes, coating my fingers and chest.

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I forced my body to stay still. It took every ounce of my being to not thrust into my hand while murmuring my mate's name. My dick was still hard... If I just kept pumping, Lex would never have to find out how quickly she'd reduced me to this quivering mess of a demon. With any luck, it would take longer to come again.

Fucking pathetic, Lochran.

Lex moaned a second time, and I thanked Hecate that my dick didn't detonate again. She moaned once more, and this time I realized that it wasn't a moan of satisfaction. Instead, it was one of frustration.

"Lochran?" Her voice skittered over my skin, the pleading tone making my ears prick. She was going to ask something of me, and nothing in this world would deny me from agreeing.

"Yes, little witch?" I replied.

"Can I watch you?" Her succubus side yearned for more, denying her climax until it was satiated. Such a wicked, self-punishing side to my little witch. One that I found a kinship with.

Lex would see what she'd reduced me to. But I couldn't deny her. What kind of mate would I be if I didn't let my little witch see every side of me, even if it displeased her?

I took a deep breath. You're a sex demon, Lochran. You're literally made to draw out sexual desires. Let your instincts take over, and you'll find some way to please her.

“Only if I can watch you too, my little witch.” It might be a bold move, given what I knew of my mate. But my instincts told me that my mate would never ask something of another that she wouldn’t be prepared to offer herself.

Her answering “Yes,” was almost drowned out by the creak of the bed as she raised herself up. I followed her lead, pushing myself into a sitting position, one hand still grasped around my cum-covered cock.

I took a deep breath, wanting my first look at my bared mate to be etched into my mind forever. I started with her toes, each beautifully curled by how close she was to a climax. Her legs were perfectly sculpted, each curve accentuated as they lay open. Her calves flared and tapered, her thighs thick and smooth.

Her soft cunt was glistening with her desire, her dusky pink lips begging to have my tongue glide between them, to suck them and tease them. Two slender fingers covered her clit, not moving. My eyes shifted to her heavy breasts, her nipples hard gems and the same dusky pink as her pussy. Someday, I would take my witch from behind, my shadow tail wrapped around those breasts just tight enough that my mate knew they were mine. There was just enough softness to her perfect neck that I could imagine exactly how incredible it would feel to brush my lips over the length of it.

But, of all the parts of my mate that were bared to me, it was her face that was the most beautiful of all.

Her eyes were wide in surprise as they lingered on the evidence of my inability to control myself around her. Her cheeks flushed, but my senses told me not in embarrassment. My witch was surprised, yes, but her desire was now tinged with pride and power that it was her presence that had done this to me. She bit the corner of her perfect, plumpbottom lip between her teeth as she unconsciously rolled her body, her eyes locked on to the cum covering the tip of my dick and hand.

“Do you see what you do to me?” My voice was surprisingly deep and raspy. My head wanted me to stop, to take it slow and not spook my mate, but my instincts told me that she needed to know how she had complete and utter control over me.

“You’re so potent. You do this to me without even trying, my m—” I just about had the sense not to say the forbidden Mword. “—witch.”

Lex’s cunt pulsed, a fresh wave of wetness dripping from her and—fuck!—this witch was going to kill me. I swirled the cooling cum over the tip of my dick, Lex’s fingers on her clit unconsciously mirroring my movements.

“Your gaze alone is going to make me come again, my wicked little witch.”

Lex’s breath hitched as I slowly brought my fist down the length of me, the sound of my spend slickening my dick making her gulp. She slid two fingers inside her drenched pussy, and I knew she was imagining that it was me filling her.

“Do you want to see just what you do to me, little witch? How quickly you can make me lose control?”

Lex’s fingers plunged deep inside her, her stroking frantic enough for her to bite down on her lip once more. She nodded, and I obliged.

I grasped my length roughly, wishing it was her hot walls clenched around me instead. My fist stroked up and down, twisting slightly as I reached the head of my cock. Without fully realizing, my hips lifted from the bed, thrusting into my fist in a rough, primal frenzy. Lex’s hips rocking into her fingers had tension tightening my balls once more as I teetered on the edge of another orgasm.

I barely noticed the shadows pooling around me, or the fact that my wings had erupted out of my back, clenched tightly in anticipation of release.



“Fuck, Lex,” I groaned, drinking in everything she had to offer me. I needed to say this before her climax broke and I was too drunk on her pleasure to form words. “You have me under your spell, and you don’t even realize.”

“Lochran,” my mate moaned as her body froze in a moment of shattering bliss, the only movement the rise and fall of her chest and the frantic clench of her cunt around her fingers.

Her ecstasy hit me like a tidal wave, a primal roar escaping my lips as cum like molten lava erupted out of me, coating my chest. My wings flexed, knocking candles and clutter to the ground, but I barely had the sense to notice. My body felt as if it were collapsing in on itself, and a split second later, I was staring up at the ceiling, not having noticed when my arm had given way.

Pleasure like I’d never experienced flooded my body, my only coherent thought being that my mate was still watching me. I lifted my head, my instinct to watch my mate until her orgasm passed. She was the most beautiful sight I’d ever seen, and my sex-addled mind wished I was a painter, the need to capture an image of my mate’s body as it writhed in pleasure the most important thing in the world at this moment.

Her body finally unclenched, and she pulled her fingers slowly from her swollen pussy. My fist flexed, but I resisted the urge to reach out and bring her fingers to my mouth to lick them clean. Not a single drop of my mate’s desire should ever be wasted.

Lex’s cheeks suddenly flushed as she realized she’d been staring at me. In a flash, she was on her feet, her back to me as she pulled her clothes on.

I wanted to tell her to wait. To tell her that nothing in my life had even come close to the bliss of what she’d reduced me to. But my tongue was heavy in my mouth, salivating at the feast my mate had given me.

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“Um, thanks,” she said, her voice quiet and embarrassed. Her mood didn’t match her tone, though. I could sense my mate was still aroused, and there was an edge of inquisitiveness and pride. She liked the fact that she’d reduced me to this primitive, rutting male. The scent in the room told me she wanted more, her succubus side begging her to stay. But there was still a tinge of something else lacing her scent. She was still hesitant to give her all.

Quick as a whip, Lex had left my room calling “Goodnight!” from the hallway before the sound of her bedroom door clicked shut.

My heart wanted to follow her into her room, to finish what she’d started, but my instinct told me not to. My mate was setting the pace, and she needed time to digest what had just happened. She would let me know when she wanted more.

It took a long time before my body was ready to move. My wings had dissipated at some point, but I hadn’t realized when. The house had cleared the mess of things that I had knocked off the side tables when my wings had spread—thank the Goddess, as I vaguely remembered there being lit candles everywhere. I shuffled under the covers and settled into the warm spot in the middle of the bed. A spike of desire permeated the air, and I knew Lex was feeling the heat of my body mirrored in her own room. I didn’t move though, and neither did she.

This was the earliest I’d ever gone to bed, but Hades himself couldn’t drag me from it. Warm, satisfying relief settled into my bones. My mate hadn’t balked at my ineptitudes.

And they wouldn’t be ineptitudes for long. A little bit of practice, and I’d be back to

my old self.

But for now, seeing the pleasure it gave my mate to know just how much control she had over me was enough. The fact that I was still rock hard had me drifting off to images of me fucking my mate like a wild animal, continually filling her over and over with my seed until her belly was swollen with it. Until it took and we created a little witch of our own.

## Chapter 12. Lex

Billy's peals of laughter rippled down the phone. She wheezed, and I could picture her clutching her sides, drawing in deep breaths before a fresh wave of laughter overtook her. I should never have trusted my best friend to offer me some serious advice, but the moment she started laughing at the ridiculousness of my situation, my soul was soothed.

Itwasridiculous.

Billy's wheezing laughter was infectious, and I soon found myself matching her tenor. Whatever was constricting my heart seemed to loosen a bit.

After a few steadying breaths, one more fit of laughter, and a few more final breaths, she said, "So, let me get this straight. Your grandma gave you a possessed house, which tricked you into accidentally summoning a sex demon who needs sex to survive, who's actually your fated mate, that you initially wanted nothing to do with. But now you've met him, he's the most attractive man you've ever seen, and he's kind and considerate. He can't go back to his own realm and refuses to feed off another, so to feed him and satisfy your own succubus side, you decided to jack off in the same room, which ended up with both of you just watching each other get off. And, without giving away the details—which is what you're supposed to do for your sex-deprived friends, Lex. I need to live vicariously through you now that you're

fucking a sex demon—it was the most erotic experience of your life. And now you think you might be falling for your fated mate. But instead of fucking his brains out, you’ve banned him from coming downstairs so you can keep writing your thirty-page essay on why Chad deserved a shriveled-up dick, but you can’t write anything because all you’re thinking about is fucking your mate. Did I miss anything?”

“That’s about it,” I said, slumping onto the hard kitchen chair.

The memory of last night had played on a constant loop in my head all morning. The moment Lochran had descended the stairs, his chest bare and his hair sticking out at angles, all I could think about was jumping on to the copper countertop and begging him to fuck me. The way his lip had twitched when he sensed the spike in my desire told me he was thinking of equally dirty thoughts. But all he’d done was make pancakes. He’d eaten with a wide grin on his face, his stomach not grumbling once. My heart swelled at that, a sense of pride that it was because of me that my mate was no longer starving.

Mate.

I hadn’t wanted to use the word, but it just felt right. I should probably have another conversation with Lochran. I needed to tell him why I’d never done the summoning before now, and why I had a sex ban in place. And I should probably tell him that, now that he was here and things had started to progress between us, I was open to reevaluating a relationship.

That was putting it lightly.

After watching him last night, the thought of having any other male in my bed was repugnant. I only wanted Lochran.

The moment I sat up and saw his cum coating his dick and torso, I was a goner. I was

used to men coming quickly. It was part of the succubus touch.

But that was mortal men.

I never dreamed I could have that effect on a full-blooded incubus. And I hadn't even been touching him. It wasn't my succubus side that drove him wild. It was me. I'd felt a surge of power and control that I hadn't felt before.

Do you want to see just what you do to me, witch? How quickly you can make me lose control?

The way he'd dragged his fist through his spend, pumping his shaft for me like he needed to show me just how much his cock ached for me. I quivered, remembering how the shadows had pooled around him as he'd thrust up into his fist, the way his wings had materialized behind him, clamped shut, before spreading out, the span almost the length of the room, knocking candles and clutter off the nightstand.

You have me under your spell, and you don't even realize.

Hearing that had tipped my succubus over the edge. The intensity of the orgasm rolling through me as I thrust my fingers into my pussy, picturing Lochran spearing me with his thick length, was enough that I was seeing stars. The only thing that stopped me from falling back and writhing in pleasure was the need to watch Lochran. The way his dick exploded, his cum spooling out of him in thick jets, made me wish that he'd come inside me, heating my walls with his seed.

My succubus yearned for him.

"What am I going to do, Billy?"

"You could just, you know, lift the ban and have sex with him," she said, a note of

wariness in her voice. Billy had tried her best to understand why I had placed myself into a sex ban, but when I had attempted to explain it to her, I couldn't quite muster the words to describe how I'd felt. How does one say that she felt betrayed by her succubus? That she couldn't trust her instinctual needs anymore?

Also, as a wolf shifter and an emerging alpha, Billy was more in tune with her primal side than I could ever understand.

My succubus was only a small part of me. While I didn't survive off desire like a full-blooded sex demon, the part of me that was desperate to fuck was driven by the biological need to feed. Aside from Lochran, it was rare that I found pleasure in the men I took to bed, but it had always been just enough to quell that side of me. Billy's wolf, however, had a different primal urge to satiate. Hers was a newly budding need to claim her mate... when she eventually found them. That need was driven by the urge to reproduce, to expand and lead her pack. I didn't know much about wolves, but I knew it was going to be just as rough a ride for my friend to deny her alpha as it was for me to deny my succubus. Actually, scratch that. It was going to be ten times worse for Billy.

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“You’re no help whatsoever,” I said.

“I don’t know why you thought I would be.” A loud bang came from somewhere in the background, loud enough to make me hold the phone away from my ear. “While I have you on the phone, do you want me to come over for, like, moral support during the trial?” Her voice was hopeful, as if she was desperate for a valid excuse to cut the visit with her pack short.

“Yeah, of course, if you want to. But you’ve only been home for a couple of days. Do you not want to spend time with your family?”

What I wanted to say was: “You’re becoming an alpha—your primal urge to dominate a pack will only be satisfied if you’re around other wolves.” But I decided to say nothing. Billy had the grace to not question my seemingly counterintuitive decisions unless I asked her outright, and I’d afford my friend the same grace.

“They’re doing my head in. Honestly, if I don’t have a break from them soon, I might just tear one of their throats out. I think I’ll start with my dad.” The guttural rumble from her throat was threatening, as if she was doing everything within her power not to let her alpha see her own father as a challenger. Yeah, on second thought, it probably would be better for Billy to take some time away from the other wolves.

“I mean, if it prevents you from committing patricide, then I insist.”

“Awesome. I’ve got something important that I need to do first, but I’ll book the flight for the morning of the trial.”

“Can’t wait to see you,” I said, my heart swelling. It had only been a few days since we’d been together, but I felt wrong without my best friend at my side.

“Can’t wait to see you either, Lex. Oh, before I forget, did you see the video of Chad?”

“Video? What video?”

“Oh. My. Goddess. You’re going to want to see this.” A second later, my phone buzzed. “He literally had a major meltdown. Someone filmed it and now it’s gone viral on TikTok. Watch it.” She was attempting to be lighthearted, like it was important for me to see this video but she didn’t want to worry me. The hint of warning that laced her voice gave her away. I had a sudden thought that part of the reason Billy wanted to come see me was her need to protect. Naw, she saw me as her pack.

“Love you,” I said.

I could picture Billy’s smile as she replied, “Love you too, bestie.”

The moment she hung up, I clicked on the link she’d sent.

The video began with the sound of a rowdy bar, most of the image covered with the words #SmallDickProblems and #KeepItToYourselfDude. The words only remained on screen long enough to read them before disappearing, revealing two women sitting at a bar, posing for the camera. The platinum blonde grasped her mimosa. Her lips twinged into a lovely smile as she bit the cardboard straw between her teeth and made a peace sign with her free hand, while her redheaded companion downed a shot before slinging her arm over her friend’s shoulder and smiling for the camera.

At first glance, it looked simply like two friends minding their own business and



having a good time. But I spotted Chad in the background almost immediately. As the pair clinked their glasses together, Chad stumbled, sloshing his drink. A worried Brett reached out to steady him, causing Chad to push him away. The commotion was enough for the pair of women to glance over their shoulders before tittering and posing for the camera once more, oblivious that Chad had noticed them.

It wasn't until Chad had stumbled halfway across the room, an exasperated Brett in tow, that the camera picked up his shouts of "You fucking bitches!"

The women turned their heads toward Chad, who faltered for a split second. He quickly regained his pace, shouting, "What the fuck are you laughing at? You know that witch bitch, don't you? Stop laughing at my tiny dick!"

"C'mon, Chad!" Brett could be heard before catching up to him and dragging him away.

The women, while visibly shaken, looked at each other before one turned to the camera and said, "What a weird way to announce that you have a tiny dick." The pair burst into laughter, and the whole video began its loop again.

I scrolled through the comments, most of which were cry-laughing emojis or eggplants. But a few caught my eye.

Glen Brewer

#FindTheWitchAndGiveHerAMedal

Lisa Corvan

#SomeoneGetChadAPenisPump

Sarah Livingstone

No way – that's my old boss Chad Brunswick. He's a predator

He's a predator.

My eyes burned, the tears like lava as they rolled down my face.

That was confirmation enough that he'd attacked other women. The humans wouldn't have had a hex to throw at him. Most wouldn't have had the strength to oppose him. A deep and burning hatred for Chad took root inside me. I couldn't wait for my trial to be over. I had no doubt that I'd be found innocent. And when I was, I'd be going back to Sacramento and directly to the police.

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The quiet voice in my head whispered, What if they don't believe you? You won't have a crystal to project your memories. It's your word against his.

My heart ached for the mortal women. How many had been in a his-word-against-hers situation? But it was true. I couldn't rely on a crystal ball to show the truth. It would be based solely on who they believed. I could just picture Chad standing in front of a judge, a plethora of witnesses agreeing with him that they'd seen me voluntarily leaving the bar with him. I'd have to admit that yes, the first time had been consensual. But not the rest. All Chad would have to do is lie and say something like he had tried to keep it professional, but I'd seduced him during a private meeting, and the chances were that no one would believe me.

Not everyone will believe you, the voices in my head said together, a harmony to their tune. But you don't need everyone. You just need one to fight in your corner. One who isn't blinded by his executive charm. One who can understand that consent given once isn't binding.

Grinding my teeth, I followed Sarah Livingstone's profile. When I worked up the courage, I would introduce myself.

A knock pulled me back to reality.

I quickly dabbed the sleeve of my jumper to my wet cheeks and prayed my eyes weren't red enough to give away the fact that I'd been crying.

"Am I allowed in?" Lochran called from the doorway. His voice was calm, and surprisingly, just his presence soothed me. The sexual desire had drained from my

body, but I ached to throw my arms around my mate and tell him everything. My body needed him to soothe and comfort me, to wrap his large arms around me, hold me to his chest and tell me that everything was going to be alright.

That it wasn't my fault.

But I couldn't do that right now. I needed every ounce of my energy to go into writing this journal. I feared that if I told Lochran everything, the wounds would start to heal. I had to remain raw for now so that I could get every single interaction with Chad down on paper. Once my trial was over, I would remove anything in the journal about magic, hand it to the police, and pray someone would believe me.

As if Lochran could sense exactly what I needed—which, I mean, of course he could, he was an incubus—he didn't question me, instead busying himself by making a cup of tea, only occasionally glancing over his shoulder to make sure I was alright.

"I'm surprised you've managed to keep your promise and stay upstairs for most of the day," I said as he set a cup of tea in front of me before taking the chair opposite. I'd allow myself a few moments of reprieve before asking him to leave so I could concentrate on the journal in earnest. "What have you been doing?"

Lochran cocked an eyebrow but didn't answer. His lip twitched into a malevolent grin, exposing his chipped canine as he asked, "Did you get anymore pages written?"

