



Kiss of Death

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Category: Romance, Paranormal

Description: Everything I've ever known about myself is a lie.

With one secret, my world falls apart. It's all been a lie. I don't even know who or what I am anymore. I don't know how to reconcile this new truth with what I've always believed.

I still have two unbonded mates, and it's tearing me apart. I'm tired of the back and forth of it all. It's time for them to make their decision once and for all because I'm done. I want them in my life, but I'm tired of being the only one fighting for us. The ball's in their court now. On top of the chaos that is my personal life, there's a war brewing between heaven and hell, and I'm smack dab in the middle of it—whether I want to be or not.

As the angels prepare to rain hell down on Earth, it's up to the denizens of hell to save both the human and supernatural races. Not exactly how you thought the apocalypse would come about, is it?

Kiss of Death is the third and final book in a why-choose paranormal academy romance and will have a HEA. None of the characters will have to choose between love interests and does include MM. This book is intended for 18+ due to language and content.

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Chapter One

Audrey

“Your dad was definitely the more powerful one of the two. Not that either of them knew who or what they were getting involved with. Did Mommy Dearest tell you that the two of you were a result of a drunken one-night stand?”

He says it like we should be ashamed of it. “Actually, yes. Once we were old enough to understand, she told us she met our dad at a bar and they slept together. She never saw him again. He doesn’t even know we exist.”

“Huh. I didn’t expect her to be that honest with you when she was lying to you about so much more.” Michael shrugs. “And you don’t have a clue about who he is.”

“Clearly,” I say once more, all of my patience gone as I step toward him once more.

I smirk when he starts to take another step back, just barely stopping himself in time.

Then he laughs, surprising me. He’s not acting rationally at all. It makes him harder to predict. It’s probably best if I just kill him now.

What he doesn’t seem to realize is I don’t need to touch him