"Um... no," I said, my hands clasping around the cup, the heat of the tea comforting.

"Was something... distracting you?" he asked sweetly.

Was replaying every detail of my mate spilling all over himself as my fingers were deep inside me over and over distracting? Hadn't noticed...

Ah, fuck!

I had been in a perpetual state of arousal since breakfast. No wonder Lochran hadn't come down to disturb me. His dick was probably raw with all the jerking off he'd been doing.

I felt my cheeks flush, and Lochran grinned. "Anyway, I'll leave you to your... writing," he said, standing. His fingers grasped around his cup of tea as he made his way around the table. Just as he reached me, he bent down as if to kiss my forehead, but caught himself at the last minute.

That single gesture made my heart break. It was something that I'd seen time and time again between the other couples in the coven. I'd never been with someone long enough for them to want anything other than sex. None of my previous partners had wanted to kiss me in a way that wasn't sexual—in a way that was just to show me that they cared.

But my mate did.

I really needed to work through whatever it was that was holding me back as soon as possible, because I wanted that part of him too.

## Chapter 13. Lochran

I had spent the entirety of the morning jerking off.

When I'd woken up and made my way down to make Lex breakfast, I hadn't planned to spend the next few hours with my fist on my dick. It was the first time that I'd ever eaten mortal food just for the pleasure of it, and not to take the edge off my hunger. Lex was her usual stunning self, her hair in a messy bun, a tight sweater that left nothing to the imagination—not that I needed to use my imagination anymore—and a

pair of baggy sweatpants that accentuated the flare of her hips. My mate had quickly shooed me up to my room so that she could concentrate on her notebook.

I was sure she had fully intended to do that, but, like me, she'd been replaying every moment of last night over and over in her head.

Her desire had permeated the entire house, and it was all I could do to strip my clothes and fist my cock before she'd sent me over the edge. That had been the first orgasm. The second one came not long after that, as did the third. But by the time the fourth came, I had some more control. And so, as Lex remained in the kitchen, unconsciously pumping her desire through the house, I'd used it as an exercise in control. By noon, I'd been able to edge myself for a full hour without climax.

It was progress.

Just as I pulled myself from the edge once more, the scent in the air changed. My nostrils no longer filled with my mate's Samhain-spiced scent of desire. This was bitter and acidic, anger mixed with fear. It took a mere second for me to pull my jeans back on before I leaped down the stairs.

The door to the kitchen was open, and I could see my mate hunched over, her phone in her hand and her back to me. I knocked on the door to announce my presence. A stabbing sensation shot through my chest as she brought the sleeve of her sweater to her face before turning to me, her eyes red.

Anger like I'd never felt before radiated through me, and I struggled to keep the shadows from pooling around me. Someone had upset my mate.

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I wanted to fall on my knees in front of her and beg her to tell me who had hurt her. I wanted to call my shadow wings and hunt down whoever had caused my mate so much pain and tear them limb from limb. I wanted to pull her into my arms and tell her everything would be okay, that she'd always be safe with me.

But I sensed that my mate wanted none of those things. Her scent changed to that of freshly wrought iron, a look of steely determination crossing her face.

So I set aside my want to comfort and destroy, and instead made my mate a cup of tea. It didn't feel like it while I was making it, but the moment I'd set the tea in front of her, her scent softened somewhat. The tang of determination was still strong, but it was laced with something soft and herbal. Comfort.

This pleased me, and I felt some of my earlier tension ebb away.

"I'm surprised you've managed to keep your promise and stay upstairs for most of the day. What have you been doing?" Lex asked.

My lip twitched. I wanted to tell my mate of all the filthy ways I'd pictured fucking her as I practiced my control. There'd been a time when talking dirty had only been a tool to make the mortal women orgasm faster. A tool that had felt wrong and cringey. But with Lex, the way her body had responded to my words last night had felt right. I wondered if I could make her orgasm from just words alone? There was a thought. But, for now, my mate wasn't quite ready for those kind of filthy declarations. Instead, I decided to tease her. "Did you get anymore pages written?"

"Um... no," she said.

“Was something... distracting you?” I asked, my tone innocent. My dick twitched the moment Lex’s eyes widened in realization, her cheeks flushing a dusky pink. Her eyes darted quickly to the bulge in my pants, to my hand, and then to her cup of tea.

Teasing my mate was quickly becoming one of my favorite pastimes. But the scent of her determination was still heavy in the air, and she needed to continue with her journal. “Anyway, I’ll leave you to your... writing,” I said, unable to resist the urge of one final teasing comment.

As I crossed the room, I bent automatically to kiss her forehead before catching myself. We’d masturbated in front of each other, but there was something more intimate about a kiss on the forehead that I didn’t think Lex was ready for.

My heart swelled as I left the room, a note of longing now added to Lex’s scent.

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I spent the rest of the afternoon pacing my room, occasionally popping down to the kitchen to make Lex a cup of tea before returning. Lex’s writing became frantic, her tongue bit between her teeth in concentration. Her emotions ebbed and flowed between anger and fear and didn’t subside until the clock struck six.

She knocked on my door to remind me that we were to have dinner with her family in an hour. There was a tinge of glee mixed in with her scent, but when I asked her what her “Good luck!” warning had meant, her lips pulled into a malevolent smile as she said, “You’ll find out soon enough.”

My devious little witch.

If she would have let me, I’d have tied her to the bed and licked her pretty little pussy, edging her until she spilled her secrets in exchange for release.



But, for now, I'd just have to trust that whatever my mate wasn't telling me wouldn't result in bodily harm.

An hour later, I was sitting on the threadbare couch waiting for Lex to finish getting ready. The house had provided me with a shirt and woolen vest top, tanned pants and a pair of loafers to dress in. It had taken a full ten minutes of pleading before I'd convinced it to conjure the outfit I'd been summoned in. Unlike in the shadow realm, I couldn't just poof things into existence myself. It felt good to be back in my usual attire.

A weight pressed down on my lap. I glanced down to see the house had summoned Lex's notebook just as a lamented creak echoed around the living room. The house was just as pained as me that our witch was hurting.

"House, that's private. I won't be reading it," I said, keeping my voice soft and soothing. I wanted nothing more than to open it and see exactly what had happened to my mate. Maybe I'd even get the name of someone to hunt and quell this murderous rage brewing inside me. "Lex will tell me in her own time."

The book disappeared, presumably back to the kitchen table, which Lex had commandeered for her task.

I didn't have long to dwell on her notebook as a moment later, Lex's bedroom door clicked shut. I looked over my shoulder just in time to catch the first glimpse of my mate descending the stairs. My heart stopped in my chest as a pair of ankle high, black Dr. Martens were followed by my mate's bared, curvy legs. The nakedness of her legs seemed to keep going and going until, finally, they were covered mid-thigh by a dress. Her dress was midnight black velvet, littered with tiny stars. It was cinched at her waist, flaring from her hips, bouncing with every step she took down the stairs in a way that made my mouth dry.

Her cardigan was black and oversized, and had fallen from her shoulder on one side, pooling at her elbow. It was the perfect mix of comfort and seduction that had the first ripple of hunger since yesterday scorch through me.

While a messy bun would always be my favorite look on my mate, billowing russet curls were a close second. They flowed down her back and over her shoulder, catching the candlelight and looking like a flaming waterfall.

I was speechless, and was pretty sure my mouth was hanging open, but I couldn't seem to move a muscle.

Lex's cheeks flared red as she pulled at the hem of her dress. "Don't get used to me wearing a dress," she huffed before looking into empty air and scowling. "It's all the house would let me wear."

"Have you tried begging?" I managed to say, my eyes still fixed on the beauty in front of me. "It worked very well for me."

I wondered if begging would work with Lex. If I fell on my knees and pleaded to taste her cunt, would she let me? As if she were having the exact same thoughts, a spike of her desire filled the room, quickly followed by a note of disapproval.

"Stop it, Lochran," she groaned. "Not when we're about to see my family."

Her family, made up of witches and other incubi. I could see why this was probably the worst time to tease my mate. As if my instincts sensed it too, an ironclad vise suppressed that side of me. It felt wrong to dampen my senses and block my mate from me, but it was probably for the best. If I caught even a whiff of desire from my mate, I'd be sporting a monstrous erection, which would be something probably best avoided when meeting my new in-laws for the first time.

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I only ever blocked my senses when I was in the shadow realm. It was an odd sensation to do it here, especially when my mate was so close to me. Not having my senses to pick up emotions made me feel vulnerable, but Lex assured me that the chance of an axe-wielding serial killer picking us off in the ten-minute walk to her parent's house was slim.

The walk was a rather pleasant one, and thoughts of homicidal murderers on the loose were soon pushed to the back of my mind. I'd only seen the town in the daylight, and there was something magical about it at night. We followed the cobbled path that skimmed the outskirts of town, the glittering town on one side and an ancient forest flanking the other. Old-fashioned lamps scattered the path, each illuminated by witchlight, which cast a warm lilac glow across the path—light enough that we wouldn't stumble, dark enough that if Lex were to let me pull her into the woods and press her up against a tree, no one would know.

The image was quickly doused by the vise I'd put on my senses. On the cusp of meeting her family formally for the first time was not when I should be thinking about how accessible her pussy was in that dress.

As we walked, Lex talked animatedly about her childhood growing up in the town, many of the stories I'd already heard from her mom. I listened intently and tried to curb the excitement that I might one day also have a daughter who would experience as magical a childhood as my mate. I wondered if my mate wanted children too. I presumed that being an active succubus, Lex had been taking the standard contraceptive potion most magical creatures consumed annually. The sex ban meant that I hadn't bothered to take it for a few years. I made a mental note to try to slip that into a casual conversation at some point. The way this witch drove me crazy, I didn't

think I'd have the mental capacity to remember to tell her if she suddenly decided she wanted a more intimate relationship.

Finally, we reached my in-laws' house. Clad in black wood slats, it looked like something from one of those renovation shows, where the owners were aiming for a well-beloved log cabin with a modern twist.

Lex's grin widened as the door opened on cue.

Her mother was standing in the hallway, fixing her hair in the mirror. It took her a moment to realize the door had opened before she spun on her heel to face us, a squeal of delight issuing from her. "Alexis!" she cried, lunging forward and enveloping Lex in a mama bear hug. "I seem to remember a certain little witch saying she would never, ever partake in the Samhain summoning. And look at you now! I'm so happy for you, dear."

"I didn't partake in the Samhain summoning," Lex huffed. "You sent me to live in a very overbearing house that tricked me into it." The declarations should have hurt, but Lex's tone was more humorous than regretful.

Ms. Cole's eyes widened in surprise as she let go of her daughter. Her eyes narrowed in on me as the next target and, sure enough, a split second later, I was engulfed in a near bone-crushing hug too. "Lochran! You didn't tell me that you were an accidental summoning when we had tea!"

"Nice to see you again, Ms. Cole," I said down to her. "And, yes. I can confirm I am indeed an accidental summoning."

"There was nothing accidental about it," a honeyed voice came from a room beyond.

Lex groaned beside me as a witch with a gray bob, sparkling eyes, and a knowing

smile clicked her way into the hallway, her serpentine cane's ruby eyes boring into me.

"Lochran, this is my grandmother, Lily Cole. Grandma, this is my m—" Lex coughed.

She'd almost said the forbidden M word! I couldn't help the smile that tore from my lips. Something primal swelled in my chest.

"... my... um." Lex looked me up and down, unsure of what to call me. I didn't care what came out of her mouth next, because what she really wanted to call me was mate. "My... um... roommate," she finally settled on.

"Pleasure to meet you, Ms. Cole," I said. I bet I looked like a lovesick fool in this moment. If this were a cartoon, I'd have little love hearts for eyes and birds would be singing. And I didn't care that my mate had reduced me to this gooey pile of mushy love.

A cough brought me back to my senses, and all three witches were staring at me. Lex rolled her eyes. Her mom brought her clasped hands to her cheek, gushing like a schoolgirl, while her grandmother eyed me up and down.

I found myself straightening under the scrutiny of the oldest Ms. Cole. She might dress like a doting grandma, but there was a steely presence to her. Finally, she said, "I think he'll survive."

"Survive what?" I asked, but quick as a viper, Lex's grandmother had already looped Lex's arm into hers and was directing her granddaughter to the living room, asking Lex to expand on the circumstances of my summoning.

I made to follow, but Lex's mom put a finger out. "Ah, ah, ah. You'll be going in

there,” she said, pointing to the kitchen, “while we catch up with Alexis. You’ll find all three generations of males in the kitchen, dear, each waiting to size you up.”

Oh, goodie.

Ms. Cole made to follow her mother and daughter before turning, her face pained. “Just... don’t mention the upcoming trial. Lex’s father is still a bit raw over the whole thing, as I’m sure you’d understand.”

I felt the color drain from my face. I was two dueling halves. Part of me wished my mate already trusted me enough to tell me what had happened to her. The other part hoped she didn’t.

That was perhaps a bit selfish of me. But, by this point, I’d realized that she had most likely been attacked by a man, and probably one that she’d been with to satisfy her succubus. The longer I lived in ignorance, the longer I had to gain Lex’s trust. Because the moment I found out who he was, Lex would be witness to a very different side of me. A side I wasn’t sure I could control when it came to protecting my mate. It would kill me if Lex saw that side of me prematurely and it scared her.

I drew in a deep breath as her mom made her way into the living room. I pushed all thoughts of the journal and the trial to the back of my mind as I wandered toward the kitchen.

Three sets of eyes narrowed on me.

Even though my senses were dampened, the three males in front of me made the hairs rise on the back of my neck. Shadows threatened to spill from me, but I willed them back.

These males were Lex’s family. There was no threat to my mate, I reminded myself.

Lex's father stood over the kitchen island, draining potatoes into the sink. His lips were tight, his eyes narrowed as if he were considering flinging hot potatoes in my face for defiling his daughter.

Her grandfather was leaning against the counter, arms folded, beer in hand, looking me up and down. While Lex's dad dressed like he had just walked off the set of a fifties suburbia movie, her grandfather looked like he belonged at a punk festival. He wore a white tee-shirt, covered by a leather vest with metal studs on the shoulder and embroidered band logos, tight black jeans and well-worn black leather boots. His hair was shaved to the skin on the sides, a blisteringly white mohawk on top. I resisted the urge to rub my eyes, for surely this man wasn't the partner of the eldest Ms. Cole, who wore a frilly apron.

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To his side was a young warlock. While warlocks were common in most covens, he was the first one I'd seen since being summoned here. Which made sense as the witches born to the Briar Coven were clones of their mothers, except for a small amount from their fathers. He did look almost identical to his sister—if Lex were a ripped, six-foot-some-odd male. His russet hair, the exact same shade as Lex and their father, was artfully disheveled. His face wore a scowl of pure and utter hatred, and I felt shadows swirl in my veins, ready to strike.

I urged the shadows to settle once more. I was taller and broader than the three males in front of me. If they wanted a show of dominance, they'd have one.

Lex's brother snorted a laugh, his scowl dropping from his face, replaced by a wide grin. "Sorry guys," he said, nearly choking on his laugh. "I can't keep it up."

The two other males rolled their eyes at the youngest one. "Seriously, Jake?" Lex's grandfather said in an irritated grumble. "I managed to keep your father on edge for a full evening when I first met him."

"One of the most uncomfortable nights of my life, Sid," Lex's dad huffed before turning to me. "I was hoping to torture you a little longer, but I guess you can help with the mashed potatoes instead." He held out a hand across the kitchen island. "You can call me Arch."

"As in Archibald?" I said, accepting his outstretched hand.

The next thing I knew, I was gliding across the island countertop, Arch's free hand grasping around my neck. "As in archnemesi*s* if you hurt my daughter."



Don't kill your mate's dad. Don't kill your mate's dad. Don't kill your mate's dad.

Despite my best effort, shadows erupted around me, coiling around Arch's arms and squeezing. His wrist bent with a sickening snap, and he let go of my neck. I threw myself off the island. The moment my feet touched the ground, my membranous shadow wings materialized behind me, spreading as far as they could in a threatening pose, the black iridescent scales flashing in warning. Obsidian talons grew from my fingers, and my bodkin-tipped tail coiled behind my shoulder, ready to strike. An unearthly hiss emanated through my gritted teeth as I stared down at my mate's father.

Arch's shadows had settled into a contrasting form. He didn't have wings or a tail. Instead, a pair of dangerously sharp horns coiled out from his hairline, piercing through his sculpted hair. His canines had grown like daggers, catching his bottom lip... which was pulled into a pleased grin as he eyed me up and down.

"Impressive," he mused. "I think you'll do nicely."

I glared at him, my talons flexing, itching to tear into something.

"Need some help in there, sweetie?" Ms. Cole called from the living room, breaking my murderous gaze.

"No thanks, dear," Lex's father replied sheepishly.

"Then kindly recall your shadows!"

The shadows instantly dropped from Arch's form at his mate's command. I remained still apart from my tail, the pointed tip trained on Arch's heart.

"You too, Lochran!" Lex bellowed.

My shadows slid from me, pooling on the floor at my feet before disappearing into the nooks and crannies of the kitchen.

Sid broke into a glittering smile, so at odds with his ominous look, as he slapped me on the back, declaring, “Ah! You’ll make a fine match for our Alexis!”

“Sorry. Couldn’t help myself,” Arch said, his canines retracting back to their normal size. He clicked his broken wrist back into place. I should feel bad for breaking my mate’s father’s wrist, but I just couldn’t seem to muster the sympathy. Besides, it’d probably be healed by the time he made it to the dining table. “That was the final bit of torture, I promise.”

“Welcome to the family!” Jake grinned as he slung his arm over my shoulder.

## Chapter 14. Lex

After Lochran’s hazing, my family accepted him with open arms. I hadn’t expected to feel so... pleased. But when we all finally sat down, it was like Lochran had always been part of the family. Aside from Lochran taking a few cautious glances at my father, the conversation flowed seamlessly, both Dad and Granda eager to hear news of what had changed in the shadow realm since they’d been summoned.

As it turned out, not a lot.

It sounded like a rather dreary place, and, without saying it outright, Lochran seemed incredibly happy to have finally been summoned away from it permanently.

The topic of the upcoming trial was skirted around. Jake mentioned it once, and the room immediately swirled with shadows from all three incubus demons.

It wasn’t until Grandma clacked her cane on the floor that the shadows finally

dissipated. The subject was only touched upon after that. Grandmacoaxed out of me that I'd managed to complete twenty of the pages. Technically forty, I guessed, as it was front and back.

She asked how I was faring without my magic, and I realized I hadn't really missed it at all. The house—devious though it might be—had catered for pretty much everything I'd needed. And Lochran had done the rest.

It was quite a blissful set up, truth be told.

I wondered if I could keep the house permanently after the trial. I thought back to my apartment in Sacramento. It was just walls and a view. But my crooked house here felt like home. I didn't want to go back to that life. Aside from Billy, there was nothing for me in Sacramento.

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But here I had my family. My house.

My mate.

My mate, who was quizzing my granda on his favorite bands, asking my mom for tips on convincing our house to let him do some minor DIY, and who stared down my brother after I winced as he chewed with his mouth open.

No... I couldn't picture a life without him now.

It was the single thought on my mind throughout the rest of dinner. It was what I was thinking when I hugged my family goodbye and what played on my mind as we walked in comfortable silence toward our home.

Well... only for the first minute or so.

Then my thoughts were filled with how beautiful Lochran looked in the lilac glow of the witchlight. How it matched his irises and caught on every bulge of muscle. I had a perfectly curated plan for how I would take the physical aspect of our relationship to the next level laid out. I'd mentally rehearsed aspeech and everything. The plan was to get home and change into my pajamas—the tight tank top and sweatpant set that made his neck pulse—and ask him if we could move on to touching. I was ready for that. More than ready. My panties were so damp right now I was surprised that Lochran's nostrils hadn't flared at the scent of my desire in the air.

I cast a glance at him. He was strolling with his hands in his jean pockets, a goofy smile on his face like he didn't have a care in the world. He definitely wasn't feeding

from me right now.

Which, surprisingly, disappointed me. Especially because my succubus side was quivering inside me, desperate for release.

My eyes darted to the tree line. Thoughts of Lochran pinning me against a tree as he hitched up my skirt sent a jolt to my core. Heat flushed in my cheeks as my eyes drifted to Lochran and...

... nothing.

It was like he was oblivious to my desires.

I ground my teeth, mentally trying to push the image of him rutting me against a tree to the part of him that should be able to see exactly what desires a person had.

Nothing.

I rolled my eyes. Maybe I needed to be a little bit more obvious.

“Hey, Lochran?”

Lochran looked down at me, his grin wide and dreamy. “Yes, Lex?”

“Um... want to take a quick...detour?” I asked, hoping he’d catch on to my obvious innuendo as I glanced at the tree line.

He did not.

“If you want to,” he replied, his tone as innocent as a mooncalf.

What was up with him this evening?

Blowing out an exasperated breath, I veered into the trees, Lochran in tow. After a few moments, I found a clearing illuminated just enough by the moonlight that I could make out Lochran's expression turn into a look of confusion as I pressed my back against a tree.

My mate was a sex demon, for Hecate's sake. What did he think I wanted from him by guiding him into the woods?

I stole a glance at his crotch. Not even a boner. Had he jerked off that much this morning that he'd broken his sex drive?

My tongue clicked against the roof of my mouth as I searched for the words I wanted to say, before settling on, "Is everything okay?"

His eyebrow cocked in confusion. "Of course. Why wouldn't it be?"

"I've just... been thinking..." C'mon, Lex! Remember the speech! "...if you wanted to, we could maybe... go a bit further?"

Lochran's lips pursed as he glanced around him. "I mean, we can, if you want to. But I'm terrible at directions, so I'd be relying on you to get us back to the path."

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. Finally, I said, "Has something happened? You don't seem to be, um..." I struggled to find the right words that would be both sympathetic, in case he had, like, hit his head or something, and frustrated, in case he really had jerked himself off into a state of perpetual obliviousness. "... reacting to me as you usually would."

Realization finally dawned on Lochran. His lip quirked into a wicked grin, his bottom

lip catching on his broke canine. He took a step forward, and my heart skipped a beat. His voice was practically a purr as he said, “Has my little witch been having sinful thoughts? Has she lured me into the woods to have her wicked way with me?”

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“Maybe” was all I managed. My mouth had suddenly become dry, all the moisture in my body seemingly being syphoned to between my legs.

“I dampened my senses, Lex.” His voice was low and guttural. “I thought it would be best when we weren’t on our own. But if your thoughts are as wicked as I think they are, you’re going to have to set your boundaries now, my little witch.” Lochran took another step, placing a hand on the tree above me. He loomed over me, blocking out the moon, shadows swirling around us. “Because once I release my incubus side, I won’t have time for questions.”

“Touching!” I blurted out. Touching was what the plan was... but the way his chest heaved in anticipation had me picturing him turning me around and pressing my chest against the tree as he pushed my dress up, his shadow talons shredding my panties before running through my folds and realizing how wet I was for him. The thought of him sheathing himself in me in one smooth, claiming movement—

“Fuck, Lex,” Lochran groaned. His arm quivered above me as the sound of wood splintering filled my ears. I glanced up to see his shadow talons embedded in the bark. “Your wicked thoughts will be the death of me.”

Lochran took a deep, steadying breath before raising his free hand to my face, a long finger hovering within reach of my cheek. “Just touching.”

I couldn’t tell if it was a question or a reminder to himself. In answer, I pressed my cheek to his finger. His touch was electric, sending a spark so powerful to my core that I let out an unconscious moan.



Lochran's finger traced lightly over my cheek and down my neck. "When you first came down the stairs"—his fingers slipped under my cardigan—"and this was draped off one shoulder"—he pushed the cardigan off said shoulder, the material pooling in my elbow—"I thought you were the most beautiful creature I'd ever seen in my life."

Naw.

"Now show me where you're aching to be touched, my wicked little witch."

My succubus roared inside me as I wrapped my fingers around his wrist and guided his hand to between my legs.

Lochran hitched a breath as his finger glided over the damp material of my panties. "You've been drenched for days, Lex." His voice was a low grumble, his lips so close to my neck that every syllable sent a spark to my very core. My body rolled in tandem with his strokes, a silent beg for more.

"I should tease you, my little witch. I should draw this out until you beg me for your release."

"Please."

Well, that didn't take long.

Lochran's laugh was a low, possessive grumble as his finger looped underneath the hem of my panties. "I love that you're so ready for me," he said as his finger circled my entrance. He pushed the tip of his finger inside me, and—fuck—I wasn't going to last long.

My voice was nearly a whimper as I begged, "More."

Lochran stroked inside me just the once, slowly feeling every contour of me, before adding a second finger. The stretch was incredible.

I barely noticed that he'd brought his head down to my ear until his hot breath brushed over me. "I'm going to make you come as quickly as you made me, my little witch."

With that, he plunged his fingers deep inside me, his thumb rolling over my clit with every quick, powerful thrust of his hands. The tip of his tongue flicked at my ear before gliding down my neck. Heat pooled in my core, and I barely had the sense to realize that his tongue was inhumanly long as it licked up the length of my neck.

The image of his long tongue pulsing inside me had a fresh wave of dampness coating my mate's hand, and he growled in pleasure.

Fuck.

My mate was making good on his promise to make me come as quickly as he had last night.

The sound of wood splintering barely registered as Lochran racked his claws through the bark above my head. Suddenly, his arm was under me, lifting me off my feet, pushing me higher up the tree and—

Deeper.

He could thrust his fingers inside me sinfully deep at this angle.

"You like it quick, don't you? I saw the flash of desire, the way you wanted me to rut you. To pin you against the tree and claim you—"

“Lochran!” I cried out.

“Come for me, witch.” Lochran’s fingers curled inside me, stroking that glorious spot as his thumb rolled over my clit. On my mate’s command, I came.Hard.

My orgasm was so powerful that I only barely remembered Lochran licking his fingers clean before he pulled me against his chest, spread his shadow wings, and flew us home.

Yup, I came so hard that I didn’t even have the mental capacity to be awestruck that my mate’s shadow wings weren’t just for show. He could actually fly.

### Chapter 15. Lex

My sleep was blissful and deep. Lochran had carried me directly to my bedroom door before letting me down, but not before gently pulling me into his chest as if he would savor every last second of my consent for him touching me.

It had been all I could do to change into my pajamas before collapsing face-first into my bed, where I remained like a satisfied statue for the next few hours. But when the high finally wore off at around two in the morning, my body jolted me awake. A mixture of anxiety and determination fueled me down the stairs and, with a quick pit stop to make a cup of tea, to the comfort of the couch to write my final ten pages.

The soft pillows enveloped me, the house ensuring they were warm and comfortable, as I detailed the morning of the hex. The moment I'd written the final sentence, the journal disappeared with a softpop, presumably reappearing in my grandma's spell room for her perusal when she woke.

The clenching of my chest seemed to lessen as I stared into the crackling fire, heat blooming around me. Now that the journal was out of the way, for now at least, I found myself craving Lochran. In a sexual way, yes—having had a taste, I didn't think I could ever not crave him in that way—but mostly just for his company. I had enjoyed hearing snippets of his life before being summoned, and while it might not have been an overly happy one, I found myself wanting to know more about him. It had been a roller-coaster few days, filled with dueling thoughts and consumed with the need to finish the journal. And now that was done, all I could think about was why I didn't know my mate's favorite color, or how he'd gotten his scar, or literally anything he could tell me about himself.

And I wanted to tell him about me too. Like how I missed my best friend. How, as much as I hated my brother at times, he was, reluctantly, my second best friend, and I secretly championed the fact that he was doing his PhD. How, aside from my last job, I really enjoyed working office jobs alongside the mortals, and how I was both excited and afraid that someday, decades from now, I would be sitting in my grandma's position, leading the coven and passing judgement on other wayward witches.

Speaking of which, I should probably fill him in on what to expect from the trial tomorrow—technically today, I guessed. If my father's reaction was anything to go by, giving him time to process before the trial might help diffuse an undoubtedly murderous reaction to seeing it firsthand.

I found that I wanted to tell him. To let him know that he was not the reason I'd needed to take things slow. In fact, his patience and understanding had been a massive part of my healing process. To know that I could make a man be uncontrollable in his lust for me, but for him to still hold my boundaries as sacred, had made me trust that side of myself once more.

I wasn't to blame.

My eyes flicked up to Lochran's room above me, and I wondered if he was awake.

I didn't have to ponder for long. A moment later, I heard the click of a door, and Lochran's footsteps on the stairs, cat-like as if trying not to wake me.

Warmth spread through me at the gesture, and I quickly righted myself as my mate stood on the squeaky final step of the stairs. A split second later, a sheepish Lochran appeared in the doorway wearing only a pair of thin shorts. I gulped as I took in his disheveled hair and mischievous grin before slowly racking my eyes down his thick torso. His dark nipples were taut, and I wondered what one would feel like against the

flat of my tongue—

A cough brought me to my senses, and I internally cursed myself for my gaze not making it as far as the delicious V-line that dipped below the hem of his shorts.

“I can go back to bed if you need some alone time?”

I shook my head a little bit too enthusiastically, causing my mate to grin. “Couldn’t sleep either?” I asked him.

“I wasn’t allowed to,” he said through a yawn as he dropped onto the couch beside me. “The room was like an icebox.”

Lochran’s hand grasped around a tattered old blanket draped over the back of the couch. He sniffed it tentatively. Deciding the scent wasn’t too offensive, he held it out to me, even though his teeth had started to chatter.

“I’m okay,” I said, automatically reaching out to push the blanket toward him. Our fingers brushed, the touch sizzling like a spark between us. Memories of last night flooded my brain, my cheeks flushing as my eyes locked with Lochran’s. His chattering had momentarily stopped as his chest moved in a deep, single breath. He sighed, and the chattering began again.

“Are you sure?” he asked.

I nodded. “Yup,” I squeaked. “The house has kept me warm with a fire.”

Lochran’s head bobbed once before he threw the blanket outward, spreading it fully in one swift motion and pulling it up to his neck.

The blanket suddenly poofed out of existence, causing Lochran’s head to roll back in

frustration. “Why is this house determined for me to freeze my balls off?”

“I think it’s maybe... um... hoping that we snuggle up for warmth.”

The house creaked in acknowledgement.

While I wasn’t opposed to the idea—in fact, the thought of pressing my body against Lochran was becoming more and more appealing by the minute—I’d already made up my mind that I wanted to find out more about my mate first.

But I wouldn’t be opposed to some more physical explorations after.

As I was forming how to articulate this to the house, Lochran turned to me and said loudly, “The house isn’t doing a very good job of getting us together.”

I had to bite back a laugh. In just a couple of days, my mate had found out exactly how to play the house at its own games. I scrunched my face into a look of confusion—I was a terrible actor, but thankfully the magic of the house was pretty innocent and easy to trick. “Oh? Why’s that?” I asked, my voice sweetly demure.

Lochran seemed to be just as terrible an actor. He tried his best to look concerned, but he couldn’t seem to hide the grin threatening to burst past his lips. In an attempt to school his face, he took a deep, steadying breath.

The house let out an impatient wheeze before Lochran finally said, “Because I’m so cold, I think my dick might fall off. And then the house will never see us together.”

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A split second later, the blanket reappeared. The house had bound Lochran tight, tucking the blanket into every crevice available.

I giggled at the concentrated look on my mate's face as he struggled to loosen an arm from the blanket's vise-like grip. Finally, he freed his arm enough to prop himself up.

Lochran's eyes met mine. "I genuinely think I might have hypothermia," he declared dramatically. The house, taking no chances, swelled the fire in the hearth to a near blisteringly hot temperature. "Do you mind distracting me while I try to warm up?"

"What did you have in mind?" I asked and was surprised to hear a tinge of sultriness in my tone.

Lochran paused a moment. "Maybe we could get to know one another more personally?"

Images of last night flooded my mind once more. I clenched my legs together as heat pooled in my stomach. Screw the Q and A, I was definitely up for getting to know my mate on a more personal level.

Lochran chuckled. "Mind out of the gutter, my wicked little witch. I wasn't kidding when I said I needed a bit of time to warm up. What I meant was it would be nice to get to know a bit more about you."

"What do you want to know?" I asked.

Lochran pondered for a moment. "Let's start simple. What's your favorite color?"



Without thinking, I said, “Easy. Violet. It’s a calming color, and it gives me a sense of peace and serenity. My favorite time of year is when the lavender blooms, and my favorite crystal to use in spells is amethyst.” I cast a glance at Lochran and gulped. Yes, of course my mate had to have violet eyes. “You?”

“Dusky pink,” he said immediately. I waited, but he offered no further explanation.

“Okay. How about favorite food?”

Lochran raised an eyebrow as if the answer should be obvious.

I rolled my eyes. “I mean human food,” I said, adding at the end for good measure.

“Pancakes, bacon, and maple syrup. When I had the energy, I would summon a small kitchenette and make imaginary pancakes in the shadow realm. How about you?”

“Cookies,” I answered, a smile curving my lips. “My grandma would sneak them to me before dinner when I was a child. I meant it when I said Dad was a disaster in the kitchen for years. He was so bad at the beginning that my mom promised me if I ate a bit of it and smiled encouragingly, she’d let me go over to Grandma’s for more cookies.”

Lochran chuckled at this. While he had seemed to soften to my dad over dinner, I guessed the hazing was still prominent in his mind. So, a little ammunition against my dad seemed like a fair exchange.

Lochran was quiet for a while, pondering his next question. Finally, he asked, “Why did you not want to summon me?”

Ah. I guessed the time for easy questions was over.

I took a moment to gather my thoughts. Finally, I answered, “I know that all the couples here are happy. But a little bit of me feared that by summoning my mate, I’d be taking the choice of freedom from them. Like, I didn’t know anything about you, and I wasn’t sure if you enjoyed your life as it was. I didn’t want to force someone to be with me. And what if you had already found someone that you loved?” I couldn’t seem to stop myself from rambling as I continued, “And then I just summoned you away from that, and you were forced to be here with me, and you’d have no choice but to stay. And if you didn’t like me, you’d have to have sex with me to survive, and that’s no better than having you as a sex slave—”

“Lex,” Lochran said softly. “We’re fated mates.” Lochran paused a moment before continuing, “Have you ever met a sex demon from a different clan than ours?”

I shook my head.

“Well, I’ve met plenty of them, and they all want the same as every other magical creature on the planet. To find their fated mate. That one person they can bare themselves to in all ways. The bargain our ancestors made is a blessing. I never had to worry about scouring the land for you, unlike the other sexdemons. And summoning me doesn’t make me your sex slave. If anything, it’s the opposite. I may have been free to wander the mortal realm, but I was chained by my need to feed. Don’t get me wrong, I didn’t exactly hate it when I was first let loose on the world. But I soon realized that I didn’t actually have the freedom I thought I had. I mean, I didn’t even have the luxury of appearing as myself,” he said, gesturing up and down his body. “I’m designed to draw out the most potent sexual desires. Just to survive, I had to find someone who craved sex, and I was forced to take on whatever form they found most desirable. But since being summoned, I can finally settle into my own skin. I’m finally free of the shackles that bound me.”

I swallowed a hard lump in my throat. I had just assumed that my mate would be living his best life, hunting for his food and having sex left, right, and center. I felt

suddenly stupid. How often had I cringed when the need to satisfy my succubus side had become intense? But it had never been overwhelming to the point where I'd been forced to give into it. I always had a choice. Lochran didn't. I wondered how I would feel being forced to change my appearance into someone I wasn't. Knowing that none of your partners were attracted to you, it was always the face of someone else.

Yeah, being a sex demonsucked.

"I think you're the most attractive person I've ever seen," I said quietly. It was true. Scars and all.

Lochran's face softened. "When you first summoned me, I didn't know what to expect." I cringed slightly. I'd been wearing my most slobbish house clothes, no makeup, and my unbrushed hair pulled into the messiest of buns. I bet he had been expecting a model, not a mess. "You took my breath away. When I used to lie in bed at night and picture my ideal mate, my favorite image was of us in our pajamas, cuddled up on the couch and watching Netflix. When I first saw you, you looked like home."

You looked like home.

Yeah... I was totally falling in love with my mate.

I had a sudden need to explain the sex ban. Maybe not in explicit detail right this very second, but I wanted to assure my mate that he wasn't the reason I'd been withdrawn since he got here. "I... um... about a month ago, I had a... regrettable encounter. I'd needed to satisfy my succubus, and the person I chose turned out to be my new boss... and, well, it has just been a very uncomfortable month dealing with that. I guess I kind of blamed my succubus side for putting me in that situation, and I kind of put myself into a sex ban as self-punishment, I guess. It's part of the reason why I've been wanting to take it slow."

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“I understand,” Lochran said. “I haven’t had sex in years. Or kissed anyone.”

A memory pricked in my mind’s eye. This wasn’t the first time Lochran had alluded to not having sex.

What constitutes as full-on sex is different for everyone. But, for me, it’s penetrative sex. And I haven’t done that in years.

I had just assumed he’d been kidding.

I resisted the urge to giggle at the ridiculousness of our situation. As if Fate would match a celibate sex demon to a witch who was on a sex ban. But when my gaze met Lochran’s, there was no humor in his eyes.

“Really?” I asked.

Lochran shrugged as if being a celibate sex demon was perfectly ordinary. “I had to do other things to feed, of course. But not having sex was my way of feeling like I was in control. And kissing has always been very intimate for me.” After a brief second, he carefully added, “And it’s the reason I haven’t... uh... taken the contraceptive potion in years.”

A conflict of emotions surged through me. I was oddly pleased that I’d found a kinship with Lochran. I understood his need to find a way to take back control, even if it meant going against his baser needs. But my stomach hollowed at the realization that he might still have his sex ban in place. We hadn’t had sex yet... in fact, we hadn’t even kissed yet. I’d assumed that once I’d worked through my issues, we

wouldn't be able to keep our hands off one another. I hadn't considered that my mate would have the same battle ahead of him.

And he was subtly warning me that, if we mutually decided to go further, he hadn't taken the annual potion to prevent pregnancies. I had, of course, as being a mother hadn't been high on my list of things to do. In fact, I'd never really given it much thought as I had never intended to summon my mate. That thought was way too overwhelming to consider right now. But the fact that my mate had brought up that he wasn't protected, rather than just assuming that we would go straight to baby making now we had been brought together, made me fall for him that little bit harder.

That was, of course, assuming he wanted to have sex. That pesky little voice in my head said, He hasn't actually crossed those boundaries he already had in place. He hasn't yet asked you to touch him, or even kiss him, let alone have sex with him.

I needed to ease into this carefully. I still wasn't ready for penetrative sex, but I wanted to let him know it wasn't off the table for me in the future. "I... um... took the contraception recently." Okay. Easy part done. I hoped he picked up that sex was something I was contemplating in the future if I was willing to talk about contraception. Now for the hard part: finding out if he was ready to challenge some of his boundaries. "Em... about your sex ban—"

As if sensing my unrest, Lochran said softly, "Don't worry, Lex. My sex ban dissipated the moment I laid eyes on you."

## Chapter 16. Lochran

A flicker of relief crossed my mate's face. Her lips looked so soft and inviting in the firelight, and I wondered if she would let me kiss her.

As if she could read my mind, she asked, "Can I kiss you?"

Excitement thrummed through my veins as I nodded.

It was as if our bodies moved in sync. One second I was on my side of the couch, wrapped in a blanket. A split second later, the blanket was gone, and I collided with my mate halfway, our lips meeting and arms wrapping around each other in a devouring embrace. Lex didn't protest as I pulled her on top of me, the heat of her body searing through the thin material of her tank top. My dick grew instantly hard as her tongue flicked over my lips, a silent plead to let her in. A moan rumbled inside me as I parted my lips for her, our tongues rolling over each other in blissful, devouring exploration.

My fingers dug into her as she ground into my length, and—fuck—she was the most perfect creature on this earth.

Her fingers glided feather-soft over my chest, feeling lower until they plucked at the hem of my shorts.

Wicked little witch.

I caught her bottom lip between my teeth, causing her to grind into me again, pulling her lips from mine.

“Lex,” I groaned, unconsciously leaning toward her, desperate for her lips to be on mine again.

She answered with a wicked grin, her fingers pushing my shorts further down. “I want more than just touching,” she said, her voice heavy with desire. “I want to take you in my mouth.”

I'd never been so glad that I'd spent the morning edging myself. If I hadn't, the seduction in my mate's voice alone would have had me spilling my seed.

“Can I taste you after?” I begged.

Lex, so eager to begin, simply nodded as she climbed off me. I just about had time to lift my ass slightly off the couch, and in one swift movement, she pulled my shorts off. My cock fell against my torso with a heavy thud, a bead of precum dripping from the tip into my navel.

Lex leaned over me, pressing her lips to mine once more before kneeling on the floor in front of me. Her breath rolled over my length, cooling a fresh bead of precum.

“I want you to stay still for as long as you can,” she said. “And when you can’t take it anymore, I want you to grab my hair and fuck my mouth.”

My balls tightened at her deliciously filthy request. How had we gone from taking it slow to my mate demanding that I fuck her mouth in just three nights?

Now wasn’t the time to question, though.

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Not when Lex's slender fingers slid along the length of me, gently lifting my dick to meet her lips. There was no time to think of how beautiful my mate was in this moment or how I wanted to etch this vision into my mind forever, for the moment the tip of her tongue pushed into my slit, my mind turned to mush.

"Fuck, Lex," I growled, my fingers digging into the tattered fabric of the sofa.

She pulled her tongue from my slit. "Remember, stay still."

It took every ounce of my control to do as she asked as her lips enveloped the head of my cock, taking almost the entire length of me in one fluid motion. Fire cracked up my spine, and I ground my teeth as she moved up and down, her teeth gliding softly over the bottom of my shaft. My fingers itched to find their way to her hair, but I bid them to stay put.

A series of deep breaths managed to get me as far as the minute mark, but my resolve broke when her fingers tickled over my balls and a knuckle pressed against my perineum.

Gasping, one hand steadied me while the other found its way into my mate's hair. I barely registered Lex's lips pulling into a triumphant grin as I thrust until I hit the back of her throat. I took a steadying breath, not wanting to hurt my mate.

But she had a different idea.

Impatiently, she pushed my cock even deeper into her throat.



“Fuck, Lex.” I plunged into her as far as she’d taken me before pulling out of her. “You want me to fuck your mouth until I come?”

She nodded.

“You won’t waste a drop?”

Her eyes practically twinkled as she shook her head. “When you thrust into your hand the other night, I wished it was my mouth around your cock instead of your hand. I’ve pictured it over and over again.”

My balls tightened at her words. Fuck.

I pressed the tip of my cock against her lips. “Then open up, my little witch.”

Again and again, I thrust into her hot, wet mouth, each time pushing a little further down her throat. Her hands grasped my ass and pushed me deeper into her one final time, and I exploded, electricity fizzing over my body as it froze in ecstasy. Lex moved her head in time with each pulse of my dick, taking my cum down her throat eagerly, as if she were dying of thirst.

“You’re such a greedy little witch,” I finally managed to say when the last pulse of my orgasm subsided.

She released my dick from her lips with a soft plop.

“But not as greedy as me.”

Chapter 17. Lex

Lochran’s hands looped under my armpits. Before I had a chance to register what had

happened, he'd lifted me through the air and set me on the sofa. The sight of him towering over me, his muscles bulging and his cock still stiff, glistening in a mixture of my saliva and his cum, had a fresh wave of juices drench me.

Lochran's nostrils flared as he drank in my desire.

I was so ready for this.

Without him asking, I teased my clothes off. His dick bobbed at the sight of me laid bare before him, offering myself as his own personal feast.

Lochran knelt in front of me, spreading my legs. He was so tall he still managed to capture my lips with his despite kneeling on the ground. His kiss was soft this time, his tongue only lightly flicking over mine before he pulled back to kiss my jawline, followed by the length of my neck.

He moved lower down, sucking my nipple into his mouth. He grasped it between his teeth before flicking his tongue over it in a silent promise.

"Lochran," I groaned as he released my breast from his mouth.

"I'm going to spend an entire night worshipping your nipples," he said, his voice raspy. "But I promised to show you just how greedy an incubus you've mated with." He leaned back. "Now spread your legs for me."

I did, and he chuckled. "Oh, Lex. I'm going to need you wider than that." Shadows pooled around him. I was so distracted by the iridescent scales of his wings and the odd lightning strike mottling of the membranous skin that I didn't notice his tail until it had coiled around my knee. It felt as soft as velvet, the tip pointed and swaying. His tail pulled at my knee gently, while his hand pushed at the other until I was spread wide for him.

My pussy clenched as he studied me, as if debating where to start.

“Bottom to top, I think.” A split second later, his head was between my thighs, his tongue inhumanly long as it glided over my ass, flicking teasingly at the ring of muscles, before sliding through my folds. Lochran groaned at the first taste of my wetness, his deep rumble rippling through me to my very core. His tongue finally dragged slowly over my swollen clit, and—fuck—if this was what he could reduce me to with a single lick...

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Lochran lifted his head from between my legs, his eyes closed as he savored the taste of me. “I will never get enough of this, Lex.” His voice was almost a growl, and when he finally opened his eyes, they were glazed over with lust.

As if to prove his point, he dipped his head once more, sucking my clit into his mouth. I arched into him, a cry escaping my lips as he sucked deeper, the tip of his tongue flicking over the sensitive nub.

More... I need more...

My fingers grasped around his hand that was pushing my legs apart, the need to feel some part of him inside me almost overwhelming. I felt his lips pull into a smile against me, but his hand didn't move. I could have cried when he pulled his tongue from my clit, but it quickly slid through my aching folds, lapping at the fresh wave of wetness.

“So wet, my mate,” he growled. “Greedy to be filled, but I only have one tongue.”

The tip of his tongue pushed into my entrance. An indistinguishable sound escaped me as heat surged through my body. Lochran pushed in deeper, his inhuman tongue prodding, exploring, pressing on nerve endings I didn't know existed.

Something glided against my leg, and I only just saw the tip of his tail, the head now thick and blunt, dip between my legs. The moment it flicked over my clit, my body jerked, pushing my pussy onto Lochran's tongue and driving him deeper inside me.

Lochran's wings flexed with glee before tucking tight to his back.

His hand left my knee, tracing slowly down the inside of my thigh as his tongue pulsed rhythmically inside me, hitting the depths of my channel and folding in on itself. Each flick of his tail worked in tandem with his tongue, and surely there could be no greater pleasure on earth than this?

I'd been a fool not to summon my mate on that first Samhain! I'd endured nine years of terrible sex when all this was just one summoning away?

But there was a greater pleasure yet to be had. Lochran's finger was feather light as it traced along the curve of my ass. He swirled it in my slickness before flicking it over my puckered hole. I'd never done anal before—never trusted a partner with something so invasive before—but I trusted my mate. He would know just how far to go, how to wring every last drop of pleasure out of me.

A second later, after hearing no complaint from me, he pushed his finger slowly past the tight ring of muscle.

This. This right here is heaven.

A familiar tingle pulsed through me with every inch he pushed his finger inside, and just as his tongue had folded in on itself enough to caress my G-spot, his finger curled inside me.

My orgasm crashed through me, bringing me to the point of almost passing out. It was as if my brain fizzed in unadulterated euphoria, Lochran's touch like a drug.

My body convulsed as my greedy, greedy mate curled, licked, and flicked once more at all of my sensitive bits, dragging a second orgasm from me, turning my mind to utter mush. I barely registered Lochran removing his finger and tongue from me, and only started to come down when he'd dressed me again, picked me up, and carried me up the stairs.

He made to set me down outside my room, but I clung to him tightly. “Can I sleep in your bed?” I asked, the need to be pressed up against him overwhelming.

Lochran didn’t have to be asked twice. Nor, it seemed, did the house. The door to his room swung open eagerly. The air was no longer the icebox the house had subjected Lochran to in a bid to push us together. Instead, the room was pleasantly warm, the smell of lavender and cinnamon heady in the air. Lochran set me gently on the bed before climbing in beside me. His thick arm pulled me into his chest, his body fitting perfectly against my back and the contours of my legs. A second later, a heavy wing settled over me, its warmth seeping into my bones and warming me to my core.

Sleepily, I traced a finger over the soft scales. Like stars falling from the sky, they bled seamlessly into the thick, membranous skin, the texture from glass-like ridges to velvet almost imperceptible. I remembered the odd markings on his wings. I’d seen shadow wings of all shapes and sizes, but never ones so uniquely beautiful as Lochran’s. “I’ve never seen wings with markings like yours.”

Lochran shuffled beside me. “No, you probably wouldn’t have.”

Well, that sounded ominous.

After a moment, he said, “I’ll tell you, but only if you let me off the pants-pooing story.”

I chuckled. “I wanted an embarrassing story in exchange for that one.”

“It is embarrassing,” he countered.

“Hm. Okay, I’ll take it.”

Lochran let out a breath. “Well, you know we’re born from the shadows fully

formed?”

“Uh huh. Potty-trained and everything, as I recall.”

“Yes. Well, while we might be physically fully formed, and able to talk and not shit our pants... that’s about it. I was born essentially as a big man baby, innocent to the ways of the world. We spend the first decade of our life exclusively in the shadow realm being lectured by the older demons on the dangers of the mortal world, which we mostly ignored, because, y’know”—he shrugged—“we were young and stupid and thought we knew better.”

“Wait... if you didn’t leave the shadow realm, then how did you feed?”

“We didn’t need to. That urge didn’t kick in until we matured, which for me was when I was about sixteen years old.”

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“Oh,” was all I could say. The first time I’d had sex was when I was sixteen, when my succubus side first reared its head. I guessed it made sense that a full-blooded incubus would also need time to mature, despite what their body looked like.

“From the age of ten, we were let loose on the world to explore.”

I cocked an eyebrow. Ten years old didn’t seem old enough to be allowed to explore on your own. “How did that go?”

“Not very well,” Lochran said with a chuckle. “I banded together with the demons that were born from the shadows at the same time as me. There were about fifteen of us, but my closest friends were Devlin, Ambrose, and Blaise.”

I racked my brain trying to think of which witches my age had mates. I didn’t recognize the names, so none of his friends had mated with the witches from our coven yet. And, aside from myself, the only witches my age that hadn’t mated were Caitlyn and, presumably, her cousin, who was in mortal prison.

“It’s a good thing that we are almost indestructible. Devlin once got run over by a car three times in one day.”

My finger automatically reached out to trace the scar down his scalp. Lochran let out a shudder as my finger softly glided down his neck and over the thick muscle of his wing. When it reached a solid band of scarring, I let out a little breath of air. He must have been severely hurt for his scalp and crooked wing to have scarred.

“All sex demon’s shadows settle differently on them, and they’re mostly just for



show. I can only fly short distances with my wings, but one day in my youth I decided to put them to the test. It's obvious now, but at the time, I didn't know that flying in a storm probably wasn't the best idea."

"You flew in a storm?" I gasped.

Lochran nodded his head.

"Stupid, I know. But I was a bit reckless back then. When the lightning bolt hit me, I plummeted to the earth. I just remember excruciating pain... and then nothing. I probably would have died if it wasn't for Devlin, Ambrose, and Blaise. They brought me immediately back to the shadow realm, and some of the older demons helped set my bones. I didn't wake up for a week, and even then, it was months before I was well enough to leave the shadow realm again. The lightning strike is what caused the mottling pattern on my wings." He sucked in a breath. "I know my scars and my wings aren't the prettiest—"

"You're perfect, just the way you are."

## Chapter 18. Lochran

You're perfect, just the way you are.

My mate's words resonated in my mind as I pulled her closer to me, one hand on her stomach, the other under her head. I pressed a soft kiss to her temple and listened to her breathing slow into a soft rhythm as she fell asleep in my arms.

As my breathing slowly matched hers, all I could think was if heaven was a place on earth, it would surely be right here by my mate's side.

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“Hello? Anyone there?” an unfamiliar voice called from somewhere below. Before I could stop myself, I was on my feet, crashing through the bedroom door. The shadows had pooled around me, wings spreading to block the intruder from the room where my mate lay.

A petite woman with billowing silver hair stood in the hallway below, one hand on her hip, a challenge on her face. Power radiated off the wolf shifter in crashing waves. The moment her eyes glowed red, my talons punched into the walls as I readied myself to leap down the stairs and attack. She was an alpha. A young, inexperienced one, yes, but a powerful one nonetheless. My mind worked frantically. A powerful witch could be a match for a normal wolf shifter. But an alpha? It didn’t matter, though; my mate’s magic had been stripped from her. My mate couldn’t protect herself, but I would. I would lay my life down for Lex.

The wolf shifter would be vulnerable in this form, but she could shift in a split second, and then she’d be deadly. But the moment she shifted, her senses would be overwhelmed for the briefest second, and her body would be in its most vulnerable form mid-shift. That would be the only chance to kill. My shadows coiled, ready to strike the moment she moved.

The young wolf’s scrutinous glare looked me up and down, assessing the threat... until her scowl landed on my naked crotch. Her eyes widened in surprise. Her cheeks flushed slightly, and her lips twitched into the oddest pleased grin before she diverted her gaze from my cock. I breathed in. Her scent wasn’t desire or attraction. It was surprise, swelling with happiness for someone else, and an odd sense of hollowness for herself.

Strange.

“Billy! Is that you?” Lex called excitedly from behind me.

“Lex!” the wolf called back. “Wanna call off Mr. Tall, Dark, and Well-hung?”

Lex stumbled from the room. From the corner of my eye, I could see the look of confusion as she took in my heaving, shadowed form. “What are you doing?” she hissed.

“Protecting you,” I growled, my eyes never leaving the wolf.

Lex and the wolf scoffed at the same time, and only then did I take my eyes off the wolf to glare at my mate instead.

“Billy is my best friend, Lochran,” she said indignantly. Lex raised her eyebrow and in a slightly more sheepish tone, she added, “Did I not tell you she’d be visiting?”

“No,” I said flatly. Though I probably should have guessed who the wolf was. I had a vague recollection of Lex’s mom mentioning a wolf-shifter best friend.

Lex flushed. “Oh. Sorry. I must have been... distracted.”

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All tension dissipated, and my shadows instantly fell from me. I could never be mad at my little witch. Especially not when her cheeks flushed that shade of dusty pink that I adored.

“I can see why,” Billy called from below. “Dude! Wanna put that distraction away before it grows any bigger?”

Ah, yes. I was naked and growing hard at the sight of my mate flushing. Probably not the most ideal introduction to her best friend.

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I took myself off for a shower to allow my mate time to catch up with Billy the wolf. The sound of my mate’s laughter hit my ears as I made my descent to the kitchen. An odd pang of jealousy pooled in my gut that someone else was making my mate laugh so heartily. But the moment I caught sight of my mate, the way the tension had left her body for the first time since I’d been summoned, I felt immediately selfish for being jealous of the wolf. Tears of laughter streamed down Lex’s face, mirrored by her best friend, as the pair giggled and tittered, their words indistinguishable to me, but seemingly a language of their own as the conversation continued through wheezes and more peals of laughter.

I remained still, etching the image of my joyous mate into my mind forever. Laughter lines that I’d never noticed creased out from her tear-filled eyes. A trickle of tears trailed haphazardly down her cheeks, their course changing as she threw her head back and wheezed another laugh at something Billy had said. Her full lips were stretched thin into the most perfect smile I’d ever seen. This image right now, I

decided, was the most beautiful image of my mate to date.

When the pair finally realized I'd joined them, Lex jumped up. The heat of the arm she looped into mine seemed to surge straight to my cock—which was immediately dampened by the possessive glare radiating from Billy.

Oblivious, Lex guided me to the table and pushed me toward her best friend, as if presenting me for inspection.

In a way, I guessed she was. Lex's succubus side was not potent enough to sense desires. She couldn't sense just how deeply possessive her best friend was of her. I wondered if Lex had guessed that Billy had chosen her as a pack mate. I wondered if even Billy realized that she'd started a new pack with my mate. I sensed the air again. No, for as possessive as she was, the young wolf was still naïve to her growing powers.

Well, there'd be time enough to figure out the implications of the beginnings of a ragtag pack. But there were worse things than having an alpha wolf who had my mate's best interests at heart.

I slung a possessive arm around Lex, which caused Billy's nostrils to flare.

Probably not the smartest move to antagonize an alpha, but I was determined to stake an equal claim on Lex.

Finally, the moment Billy's narrowed eyes softened, Lex said, "Good. Now you guys have stopped sizing up your dicks—tits, in your case, Billy—can we move on to the introductions?"

Lex went on to tell me how she and Billy had met, then briefly filled Billy in on the last few days. A buzzing filled my ears periodically when Billy talked about her pack,

which could only mean one thing: she was part of the lethal Hell's Gate pack.

I didn't know much about the Hell's Gate pack, except what little Devlin had been able to tell me. And Devlin only knew what he did by sheer accident. Almost two decades ago, he'd just so happened to be in the right place at the right time to save a young wolf pup's life, though he couldn't tell me the circumstances. The pup, most likely not old enough to have been imbued with the same secret-keeping magic Billy had, had let slip to Devlin that he was part of the Hell's Gate pack, the most feared of all wolf shifters.

Some said the Hell's Gate pack guarded a group of powerful necromancers, while others claimed they guarded the gates to Hades's underworld. Regardless of what they actually guarded, there was one thing everyone agreed on: no one meets a Hell's Gate wolf and lives to tell the tale...

... except Devlin.

And now Lex.

I studied the alpha as the buzzing in my ears grew louder. She was hands down the strongest wolf shifter I'd ever encountered, but she certainly didn't scream "murderous rage." Maybe I was wrong about her pack origins? I did know of packs that had formed allegiances with witches, forging a symbiotic relationship, much like my ancestors had with this coven. Maybe the young pup had lied to Devlin? Devlin had been pretty naïve two decades ago. He probably would have believed the pup was Cerberus if the pup had claimed it. I remembered the witch from the hardware shop. She'd cast a spell on her notebook that made it impossible for me to read her notes.

Yeah, that was probably what it was. My mate hadn't unconsciously become part of a pack with a Hell's Gate wolf. That was just ridiculous. It was much more sensible

that Billy was just a spelled wolf whose pack protected a different coven of witches.

I hoped.

“... that’s why I left the pack to find my own way. Which is why I ended up working at that shithole. But I did find my best friend there,” Billy said, her words finally back in focus. Suddenly, she turned to Lex and said, “Oh, did you hear the latest about Chad?”

The scent in the air changed around Billy. Her voice sounded casual, as if she didn’t want to worry my mate, but her scent was caution laced with the coppery tang of murderous rage that had me questioning if maybe she was a Hell’s Gate wolf after all.

Which made my own murderous rage home in on whoever this “Chad” was. I finally had a name for the person who had hurt my mate. Shadows swirled around me, begging for me to take to the skies and hunt Chad down.

“I might not have got around to telling Lochran the full story yet,” Lex said quietly, her embarrassment momentarily quelling my rage.

Billy’s brows knotted in confusion, and I tried my best not to let the shame that my mate didn’t yet trust me enough to tell me what had happened to her bubble to the surface.

“I thought you said there would be a crystal memory projector thingy at the trial? Would it not be better to, you know”—Billy’s eyes flicked to me, a strange look of concern on her face that had me praying she hadn’t started to think of me as part of her pack—“give him a heads up on what to expect?”

Hades damn it, the wolf was growing on me.

“It’s not that I didn’t want to,” Lex said to Billy before turning to me, her voice now whisper soft and with a hint of pleading as she repeated, “It’s not that I didn’t want to tell you, Lochran.”

“You don’t have to explain yourself, Lex,” I said, placing my hand on top of hers.



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I managed to catch the slight nod of acceptance Billy issued at the gesture, before Lex continued, “I know I don’t. But I want to.” She settled back in her chair, careful not to move her hand from under mine. “So, a month ago, I needed to satiate my succubus side and met Chad in a bar. I never thought I’d see him again, but the next day when I started my new job, it turned out he was my boss. Billy had just started the week before me, and she quickly sniffed out why I was a bit uncomfortable with him being my boss. Anyway, Billy and I quickly realized that the company was definitely not for us. I thought I could handle Chad while we looked for a new job, but his advances became progressively worse. The day I quit, he pulled out his dick and told me to suck it—”

Shadows filled the room, swirling protectively around my mate as I fought to remain still, to keep my hand motionless over Lex’s. Billy’s ember eyes glowed through the shadows, but it was Lex’s soothing voice that brought me to my senses. “It’s okay, Lochran. Really, I’m okay.”

The shadows slowly crept back to the corners of the room before Lex continued, “I hexed his dick off, which is why I had to come back to my coven for the trial. But Billy sent me a video the other day. One of the comments was from a previous employee that said he was a predator, alluding that he had done this to other women. I didn’t tell you because I needed to get it all written down. I was going to give the notebook to the mortal police in the hopes that they could use it to arrest him.”

Overwhelming relief surged through me at my mate’s admission. It wasn’t that she didn’t trust me, but rather she needed to focus her energy on writing it all down. She selflessly wanted a record to give to the mortal police for justice for the other women he’d attacked. Pride swelled in my chest for my brave mate, and my fingers tightened

around hers.

Lex's lashes fluttered as a blush raised up her neck. "And we've been a little distracted since I finished the journal."

Billy snorted. "I bet you have—I'll need details later, Lex. But I should probably tell you what I've been up to." Billy thrust her hand unceremoniously into her bag and, after some animated rifling, produced a violent pink folder and set it on the table in front of her. The folder was scrawled with hand-drawn love hearts of varying sizes. The love hearts encased a variety of short messages ranging from a simple JN+CC and Mrs. Jasper Neukdaeto a blush-worthy Cass wants Jasper's knot.

I glanced at Billy, who glared at me in challenge. "Cool it, demon," she hissed. "It's my sister's old school folder. It's all we had. Anyway," she slammed the folder open, hiding the profanities from view. "My sister, Cass, after some persuasion, did some digging into dear old Chad. It wasn't hard as he's becoming increasingly unhinged. This is the most recent one from just last night." Billy pulled a piece of paper out of a plastic wallet before handing it to Lex, who tilted it so I could see.

It was an online newspaper article from the notorious paranormal journalism site Who Do the Voodoo? I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. There weren't many news outlets that catered exclusively to supernatural beings, but this one had to be the worst to source facts from. It was barely better than a gossip column, and I'd be surprised if even half of what was reported was true.

Regardless, I scanned the two photos. The first was of a beautiful red-haired woman with striking green eyes, while the second was of a blonde-haired man and looked as if it had been pulled off a business website. I ground my teeth at the sight of the man who had sexually assaulted my mate. I decided then and there that when the trial was over, I would fall to my knees and beg my mate to allow me to exact vengeance on him.

But for now, I'd hold her hand and help her through her trial.

HUMAN MALE, CHAD BRUNSWICK, AGGRESSIVELY ANNOUNCES TO BANSHEE, MALORY BRÓNACH, THAT HE HAS A TINY PENIS.

Chaos erupted on the streets of Seattle today as a mortal man, Chad Brunswick, attempted to attack local New Orleans resident and banshee, Malory Brónach.

Malory states: "I don't know what the feck he was talking about. There I am, on holiday, minding my own business, when this drunk human man came out of nowhere screaming, 'I'll kill you, you fucking witch! Give it back!' I told him that I didn't know what the feck he was talking about, but he just kept screaming at me. He said something like, 'I'm going to kill you if you don't give it back!' I told him I had no idea what he was talking about, but he just kept saying, 'My dick! Make my dick grow back! I'll fucking kill you, you redhead witch-bitch!'"

When asked how she responded, Malory shrugged and said: "I did nothing, of course. I calmly turned away and left the situation."

An eyewitness, Drasco Raxhus, says, "The banshee showed him her true form. It was terrifying, even for me, and I'm a Reaper! The human pissed himself and cried. By the time his friend found him, he was a blubbering mess. It was hilarious. I'm just upset I never caught the banshee's name. Do you have it? Could you pass on my number? Anyway, whoever this witch is who hexed his dick off, I can't blame her. He deserved it."

This isn't the first time ChadBrunswick has attempted to find his missing appendage. He recently went viral on TikTok when he screamed at a pair of mortal women for laughing at his tiny penis.

Billy closed the folder and laid her hand gently on top of it. "You can't use the Who

Do the Voodoo? article, but since it surfaced, along with the video, my sister managed to cross-reference the women who commented that likely knew Chad personally. She hacked into the HR database and found dozens of HR reports, as well as some police reports and some suspicious NDAs that looked forced. There was also a hospital report of a woman who refused to cooperate and keep her allegations quiet. He literally used the company records to find out where she lived and put her in intensive care.” Billy pushed the folder toward Lex. “Don’t read it yet. Let’s get the trial over with, and then we can come up with a plan.”

Hell’s Gate or not, I had to take my hat off to the wolf. She was going to make a great alpha.

## Chapter 19. Lex

We spent the rest of the day relaxing, refusing to give Chad Brunswick—curse his name—another thought until the trial.

Lochran and Billy settled into an oddly endearing, if not slightly strained, friendship. It was strange having not one but two volatile creatures under my roof who could switch between murderous rage and cooing concern in the blink of an eye.

Lochran’s shadows ebbed and flowed throughout the day as he digested the brief version of what Chad had done, as did Billy’s shifting. But when one spotted the other about to tip over the edge, they pulled them back with a distracting comment.

And it helped that the house absolutely adored Billy. The moment she mentioned getting ready, the house magicked a frothing bubble bath for her in the main bathroom. It readied the third bedroom, complete with the best home comforts it could offer, and I had a sneaking suspicion that the house was trying to convince Billy to stay longer than the three nights she was supposed to. Its plan was apparently working, as Billy exclaimed with glee that she would do anything to have such an

awesome house looking after her. The house creaked so merrily that I was surprised the walls didn't crumble around us.

After a shower and a session of meditation to calm my nerves, I dressed in the outfit the house had left out for me. It had chosen a pair of black suede loafers, black pants, a loose white blouse, and a heavy black cardigan with a pattern of golden suns and moons knitted into it. The outfit was more formal than I was used to wearing—though I guessed most outfits were formal in comparison to house clothes—but still had an odd comfort to them. I pinned my hair into a neat bun before carefully curling the loose strands.

As I stood in front of the mirror for a final check over, I hardly recognized myself. I still looked like me, of course, but something about my aura had changed. I no longer felt the crushing anxiety of blaming myself for what had happened, or the pressure of punishing my succubus. And I looked well for it. I took a deep breath as I touched my reflection in the mirror. It would be a rocky road ahead of me, starting with the trial, but the healing had begun.

And I had my patient mate, fierce friend, and cunning house to thank for it.

“Lex! If you don't get your ass in gear, you'll be late!” Billy bellowed from below, breaking my rather poignant moment of reflection.

With a sigh, I made my way down the stairs. The house had illuminated every surface with flickering candles in a fruitless bid to keep Lochran's shadows at bay. They swirled worriedly around where he sat on the sofa, engulfing Billy, who cougheddramatically and said, “Secondhand smoke kills, y'know!”

But the moment his eyes met mine, the shadows dropped once more. I couldn't help but smile at my mate. I could sense that he wanted nothing more than to hunt down Chad and tear him limb from limb for what he did. But he knew that I needed him by

my side more. The thought of standing trial without Lochran beside me was inconceivable, and the fact that he put my needs above his meant the world to me.

Lochran stood and offered me his arm. I took it, pressing my head against his shoulder, and whispered, “Thank you.”

*Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 7:15 am*

He looked down at me in confusion. “For what?”

“For not making this about you.”

Lochran’s face softened. He planted a soft kiss on my forehead before saying, “You’re strong and capable, my little witch. And if you wanted him dead, I have no doubt he already would be. My only concern is to be here at your side.” Lochran thought carefully before adding, “But I would consider it an honor if you asked me to end him for you.”

“No fair!” Billy huffed, silver fur fluttering over her exposed skin. “If the Babadook is allowed to kill him, then I should be allowed to too!”

Lochran scoffed. “Cool it, Lassie. If you’re a good girl, I’ll let you chew on his bones.”

“What are you going to do with him, Shadowman? Flutter your wings at him?” Billy made a butterfly movement with her hands, causing Lochran’s lips to twitch in amusement.

“You better hope he has an allergy to dogs—”

“No one is killing Chad,” I said. While I appreciated the pair trying to lighten the mood before the trial, we really were going to be late if I let them continue.

“But what if he turns up on our doorstep? Can I kill him then?” Lochran asked.

I rolled my eyes at him but couldn't quite hide the smile twinging my face. It felt like a lifetime ago that I'd first told Lochran about the no-touching rule, and he'd responded: What if you fall down a well and are unconscious? Can I touch you then to rescue you? His method, immature and infuriating as it was, of breaking the building tension worked just as well now as it had then.

“If Chad Brunswick shows up on our doorstep, you can kill him in whatever manner you see fit. But he won't. He's probably surrounded by a team of cosmetic surgeons trying to rebuild his penis as we speak.” If that was the case, I would happily write another thirty page essay just for the joy of hexing it off for a second time.

Billy suddenly stiffened, her eyes flashing inferno red as they snapped toward the front door. Her canines lengthened to lethal points, her icy talons tearing into the fabric of the couch as a fine dusting of fur flashed in waves over her skin. Her nostrils flared, but the growl that rumbled in her throat was different to the dominant, challenging growl I was used to hearing from her. Nonetheless, Lochran took a protective step in front of both Billy and me.

Billy snapped at Lochran, who held his hands up in a have-it-your-way gesture. My mate's lips twitched into a grin as he took a step back and draped his arm across my shoulder. “This will be fun to watch,” he whispered into my ear as Billy stood up.

She violently shook her body, dispelling the change her wolf had brought about. Her cheeks flushed red as she frantically ran her fingers through her hair and straightened her clothes.

A moment later, the front door swung open to reveal—

Priscilla fucking Raisin.

Who was attached to the arm of my brother.



For the first time, I was glad my magic had been stripped from me. Otherwise, I would definitely be writing another journal.

Priscilla was the worst. Scratch that. Priscilla's mom was the worst. Our coven rarely accepted new members, but we could never turn away a lone witch in need—which was what Priscilla's mother claimed to be when she first arrived on our doorstep two and a half decades ago, heavily pregnant and without a cent to her name.

While she might have been allowed to stay, the magic of the coven refused to acknowledge them as one of our own. The house she was given remained silent. And when she tried to move into another house while the family was on holiday, that house also went suspiciously inactive. Despite trying every year, no incubus ever appeared at the Samhain summoning for Priscilla's mom. And when she tried relentlessly to seduce the mated incubus in the coven, she was issued a final warning. Her final strike happened when Priscilla was eighteen, when her mom tried to usurp my grandmother as head of the coven. Priscilla's mom was exiled, and she decided to leave Priscilla behind.

One could be forgiven for feeling sorry for Priscilla, but she was just as cruel as her mother. She lied and cheated, manipulated and blackmailed her way through the coven, but was always careful that her crimes were just on the cusp of not serious enough to induce a trial of her own.

My own personal grievance with Priscilla started when she tried to bully me at school. Like her mother, she coveted things that weren't hers. I'd saved my pocket money for months to buy the extortionate limited edition stuffed wolf Beanie Baby, and when I told her that I wouldn't trade her for her old tatty unicorn Beanie Baby, I found my wolf suspiciously decapitated when I returned from recess.

And now the slimy wraith was hanging off the arm of my brother. I knew she'd been after him for years. Like her mother, the Samhain summoning didn't work for

Priscilla. Jake, being the only single warlock around, had been the subject of her desires—double gross—for years. Why she didn't just leave the coven for her kicks like every other single witch was anyone's guess. But I guessed not having a succubus side helped her focus her energy on my brother.

But, despite having the emotional intelligence of a toad, Jake had always quashed her advances. Why would he entertain Priscilla Raisin now?

I had a sudden and intense urge to get Jake in a headlock and noogie some sense into that thick skull of his. But it would have to wait until after the trial.

The house creaked in excitement at its new guests, and the kettle began whistling in the kitchen.

"We're not staying, House. We need to go," I said. Also, there wasn't a hope in Hades's underworld that Priscilla would be crossing my threshold. As if sensing my anger, a low, barely audible challenging growl issued past Billy's lips.

Jake whistled a low note as his eyes darted about the hallway. "This is going to take some work."

A candle flew off the wall and hit Jake directly between the eyes. I was not ashamed to admit that, as a dutiful older sister, minor bodily injuries on Jake were an endless source of amusement.

But I stifled the giggle threatening to erupt as Jake rubbed the red welt forming between his brows. "Sorry," he called to the house, which answered with an indignant huff and the silencing of the kettle. "Nice to see you again, Lochran." Jake nodded at my mate, who still wore an infuriatingly smug smile, as if he were about to witness something spectacular.

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“Good to see you, Jake. Have you met Lex’s friend, Billy?” Lochran replied, an oddly gleeful smile on his face.

Billy, who at some point had moved to hide behind me, stiffened. She cast Lochran a death glare as she took a step to my side once more, her cheeks almost as scarlet as her wolf’s eyes.

What in Hecate’s name was going on?

Jake’s eyes darkened and something pulsed in his neck, but he said nothing.

“Aren’t you going to say hello?” Lochran asked, Billy and now Priscilla throwing him another death glare.

“Oh. Hi, Billy. You’re a wolf shifter, aren’t you? Um, Lex mentioned something about a wolf-shifter friend. It’s nice to finally meet you.”

Priscilla’s death glare now slid to Jake. With a viper like strike, she slapped the back of his head, disheveling his hair. My fingers flexed, and I automatically motioned to flick a hex at her for touching my brother, forgetting that I had no magic.

Billy vibrated beside me, and one huge, crooked shadow wing flexed in front of both of us.

Neither Jake nor Priscilla noticed.

“Really, Jake?” Priscilla called over her shoulder as she stomped down the front

steps. “You’re just going to fawn over some flea-bag wolf while I’m standing right there?”

Jake, hot on her heels, called, “I wasn’t fawning, Pris. I’ve just never met a wolf shifter, is all!”

The house angrily slammed the door behind them.

Billy, after a moment of grinding her teeth and flexing her fingers, pushed Lochran’s wing out of her way and took a step toward the front door, which opened with a gentle click for her. Jake and Priscilla had made their way beyond our eyeline, but Billy, with her inhuman sense of smell, had no problem following their trail, angrily stomping her way toward the heart of the town where the town hall sat.

“What was all that about?” I asked.

Lochran just shrugged as he walked me down the steps of the porch. “There’ll be time enough to explain later. But, for now”—his fingers interlaced with mine—“tell me how you’re feeling about the trial.”

“Actually, much better than I thought I would. I know I’ll be found innocent, and while I’m not exactly thrilled about reliving the memory again, I’m more nervous about what happens after. I need him off the street, and I’m afraid that the mortal authorities won’t take me seriously.”

A cool wind whipped around us, and Lochran pulled me closer. Shadows pooled from him, his crooked wing wrapping around my back and blocking the breeze. “They will believe you. Even if I have to steal your grandma’s memory crystal and force the mortals to watch. I’ll do it if that’s what it takes.”

Heat bloomed in my chest. How could I not fall in love with my mate when he said

things like that?

“You do not want to be in my grandma’s bad books,” I said. “I reckon stealing her crystal will earn you fifty pages at least.”

Lochran huffed a laugh. “She is a formidable woman. But so are you, Lex.”

Except, I wasn’t.

I’d allowed one mortal man’s actions to reduce me to this self-loathing shadow of a witch. I’d allowed him to chip away at my confidence time and time again because I’d convinced myself that I was to blame for his actions. That it was my succubus side that had put me in that situation, and not doing something sooner was my punishment—

As if sensing my spiraling thoughts, Lochran said, “We don’t know our strength until it’s tested, Lex.”

## Chapter 20. Lex

“C’mon, guys,” Billy called irritably as she approached the town hall. She’d caught up with Jake and Priscilla but was keeping a safe enough distance to not distract them from yet another argument they were having.

The town hall was bathed in moonlight, accentuated by the rippling lilac witchlight that illuminated the street. The moment I came into view, the ancient bell began a lamented toll to indicate that the accused had arrived. The crooked front door opened with an earsplitting creak. I had anticipated the chatter of the rest of my coven to spill out into the street, but only a deathly silence swirled and settled around me.

Lochran’s arm pulled me closer. Sensing my growing apprehension, Billy cast me a

glance before angrily shooving the still arguing Jake and Priscilla inside, allowing me one final moment with my mate.

Lochran pulled me against his chest, arms and wings enveloping me and blocking out most of the deafening silence. He pressed his lips gently to my forehead before saying, "If you could be anywhere but here, where would you be?"

My eyebrows knotted in confusion, but I answered anyway. "Somewhere far away, with no one to disturb us."

Lochran's finger hooked under my chin, and he tilted my face toward him. His eyes softened, the violet of his irises almost flickering in the witchlight. "When the trial is over, and you've been to the mortal police, I'm going to take you far away from here. Just you, me, and even Billy, if that's what you want." His eyes narrowed as if the last thing he wanted was to take Billy with us, but he would if I asked. "And I'm not bringing you back until this trial and the memory of Chad Brunswick don't hurt anymore." His hand brushed over my shoulder and down my arm until his fingers intertwined with mine.

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“That sounds perfect,” I said. It was as if my mate had siphoned his strength into me, because the moment I let him lead me through the ancient oak door, the nausea and nervousness was gone. I was no longer afraid to relive the memory. In fact, I was ready to see the witch I’d been just four nights ago. I was ready to confront her and see just how much I’d forgiven myself since then.

I was surprised to find that not a single member of my coven, aside from my family and Priscilla, was present. My eyes scanned the empty room, and I realized that my assessment wasn’t quite true. There were two others present. Caitlyn, my old school friend, sat on the front pew. She turned to face me, offering me a supportive thumbs up. Beside her sat Declan, the incubus who owned the tea shop. His smile was soft and supportive before he turned his attention back to the front of the room.

Something loosened in my chest when I realized my memory wouldn’t be projected to the entire coven. I was finally comfortable enough to register the decor of the room. The town hall had always been a source of strength for me, filled with happy memories of feasts and celebrations.

Bundles of herbs hung from the ceilings, their earthy scent heady in the air. At the front sat a dais covered in seasonal offerings, pumpkins and turnips predominant around the dominating stone statue of Hecate. Garlands of berries and autumnal leaves littered the floor and snaked their way around the throne positioned in front of Hecate, her gaze looking over the congregation. Sitting atop the throne was the cloaked figure of my grandmother, the billowing black material covering the entirety of her features, the hood pointed and curled backwards. She held her serpentine cane in one hand, the other outstretched, a crooked finger pointing ominously to the large crystal from her spell room. Instead of its usual clarity, lilac smoke swirled excitedly

within.

Flanking my grandmother was my family. Thankfully, the magic of the town hall hadn't allowed Priscilla to take a spot on the dais with my loved ones. Instead, she sat a few pews behind Caitlyn and Declan, her arms crossed, her murderous gaze flicking between Jake and Billy.

Billy stood beside my brother, jaw clenched and chest unmoving, as if she were trying not to breathe. Jake just wore a look of confusion, his eyes occasionally glancing toward Billy, who stiffened under his gaze.

Lochran guided me onto the dais, finally stopping in front of my grandmother.

"I can stay by your side if you want," he said, his fingers squeezing mine.

I shook my head. Lochran's strength had got me this far, but this was something I needed to face on my own.

He placed a final, gentle kiss on my forehead before making his way toward the rest of my family, tactfully shimmying between Billy and Jake. I only just caught Billy throwing Lochran a thankful glance before my attention was solely on my grandmother.

Her cane clacked on the stone floor, echoing menacingly off the granite walls. As she stood, she used her free hand to pull down her hood. A crown of bones and berries sat atop her neatly permed hair. Her eyes and forehead were smeared with charcoal, as were her lips. Painted in blistering white upon her forehead was the symbol of the triple moon.

"Witches, demons and, uh, wolf shifter." Grandma cast a glance at Billy. "We have congregated today to pass judgment on Alexis Cole, who hexed a mortal. As is our



custom”—the journal appeared in Grandma’s hand—“Alexis has provided a full account of the circumstances surrounding the hexing. I have examined the contents of the journal, and provided the truth has been written, I am satisfied that the accused is, categorically, not at fault. Our usual custom is to use the crystal to project the memories as accounted in the accused’s journal to the entire coven, who would then decide if the accused was wrong to have used their magic on a mortal. However, due to the nature of this case, I have decided that the memories need only be witnessed by myself and three members of the coven to provide an unbiased judgment.” Grandma turned to face my family. “This will be difficult to bear witness to. We understand if you need to leave.”

My father’s hand tightened in my mother’s. Jake’s jaw clenched as my grandfather placed a supportive hand on his shoulder. Both Lochran and Billy stiffened, but nodded in unison. My entire family would stay to support me. Tears pricked in the corners of my eyes, and I took a deep, steadying breath in a bid not to break down at all the love and support centered on me.

“In that case, I think we need only look at the final memory to come to our verdict,” Grandma said, her voice wavering slightly in apprehension. “Alexis, please step forward.”

I did as my grandmother asked. My eyes flicked to Lochran. His face was bright with a supportive smile, but his hands were white-knuckled fists at his side.

The moment I came within striking distance, Grandma’s serpentine cane shot out, stopping inches from my face. The ruby eyes bored into me, the reflection of the witchlight making them seem alive. Grandma’s haunting chants filled the room, reverberating through my body, but I couldn’t seem to stop watching the ruby eyes as the snake swayed from side to side. Slowly, my vision blurred until nothing but the carved snake’s head was in focus. Something slithered beneath my skull, poking and prodding until fresh tears welled in my eyes and my knees weakened.

I barely registered when Grandma's chant had stopped, and she took a step forward to catch me. Lochran was quicker. His arms wrapped gently around me as he pulled me to my feet. As my vision refocused, I managed to catch just the barest glimpse of a smile on my grandmother's face before it settled once more into the neutral stare of our coven leader.

Grandma allowed Lochran to check me over before he ushered me to his side. My family swarmed us, each placing a hand on my shoulder as we waited for Grandma to continue. She walked toward the crystal ball and began her chanting once more, the words ethereal and indistinguishable.

She brought the cane down on the crystal ball, which shattered outwards into a million wisps of glittering purple smoke. The opaque tendrils of memory reached every corner of the room, engulfing everything in its wake. When the haze finally cleared, I was back in Chad's gray office.

While I could feel Lochran's body pressed into me and my family's hands anchoring me, I was alone in the memory.

The door opened, and I could see my memory-self try desperately to shimmy past Chad without touching him. Chad gestured that I should take a seat, his eyes fixed on my ass as I sighed.

At the time, I had felt anger and revulsion, so I was surprised to see that my face in the memory was wide-eyed, almost skittish.

My breath caught as Chad spread his legs out, sitting on the desk.

"Alexis. Lex. Lexi, Lexi, Lexi. Listen. I know what you're doing." His voice was sickly and condescending.

“Eh?” memory-me had mused.

“Of course. I mean, I’m your boss and we...” His hand reached out to move a strand of hair, but I managed to bob. A flash of anger that I didn’t remember seeing before flittered over his face as he hovered a hand over his sculpted hair.

“Look, Lexi. I know you’ve been playing hard to get for the past month. And I’m into it, I really am. But let’s stop playing games, hm?”

“I can assure you, Chad, I’m not playing games.” I hadn’t realized just how flighty my tone had been.

Chad looked down at memory-me, and when I didn’t respond, a feral change came over him. His nostrils flared, his lips pulling back to expose blisteringly white teeth as his eyes narrowed in on me. “Alexis. If you want to have any chance of making it within this company, I suggest you stay on my good side. In fact”—he unbuckled his belt—“there is a senior position coming up”—he unzipped his trousers—“that I think you would be perfect for.”

His boxers dropped. Semi-flaccid cock pointed at memory-me, he said, “Well, it’s not going to suck itself.”

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I felt Lochran pull me closer into him, his murderous growl, and that of the rest of my family, drowned by the savage snarl of Billy, who I suspected might have started to shift.

I saw memory-me hold out a hand I hadn't realized had been shaking at the time. Memory-me hesitated for a moment until a look of triumph crossed Chad's features. Finally, memory-me clicked her fingers, and Chad's dick shriveled into near-nothing.

The snapping of Billy's jaws filled the room as the memory faded, the purple wisps pulling themselves back toward the dais, presumably forming into the crystal ball once more—I couldn't actually tell because the room was filled with shadows, which the witchfire skittering over Mom's and Jake's skin could barely penetrate.

The sound of Grandma's cane clanking on stone finally broke the murderous rage filling the room. Lochran, Dad, and Granda's shadows finally started receding, wrapping protectively around me one more time before settling into the corners of the room. I just about caught Billy's muzzle returning to her human features, though she was still too worked up to be able to shake off the elongated canines.

My gaze fell on the witnesses. Tears streamed down Caitlyn's eyes and Declan wore a look flashing between fury and abhorrence.

"Innocent!" Caitlyn croaked.

Declan brought his index and middle fingers from both hands to hover just above the corners of his lips before gesturing outward.

Innocent.

All eyes landed on Priscilla, who looked indifferent as she idly checked her watch.

“Ms. Raisin?” Grandma’s voice was laced with warning.

Priscilla rolled her eyes. “Sure. Innocent. Whatever,” she finally said.

Grandma cast Priscilla a final warning glare before she crossed the room and clasped my hands in hers. “Innocent,” she said.

## Chapter 21. Lochran

I tried my best to push the memory of Lex’s ordeal to the depths of my mind. There would be time enough to dwell on it later, but for now, my mate was animated and happy, and I would not sour her mood tonight.

Declan was the first to break off from the group, but not before signing that Lex and I should come to the tea shop tomorrow for some free tea.

Lex’s parents, flanked by her grandparents, marched quickly toward their house to finish making the celebratory dinner we’d been promised, leaving the rest of us to walk idly in their wake. Jake and Priscilla walked far enough behind us that we couldn’t hear their latest argument. Lex talked animatedly to Caitlyn, while Billy marched solemnly beside me, every so often throwing a subtle glance back at Jake.

I felt sorry for the shifter.

The moment she’d scented Jake through the closed door, something had changed in the wolf. It was like her entire body had focused in on him and him alone. Her desires had practically screamed “Mate!”

Unfortunately for Billy, her fated mate had the emotional range of a teapot.

Which was why his scent kept changing between the hazy notes of confusion, a bland indifference when he looked at Priscilla, and the heady, earthy notes of evergreen needles and petrichor when he stole a glance at Billy. There was attraction there, sure. But it was as if his body just couldn't understand what that extra layer was, especially as Billy grew gradually more irritated with him as the evening progressed.

"Lochran said he'd take me away," Lex said excitedly, and my attention homed in on my mate once more.

"Like, on vacation? If you want, I have a cabin near Headless Hollow. It's booked up until the end of the week, but it's yours if you want it," Caitlyn said.

"Headless Hollow? Sounds like a place from a horror movie," I said.

Lex scoffed. "Headless Hollow is one of the few towns in America that exclusively caters to magical creatures from all walks of life. It's been on my bucket list for years! I didn't know you had a property there, Cat?"

Caitlyn's smile faltered. "I don't, technically. I'm just looking after it until..." She trailed off, but it seemed like Lex knew exactly what she was talking about.

Neither witch expanded for the benefit of Billy and me.

"What do you say, Lochran? Oh, and Billy, you should come too!"

"I don't want to be a third wheel—"

Lex sucked in a breath as if she'd just realized something. "I know! What if Lochran and I go alone, and you can stay here and mind the house for us? It adores you, Billy.

And haven't you always talked about just letting your wolf roam free and away from your pack? Here would be perfect. There're no mortals around, so you can spend your days frolicking in the woods, hunting bunnies, and rolling in fox poo to your heart's content."

Billy's lips twitched into the first smile since she'd scented Jake.

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“I donotroll in fox poo, or poo of any kind,” she said, her grin widening. “And I’ll have you know I happen toadorebunnies.” She threw a glare over her shoulder and growled under her breath, “Now black-haired, wraith-like witches on the other hand...”

“Perfect!” Lex squealed. “You can wait out the rest of the week with us and look after the house while we’re gone.”

“You’re staying here for longer?” Jake asked, a panting Priscilla in tow.

“I... um... I dunno. Maybe,” Billy answered, her cheeks growing scarlet. Just at that moment, her phone rang. Buzzing filled my ears as Billy talked, her stance immediately changing from flustered fangirl to alpha. Caitlyn looked concernedly at Billy, then confusedly back at our uncomprehending expressions. With a final roll of her eyes, Billy hung up the phone.

“Listen, I’m going to have to cut the visit short, Lex. Something has come up with the pack, and I need to return home.”

“You’re coming back, though?” Jake asked.

“I dunno. Maybe. If I can sort—” Buzzing filled my ears once more. Billy turned toward Lex and finished, “—then I’ll let you know if I can look after the house for you.”

“Do you have to go right away?” Lex asked, but Billy had already opened the Uber app, the screen pixelating as soon as she began typing.



“Yeah.” Her phone pinged, and she glanced down. “Taxi is only thirty minutes away, so I should head back and get my stuff.”

Jake’s brows knitted in confusion.

“Want me to walk you there?” Lex asked.

“No, honestly, you go be with your family.”

“I could walk you?” Jake asked, his look of confusion quickly replaced by eagerness. This resulted in a smack over the head by Priscilla. Billy growled and a weak flicker of magic skittered over Lex’s arms.

Priscilla was either an incredibly confident witch or entirely too self-involved to realize the danger Lex and Billy posed.

“Seriously, Jake? You’re just going to leave me to deal with your family on my own?”

“I’ll be fine onmyown,” Billy said through clenched teeth.

After a calming breath, Billy pulled Lex into a bone-crushing hug. Caitlyn was given a much gentler one-armed hug while I got a fist bump and a grin. Jake, who went in for a hug, was offered an awkward handshake, and Priscilla, who cast daggers at Billy, was given the middle finger.

A second later, Billy had turned on her heel toward our house, offering only the subtlest of glances back. Caitlyn, too, took her leave with the promise that she’d pop by in the morning with all the details for the holiday cabin. And, as luck would have it, Priscilla and Jake had found yet another thing to squabble about and had marched on ahead of us.

The moment they were all out of earshot, Lex wrapped her arm around my waist and stood in front of me. Her mossy eyes bore into mine as desire pulsed through her in crashing waves. I hadn't realized just how hungry I'd been with the stress of the day, but the moment her hand found its way to the nape of my neck and pushed gently, my stomach rumbled.

"My greedy witch," I said, my voice a low grumble.

Her mouth met mine, soft and fleetingly gentle before her succubus took over. Her lips opened, her tongue caressing mine, long and sweeping, before landing a controlled, hard flick on my top lip that had me wishing she was tonguing the precum off my slit like she had done last night.

One arm found its way to her waist, the other under her perfect, rounded ass, as I lifted her into the air. Her legs looped around me, her hot core grinding against my length as my shadow wings pooled around her, cocooning my mate to my body. Slender fingers ran through the length of my hair, tracing the scar before pulling, exposing my neck. Lex landed gentle kisses on the crook of my neck that had a low, primal growl escaping my lips. The entirety of my body begged me to take my mate home. My wings unwrapped, spreading, ready for flight—

"Fuck! My eyes!" Jake cried, instantly ruining the moment.

Reluctantly, I gently placed my mate on the ground before turning to face Jake, a murderous scowl on my face. Jake, however, couldn't see on account of his hand clamped tightly over his eyes.

"You always find a way to ruin a moment," Lex barked, deadly irritation lacing her tone.

"How was I to know you'd be doing that the moment my back was turned? Gross. I

think I need to wash my eyes out with bleach.” Jake finally peeked through his fingers and, finding us no longer entangled with each other, dropped his hand and glared at us. “I will never be able to unsee that. You better hope Dad and Granda have dampened their senses.”

“Oh, grow up, Jake. You haven’t summoned your mate yet. You wouldn’t understand.”

Jake stiffened, his face paling. “Just keep it PG, Lex. We’re almost there.”

Poor Jake. I wondered if he’d yet realized that his mate was currently at ours, packing her clothes to leave. I could, of course, tell him what I knew, but Fate worked in a mysterious way. It had a plan in motion to bring the pair together, and it was best to let it work its magic.

Jake, throwing Lex a final, impetuous look, turned on his heel and stomped toward Priscilla.

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“C’mon. He’s right. Probably best not to turn up to my parents’ house all hot and bothered.”

I took a deep, blissful breath of Lex’s lingering desire before I choked my senses once more. “Senses dampened,” I confirmed as Lex took my hand in hers and guided me toward her parents’ house.

A moment later, the house came into view.

Priscilla, arms crossed and a scowl on her face, stood on the porch, her foot tapping irritably. Jake had a hand clasped on the door handle, rattling it, but to no avail. “C’mon, House! Please?” he pleaded. “Priscilla didn’t mean it.” He rattled the door handle a few more times, but the house still refused them entry. Finally, he turned to Priscilla. “Pris, please just apologize?”

Priscilla scoffed. A moment later, she clicked her tongue irritably and finally said in her most sarcastic tone, “Fine. I didn’t mean to say your house was ugly. I’m just used to a more clinical aesthetic.” The insincere apology seemed to be enough for the house, as it finally swung the door open.

Priscilla charged in, ignoring Lex’s mom, who was waiting for us in the hallway. Ms. Cole seemed to have expected as much, because she dutifully ignored Priscilla too.

“It’s a good thing the house is too innocent to sense sarcasm,” Jake whispered to me. He made his way inside and gave his mom a peck on the cheek before following Priscilla.

Lex gritted her teeth as if she were trying her best not to scream at her brother exactly what she thought about his choice of companion. Thankfully, her look of disgust faded as she stepped through the threshold and into her mother's embrace.

Ms. Cole, having finished with her daughter, pulled me into a motherly hug before ushering us to the dining room where everyone was already seated, their food cooling in front of them. The dinner soon settled into an animated conversation with everyone except Priscilla. Occasionally, Lex's dad or grandfather would go quiet, the shadows swirling around them, which were soon settled with a gentle touch from Lex's mom and grandma. As Jake finished his final bite, his brows knitted into confusion once more. It seemed to be his signature look.

"There's something Billy said that's been bothering me."

"Seriously, Jake?" Priscilla's chair screeched as she pushed it backward, looming over Jake. "That wolf bitch again?" She threw her napkin at his head and stormed out. The house evidently didn't like the fact that she'd thrown something at Jake, because a moment later, the sound of plates shattering in the kitchen was swiftly followed by Priscilla's scream of frustration and subsequent slamming of the back door.

"Thank Hecate she's gone," Ms. Cole said. "Honestly, Jake. You know I would never dream of telling you who you should and shouldn't date, but Priscilla really—"

Jake, lost in his own world, continued, "Billy said the taxi was only thirty minutes away."

"So?" Lex said through her final mouthful of potato.

"Well, why would a taxi be so close to here? The nearest town is, like, an hour away."

“Your point being?”

Jake shrugged. “I’m not sure.”

“Riveting stuff,” Lex said. She turned to me. “While Sherlock tries to figure out what his point is, why don’t you help me with the plates.”

I took Jake’s plate from under him as he remained staring stupidly off into space, pondering his taxi dilemma... or, more likely, pondering why he was now overanalyzing everything the wolf shifter he was getting fuzzy feels for had said and done.

I followed Lex into the kitchen, the back door rattling in the breeze. “Fucking Priscilla,” Lex seethed. “Can’t even storm out properly.” With a flick of her wrist, the door gently closed. Lex rubbed her wrist, grinning sheepishly up at me. “I had meant to slam it shut. It might take a while for my magic to fully return, but Goddess, how I missed it!” With another wave, the sink filled with soapy water. Pleased with her effort, Lex prodded a peak of bubbles.

Fuck, I loved this witch.

I had expected to like my mate, of course. But I assumed it would take a while to fall in love with her. But here she was, perfect, brave, and holding a handful of suds...

“Don’t you dare, little witch,” I said. “Or I may have to punish you later.”

“Is that a promise?” Her voice was soft and seductive. A split second later, I was wiping suds from my face, unable to hide my smile.

My soapy fingers clasped around her ass, and I pulled my giggling mate closer. Heat surged through me, my stomach growling in need of just a taste...

I let out the smallest kernel of my power, my nostrils filling with her seductive Samhain scent, laced with something foreign and putrid. Just as my shadows coiled around my mate, the pantry door swung open.

“I’ll fucking kill you, witch!”

## Chapter 22. Lex

In a split second, Lochran’s entire demeanor changed. As he spun on his heel, shadows rippled out of him, latching onto his back, his wings spreading out to protect me.

My momentary confusion was replaced with consuming fear as a familiar voice rasped, “I’ll fucking kill you, witch!”

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Icy panic flooded my veins, my heart pounding, vision blurring as my body froze.

You're a witch! Remember, he can't harm you! a distant internal voice called.

Lochran took a step backward, the heat of his body against mine grounding me.

You can do this, Lex. You are strong enough to face your demons.

My vision focused enough to peer over Lochran's crooked wing. Chad was hunched over like a wounded animal, his hair greasy and disheveled. His eyes were deep hollows, wide and manic. The stench of stale alcohol and unwashed body filled the air, wafting from his soiled clothes. But I didn't have the chance to revel in what stock-photo Chad had been reduced to. In his outstretched, dirt-crusted hand was a gun, pointing directly at Lochran's chest.

"They didn't believe me," Chad hissed, spittle flying from his crusted lips. "But I knew you were a witch. You did this to me!" He pointed a dirt crusted finger at his crotch. "You were fucking hard to find. I thought you might be somewhere north. Tried Seattle, I did," Chad said, his voice almost delirious. "And then Brett managed to steal your HR files and find me your next of kin."

Lochran's movement was almost imperceptible as he crouched, ready to pounce. I flexed my fingers, willing my magic to return, but only the barest spark fluttered over my hand.

Chad's laugh was manic. "And now I'm going to fucking kill you!"



Before Lochran had the chance to react, Chad shot. Lochran's body jerked, pinning me to the counter behind him. Plates and appliances flung themselves off the counters, as if the house had only just realized it had a monster in its midst. The clang of metal and pottery hitting the wall permeated the room as shards of ceramic fell like shrapnel on Chad, but my only concern was my mate.

"Lochran!" I cried as Chad shot aimlessly in the air, before his gun lowered and Lochran's body jerked again. I scrambled to get in front of Lochran, desperate to take the bullets meant for me and not my mate. But Lochran remained steadfast, his body pressing me against the counter, determined to shield me even as hot blood pooled on his back, seeping into my shirt.

Fury like I'd never felt before flashed through my body, magic like liquid hot magma surging through me, but only enough for a single, concentrated strike.

Chad's gun clicked but made no other noise.

Jammed.

"Fucking piece of shit!" Chad bellowed, thumping the gun against the kitchen island.

Lochran faltered just enough for me to shimmy out from behind him. I could see the shocked expressions of my family as they skidded to a halt at the kitchen door, shadows pooling from the incubi, witchfire flickering from the witches.

"He's mine!" I bellowed, taking a step in front of my mate, a murderous rage flooding my body. I would kill my tormentor, and nothing on this green earth could stop me.

Until the sound of spluttering filled my ears.

I fell to my knees beside Lochran as blood frothed at his mouth. This couldn't be happening. He was an incubus demon. They healed really, really fast. My hands glided over his chest, and sure enough, the bullet wounds had begun to heal.

But where were the bullets?

Fear doused my rage. If they were still inside him, no amount of supernatural healing would help. My mate could die.

Without a second thought, I let the magic reserved for Chad pour into my mate, poking and prodding until finally it found the bullets—two in his lung, one in his heart. Lochran winced in pain as I coaxed all three of the bullets back out, each one popping from the healing wound with a sickening squelch before clattering to the floor.

“You should have... used your magic... on your revenge,” Lochran said, each word causing him to wince in pain.

“Revenge would mean nothing if it cost me you,” I whispered, my hand pressed firmly against his chest, allowing the last of my magic to knit my mate's wounds as best as I could before his healing took over.

Lochran pressed his forehead against mine. He placed one hand over my fingers that rested on his chest, the other pressed against the nape of my neck. It was irrational, because I knew my succubus side wasn't potent enough to pick up on emotions, but in that moment, I felt enveloped by my mate's love. It was as if our hearts melded together as one, something primal and eternal snapping into place.

“Do you still want your revenge?” Lochran finally asked, his eyes widening hopefully.

My gaze settled on Chad, who had one leg propped against the door, his hands twisting fruitlessly at the handle. I nodded.

Lochran placed a talon-tipped hand on the counter and pulled himself up, his tousled black hair hanging menacingly over his forehead. His violet eyes flared in vengeance, locked on to his target.

“Then allow me.”

Chad’s eyes widened, his body quivering in fear. “Wait!” he cried out. “I-I can just leave, and you’ll never see me again.”

“Never isn’t long enough,” I said.

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Lochran's shadows uncoiled, spooling around Chad and lifting him into the air. Screaming filled the room as the shadows folded in on themselves, Chad's shrieks of pain accompanied by the deafening sound of bones breaking.

A tendril of shadows wrapped around Chad's neck, squeezing hard enough to make his eyes bulge out of their hollows. Lochran's bodkin-like tail slashed across Chad's abdomen, his innards spilling to the floor with a sickening squelch. Chad's broken fingers tried pitifully to grasp at his trailing organs, but to no avail. My mate took a step forward, his shadows loosening around Chad's neck enough to tilt his head, forcing him to look Lochran in the eyes.

"Please," Chad managed to choke out, the words almost indistinguishable over his swollen tongue and blood foaming from his mouth. "I d-don't want to die."

Lochran's laugh was a low, lethal rumble that filled the room. "You were always going to die for what you did to my mate." In one swift movement, Lochran brought his obsidian talons across Chad's neck. My mate immediately turned his back to Chad, his eyes focused on me, ignoring the death gurgles of my tormentor. He took my hand gently in his, Chad's blood still warm as he placed my hand over the almost healed wound on his chest. "I'm sorry, my heart."

My head tilted, unsure of what he meant.

"I know that you wanted justice for the other women that he hurt. In seeking justice for you, they will never know that they don't need to fear Chad Brunswick anymore."

I barely registered Chad's final, gurgling breath as I stood on my tiptoes and pressed

my forehead against Lochran's. "He needed to die. It would have taken months, maybe even years, to get him behind bars, if at all. Besides, we still have the journal and Billy's notes."

As if by magic, the pinkfolder appeared on the countertop beside me.

"If I may," Grandma's voice filled the room, reminding me that my family was still spectating from the doorway. My journal was clutched in her hands as she crossed the room and picked up the pink folder. Her eyes widened as she briefly read the graffiti. Grandma, with some disdain, removed the contents of the folder and set them on a neat pile on the countertop before adding my journal to the pile. "I took the liberty of removing any mention of witches and hexes from your notes, Alexis. As head of the coven, I cannot condone murder." She glanced at Lochran before her gaze returned to me. "And I certainly cannot condone the disposal of the body in a public place where it may be found surrounded by evidence of his crimes." She tapped a finger on my journal. "However, as head of this coven, I can tell you that the magic of the house will deposit trash wherever you want it. Be that a landfill, the bottom of an ocean, or a clinical gray office in Sacramento."

"I think the latter would be most appropriate," Lochran said. A split second later, all traces of Chad and his crimes had disappeared from the house.

The final threads of tension snapped inside me. The knowledge that Chad could no longer hurt anyone and that, while he might not face a mortal punishment, the world would know what he'd done, made me feel lighter than air.

My reprieve was only short-lived, however, as a second later, a bloodcurdling howl pierced the quietness. The back door opened of its own accord with enough force to punch a hole in the drywall. A gigantic silver wolf leapt through the doorway, her lethal claws scraping against the stone floor like nails down a chalkboard. Billy's eyes glowed like hellfire, her lips pulled back, exposing canines longer than my hand. Her

growl reverberated through the room, low enough that all the plates, cups, and glasses quivered.

I'd never seen Billy fully shifted, but there could be no doubt that she was an alpha. She had to be at least three times the size of the biggest wolf shifter I'd seen to date and radiated so much power that all the incubi and witches present, including myself, had enough sense not to call our magic and startle her.

Except Jake, who wore a goofy smile and reached out his hand as if to pet her.

I quickly slapped his hand away.

"Billy," I said, my voice careful and soothing. "It's okay."

I sucked in a breath of surprise as my best friend's voice echoed in my mind.

Where is he? I'll kill him.

If I was unsure before, then this solidified it. I was now part of Billy's new pack. And by the way Lochran was rubbing his ear in confusion, he apparently was too.

"He's already dead," Jake said, and I snapped my head toward him.

No.

Nuh-uh.

No fucking way.

Mybrotherwas part of Billy's pack?

I turned to Lochran, mouth opened in an is-he-for-fucking-real look, only to be met with Lochran mouthing “I’ll explain later.”

Billy’s eyes werelocked on Jake, who took another step toward her, his hand outstretched. This time, my slap on his wrist was a little harder than I meant it to be. Jake glared at me, nursing his wrist against his chest before turning his attention back on Billy.

Finally, her hackles lowered, her lips relaxed, and her eyes stopped glowing. She let out a huff and, in one fluid movement, raised her front paws, transforming back into her much smaller human form.

Nakedhuman form.

Jake turned bright red. His entire torso was flushed as he removed his T-shirt and handed it to Billy, who was blushing just as profusely as she pulled the T-shirt over her head.

I glanced at Lochran, my eyes narrowing as he offered me a what-can-I-say shrug.

My teeth gritted together as realization dawned on me.

Why couldn't I have anything that was just mine?

But no. Of-fucking-course my brother was mated to my best friend.

Fate fucking sucked.

Chapter 23. Lex

It took about a minute for Billy to explain that the moment the taxi had arrived, she'd scented Chad and immediately shifted, her only thought to find me. It took a further minute for Jake to smugly tell me that his instinct that there was something fishy with a taxi being so close to the coven was correct and that I should apologize for calling him Sherlock, which I dutifully did not indulge. At the three-minute mark was when I noticed my mother wore a grin so wide it made her look like the Joker as she glanced between her son and Billy, evidently catching on that Billy was his fated mate. Minute four was when I realized that Jake had absolutely no idea that Billy was his mate, because he excused himself to take a phone call from Priscilla, causing a flash of anger to cross Billy's face, followed swiftly by tears pricking in the corners of her eyes. After five minutes, I'd calmed down enough to wrap my arms around Billy, making a silent promise that I would do everything within my power to knock some sense into my brother's rock-filled head.

It took a further twenty minutes for Billy to politely refuse every offer my parents made to try to get her to stay. It was only when Billy accepted a phone call from her dad and had to explain why she'd missed her flight that my parents finally gave up.



Lochran and I walked Billy back to our house, where thankfully the taxi driver still remained, surrounded by concerned neighbors offering him his third cup of tea laced with a calming draft. It seemed to have worked, for the taxi driver smiled blandly at Billy as she approached. Billy, still wearing my brother's T-shirt, reached into one of the bags she'd abandoned and shimmied into a pair of leggings.

She made a final promise that she'd try her best to get away from the pack to look after the house for us, throwing her arms around me once more before clambering into the taxi. Only when the taxi had disappeared into the darkness and our neighbors had filtered back into their homes did we make our way up the steps to the porch.

The front door swung open, creaking giddily on its hinges. In the next moment, Lochran had swept me into a bridal lift, causing a giggle to escape my lips and the house to creak and moan in enjoyment. I looped my arms around his neck as he crossed the threshold, carrying me with ease up the stairs, through his bedroom and into the bathroom, where the house already had a steaming shower ready for us.

Lochran placed me gently on the floor, facing the steam-edged mirror as he stood proudly behind me. It was the first time I'd seen us together, and, disregarding the blood, we did make a perfect pair. I hadn't realized just how tall he was, or just how soft his features were when he looked at me, nothing but pride and admiration in his eyes.

Lochran didn't have to say anything for me to know that he wanted me to look at myself, to see how far I'd come in just a few short days.

I had looked at myself in this very mirror only a few hours ago. I'd been proud of my change then, but now that the trial was over and I knew Chad could never hurt anyone again, I finally recognized my old self once more. Life, hope, and love had returned to my eyes, and I realized I matched my mate's look of pride and admiration.

We didn't have to have the conversation to know that the mating bond had solidified between us. We didn't have to declare our love for one another or let each other know that there were no longer any boundaries left between us.

It was all conveyed in the image reflecting back at us.

Only when the mirror steamed up did we finally move. Lochran's fingers were light as a feather as he undressed me before making quick work of his clothing. The moment the bloodied clothes hit the floor, the house magicked them away.

My mate opened the shower curtain and held my hand as I climbed into the cramped avocado bath. The hot water hit my skin, and I let out an uncontrollable sigh. Lochran reached behind me, grabbing the soap and lathering his hands. I watched in fascination as the blood frothed in the suds at my feet as Lochran took his time, running his fingers gently over every inch of me, careful not to miss a spot.

His cock was stiff, but he refused to let me touch him. It was as if he craved to know every curve of me intimately... and I found I was rather inclined to return the favor. Lochran kneeled before me, his forehead pressed between my breasts and directly over my heart as I ran my fingers through his hair, massaging his scalp. His breathing was slow and content as my fingers rubbed into his neck and shoulders, tracing lightly over the swell of muscle that blended the supple skin of his back to the scaled shadow wings.

There was a level of ingenuity needed for Lochran to position himself to give me access to his wings, but he practically shivered in delight as I reached the membranous skin between the scaled bones, tracing the mottled marks left from the lightning strike.

We took turns getting to know each other's bodies until the house decided we'd used enough hot water and turned the shower off. Lochran patted my hair dry with a towel

before wrapping me in one, then himself.

He pressed a kiss to my forehead. "I'll wait for you in the bedroom while you dry your hair."

I made a quick pass over my hair with the blow-dryer, just enough that it wouldn't stick to my body when I inevitably got into bed with my mate. The moment I switched it off, Lochran's amused voice called from the bedroom.

"Um, Lex? Any chance you can help me out here?"

I peered into the bedroom, and an uncontrollable giggle passed my lips as I took in the sight before me. Lochran was lying in the middle of the bed, his towel precariously in place as his arms stretched the length of the headboard, each wrist attached to the black silk bonds. His mouth was pulled into a mischievous grin that had heat pooling in my core.

"What happened here?"

"I was just musing out loud that I wanted you to feel in control for our first time together, and the next thing I knew, the house had me pinned to the bed."

I sauntered to the end of the bed, my hips swaying as I loosened the knot of my towel. "You should know by now, mate, that you ought to be careful what you say in this house. For example, wet towels have no place in a bedroom." The moment I loosened the towel from my chest, it disappeared, as did Lochran's. His cock was thick and ready, pulsing with need as I climbed between his legs.

Lochran groaned as I swept the precum from his tip with one swipe of my finger, placing it between my lips and sucking hard. My voice was a soft whisper as I practically moaned, "My mate tastes like... more."

I let my breath roll over him before my tongue flicked into his slit, causing his body to jerk and another low growl to peel from him. I lapped hungrily at the swell of precum that beaded from his slit before sheathing him to the back of my throat in one smooth movement.

“Oh, fuck, Lex.” His voice was barely a whisper.

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A shiver of pleasure pulsed through me as Lochran's fingers twitched. I knew he wanted to run his fingers through my hair and guide me onto his dick like he had the night before. And, as much as I loved him fucking my mouth, I equally loved denying him, drawing out his pleasure in a slow, devouring promise.

My tongue pressed firmly against the underside of his shaft as I leisurely brought my mouth up the length of him before sheathing him to the back of my throat once more. A combination of languid licks and quick, deep swallows had my mate panting hard.

"You're going to be the death of me, little witch," he said, breathless. And I realized that I almost was. He'd taken three bullets, one of them directly in his heart, for me.

"Can't have that," I said, replacing my mouth with my hand.

I pumped his shaft rhythmically, my fingers twisting gently as they caressed his crown, mimicking the way he'd touched himself on the first night. I felt myself dampen, remembering the way I'd driven him almost feral as he had thrust into his hand. Yet, all the while, he'd managed to stay within the confines of my boundaries.

Even now, he could easily snap the bonds that held his wrists. But he got pleasure from seeing me in control, watching my every move with lust-hazed eyes, eager to see what I did next.

Well, if my mate wants a show...

I took my hand from his cock and kneeled backward. His eyes widened as I trailed a finger over my breast, twisting gently at my nipple before slowly dragging my hand

down my stomach.

“You make me so wet, my mate,” I purred at him, dipping my fingers between my folds and coating them in my wetness. My fingers glistened as I held them out for inspection.

“Just a taste,” Lochran pleaded.

I straddled him, his cock fitting perfectly between my folds as I placed a finger between his lips. Lochran groaned, his tongue flicking over my fingertip as his hips thrust, his dick gliding between my folds, the tip pressing against my clit. A moan threatened to escape my lips as the first tendrils of anorgasm swelled within me.

“So greedy,” I said, pulling my finger from his mouth and climbing off him, settling between his legs once more. “That was more than just a taste.”

Lochran’s wicked grin dropped from his face, his eyes rolling back in his head as I wrapped my fingers around his shaft, slick with my arousal, and pumped. I dipped my head between his legs and pressed my tongue into his perineum, causing his hips to arch off the bed. My tongue flicked over the spot before following the fine crease that divided his balls, the sound of my arousal mixing with his precum as I continued to pump his shaft like music to my ears. Lochran arched into my fist, one final low grumble passing his lips before he said, “Mate. I’m going to need you to sit on my face. Right. Now.”

I was nothing if not an indulgent mate.

Lochran’s body was hot to the touch, sizzling with desire as I crawled over him, making sure to let my nipples gently caress their way across his chest. His mouth opened with need as I held my breast just out of reach.

“Wicked witch,” Lochran purred, before his inhumanly long tongue darted out, flicking over my hardened nipple.

I sucked in a breath. I’d momentarily forgotten about the tongue ability.

I made to reach for his bonds, but my mate stopped me, his words staggered with longing. “Your pussy. My face. Now.”

I didn’t realize I could move so fast. One moment, I was straddling him, teasing him with my breast. A split second later, his head was rested on my calves, my arms behind me, positioned on his stomach, as I guided my pussy toward his face.

Lochran’s tongue caressed lightly at first, the tip rolling in gentle flicks, teasing the hood of my clit before circling around it in a single, slow stroke. Each time his tongue rolled around my bud, my mate flicked harder and more frantically until he completely forgot that he was trying to tease me, his licks now wild with need, like a man starved.

A moan escaped my lips as he sucked my clit into his mouth, holding it between his lips as his tongue darted over it.

Fuck. I really wasn’t going to last long at this rate.

Just as my orgasm was within grasp, my cruel mate released my clit. I could feel his wicked smile on my lips, despite my eyes having rolled back into my head.

His tongue moved slowly through my folds, taking his time to lap up every drop of my juices until my heart rate subsided enough for my mouth to form words.

“Is your plan to edge me all night, dear?” I said, putting my weight onto one arm as my other hand found its way into his hair.

“Maybe once or twice, my love,” he said, his voice muffled.

“How about just the once?” I replied, my fingers entwining with his hair.

With that, Lochran’s inhumanly long tongue speared into me, causing me to buck uncontrollably. My hips seemed to grind of their own accord, each thrust pushing his tongue deeper inside me. Just when I didn’t think there was any way he could possibly fill me more, his tongue began to roll in on itself, twisting and wriggling its way back down my inner walls until it hit the rough bundle of nerves inside me that had stars exploding behind my eyes.

I couldn’t help but grind my cunt into him, each pulse of my orgasm grasping around his tongue inside me, pressing it harder against my G-spot.

I quivered as every part of my body, mind, and soul was given over to my mate as his tongue continued to roll inside me.



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At some point the house must have released him from his bonds, because his thick arms wrapped around me, lifting me into the air and settling me on the bottom end of the bed, his tongue still impossibly inside me, thrusting and pulsing. The tip of his tongue wriggled out of me, finding its way to my swollen, sensitive clit. My sex-addled mind managed to register three flicks before a second orgasm had me screaming his name, my body tight, hands still fisting his hair as I held his face in place.

Lochran didn't untangle his tongue until the very last pulse fluttered out, and even then, I was very close to a third orgasm as he pulled his mouth from my cunt. My scent was oddly familiar as he pressed his lips to mine, his knees parting my legs for him.

His violet eyes bore into mine as he looped a finger under my chin, tilting my head toward his. "I want to see your face as I take you for the first time, my love."

### Chapter 24. Lochran

My mate was stunning under me, her mossy eyes heavy with pleasure as she unconsciously bit her bottom lip. She was perfect in every way imaginable. Beautiful, smart, courageous, bold, seductive... there weren't enough words invented to describe my mate.

For so long I'd wandered this earth, lonely and guarded. But Fate couldn't have matched me with anyone more perfect than Lex to give my heart and soul to.

Lex moaned as I dragged the tip of my cock through her folds, coating it in her

delicious arousal. I wanted our first time to be slow, to draw out her pleasure in languid thrusts so I could etch every movement of her face. Our second time, which I planned to be immediately after, would be where we could lose ourselves in each other.

“Lochran.” Her voice was thick with need, rousing something primal inside me. The need to claim her was almost overwhelming, but not tonight. Tonight was for bonding, notclaiming.

I positioned myself at her slick entrance, allowing myself to suck in a deep breath of her desire before I pushed the tip of my cock inside her. I held myself there for a moment, loving the way she sucked in a breath, her bottom lip still clamped between her teeth, her legs wrapping around my waist, her arms around my neck. I pushed in a little more, her cunt clenching around every inch, pulling me deeper. Her walls were gloriously hot, and should Hecate herself decide to strike me down this very moment, I would die a happy demon enveloped inside my mate’s glorious pussy, wrapped in her loving embrace.

Unable to tease any longer, I sheathed myself fully inside her, my mate moaning as I hit the limits of her walls, her cunt pulsing around me as her third orgasm threatened to consume her. I made a mental note that she should perhaps join me some day as I practiced edging.

I traced a finger down the side of her cheek, causing her eyes to flutter open.

“I love you.” My voice was a low grumble, heavy with an intimacy I’d never felt before.

Lex brought a hand to my cheek, her palm soft and warm. “I love you too.”

Her lips pressed into mine, soft and gentle. Her desire was heady, consuming the air

around me, threatening to make me spill inside her. But my need to pleasure her outweighed my own desires, and I drew in a steadying breath. I pulled out of my mate, almost to the tip, before slowly rolling my hips back into her. Her moan passed between us, tingling my lips before she broke the kiss, her headlolling back as she arched into me.

“Lochran,” she groaned as her nails dug into my back on the next thrust.

She was so close, but I wasn’t going to let my mate off that easily. My tail materialized, the tip, now blunt, wrapping around the corner of a pillow. Settled deep inside my mate, my hand clasped around her ass before gently lifting her into the air, placing the pillow under her. Lex threw her arms behind her head, desperately grasping at the footboard to steady herself as I thrust deeply into her one final time before pulling out.

“Don’t stop,” she pleaded.

“What makes you think I’m stopping, mate?”

I allowed her just enough time for a retort to form on her lips before plunging the rounded tip of my tail deep into her pussy. She sucked in a surprised breath, her mouth forming a little O before she arched into it.

“This will only take a second, my love,” I promised, letting my tail swirl in her arousal. I pulled it from her, trailing it over her clit and through her folds until it found its way to her tight asshole. The moment she realized what I was about to do, a fresh wave of desire spooled from her, making me bite the inside of my cheek to not spill over her swollen cunt then and there.

Her ring of muscles was tight, resistant as I swirled the tip over her hole, prodding lightly until it gave way. Lex moaned as I pushed my tail in further, her eyes

threatening to roll to the back of her head as her knuckles whitened, her grasp on the footboard hard enough I was surprised the wood wasn't splintering.

"Please, Lochran. I need you inside me."

I did as my mate commanded, sheathing myself in a single, deep stroke. The new sensation of having both holes filled had my mate clamping around me as another orgasm overtook her.

I watched in awe at the way her eyes fluttered under her lids, the way her nostrils flared, and her lips pulled into a smile before she screamed. Her orgasm radiated through her, and the overwhelming need to watch my mate come undone was the only thing that kept me from joining her in release.

I pulled my cock from her, the sensation of it slowly dragging from her core increasing the pulse of her orgasm. Still positioned over her, I watched her writhing beneath me. Lex bit her bottom lip, a series of short moans escaping as her orgasm slowly ebbed from her. Pride swelled in my chest as it took another full minute before she was able to form a coherent sentence.

"You... you didn't come?" she asked, a note of disappointment in her voice.

"That was on purpose," I said, enjoying the look of confusion that crossed her face as I pushed myself off her, kneeling between her legs. I traced my fingers down her wonderfully curvy form. "On your knees, mate," I said, the command in my voice causing my mate to move without hesitation. The moment she was settled in front of me, I pulled her hips toward me, positioning my cock at her entrance. My hand found its way into her hair, and I tugged gently until her body was flush with mine. "I believe I owe you a rutting."

A fresh wave of her desire instantly engulfed the room, causing me to almost go

lightheaded. I let go of my grip on her hair. She fell on all fours as my hands gripped her hips, her back arching into me as I thrust into her to the hilt. As promised, I fucked her without abandon, driving hard into her. Her wetness dripped down her thighs, coating her swollen cunt as my balls slapped into her dripping folds.

Her words were incoherent as she bit down on the pillow, her desire spiking to the point where another orgasm threatened to overtake her.

“Not just yet, Lex. Hold off for me a little longer.”

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Her hip slammed back into me, meeting my every thrust. Her teeth let go of the pillow and she panted, “Don’t... think... I can.”

Her words alone had my own climax looming. My hand slipped under her, dipping between her legs. If my mate wasn’t able to hold back another orgasm, I might as well let this one be explosive. I gently pinched her swollen clit, causing her to buck into me, impaling herself to the limit.

Lex’s moan reverberated around the room as her tight cunt clamped around my cock, tipping me over the edge. My vision blurred as the most intense orgasm I’d ever had consumed me, my body freezing in ecstasy as I released inside her, my seed searing hot as it coated her walls. My mate kept moving, grinding my length in and out of her pulsing cunt, eager to milk every drop of my cum from me.

My mind was a haze, ablaze with awe and wonder, my body tingling, my stomach full, my soul whole, as I took in the sight of my glorious mate in front of me.

As the final thrum of her orgasm faded, Lex pulled herself slowly from my cock. She managed to throw me a satisfied grin over her shoulder before she slumped onto the bed, her body satiated and spent. She had just enough energy left to wiggle her ass at me, the sight of my cum mixing with her arousal stirring that primal need in me.

My mate’s desire to be rutted came from her succubus’s yearning to be claimed. As much as she craved it, I could tell she was ignorant of what claiming actually entailed, which made sense; she’d never intended to summon her mate, so I doubted she’d gone out of her way to find out the most intimate details of how we would claim each other with a mating bite. While I had an intense urge to sink my teeth into

her skin and demand she do the same to me, my brain didn't have enough cognition left to explain the mating bite.

But the primitive need to make some gesture of claiming overtook me. Lex quivered as I dipped my fingers between her legs, coating them in our spend. She flipped onto her back, her eyes widening as I rolled the wetness between my fingers. I brought my hand to her breast, the one that would one day hold the mark of my mating bite. Something primal swirled in my mate's desire. I could tell that she wasn't sure why, but she had an intense need to reciprocate the gesture. Her fingers pressed into the mark I'd just left before she rolled the wetness between her fingertips. Her hand pressed into the now healed scar from the bullet that had pierced my heart.

We remained still for a moment, letting the temporary marks dry, before the need to have my mate pressed into me took over. I settled myself beside her, scooping her into my arms and holding her body close to mine.

"I love you," I said, my lips pressing gently into the crown of her head.

"I love you too," she replied, her voice sleepy as she wiggled deeper against my body.

Life was perfect with Lex wrapped in my arms. I listened to her breathing slow, her body going limp in my arms before I let blissful sleep take me.

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"Knock knock," called a familiar voice that my sex-addled brain couldn't quite place.

Reluctantly, I pried myself from around Lex, who let out an almighty snore before rolling into the space I'd just vacated.

Pulling on a pair of sweatpants, I walked onto the landing and glanced down the stairs. A formidable figure in a frilly apron stood in the hallway, haloed with the first

rays of dawn light.

“Ms. Cole. I’ll just go and wake Lex.”

“I’m not here to talk to Lex.” Lex’s grandma crooked a beckoning finger that brooked no argument. “I’m here for you, Lochran.”

For me? Why would Lex’s grandmother be here to see me?

Apparently, I was taking too long in my pondering, for Ms. Cole, rather tersely, said, “I’m a very busy witch, Lochran. It would not bode well for you if I have to come up those stairs to get you. My knees aren’t quite what they once were.”

“Sorry,” I said sheepishly. For someone who looked like they could be on a box of cake mixture, she sure as shit was scary.

The ruby eyes of her snake-like cane bore into me as I gingerly made my way down the stairs, coming to a halt in front of her. She held out an empty hand, and I stared down in confusion.

The crack of her cane nearly made me jump out of my skin as a journal, suspiciously similar to Lex’s, appeared in her hand.

Oh, shit, yes. The murder.

“You killed a mortal, Lochran.” She flicked through the pages before offering it to me. “One hundred pages, front and back. Your trial will be—” She leaned in, her face relaxing into a doting grandma once more as she whispered, “When do you go away with Lex?”

“Um, we leave on Saturday,” I whispered back to her.



Ms. Cole straightened once more, her tone icily formal. “Your trial will be on Friday. Until then, no magic.” Her cane cracked against the floor, and it felt as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown over me. “And you cannot leave the confines of the coven.” Her cane clacked once more.

Lex was going to have a field day when I told her my punishment was a hundred pages.

Ms. Cole stared at me, her narrowed eyes boring into me as intensely as the ruby eyes of her cane. Suddenly, she broke into a smile. “Now the official business is over”—she reached out and grabbed my hand—“thank you for protecting my granddaughter, and welcome to the family.”

My face twitched into a grin. “It’s a pleasure,” I said, meaning every word.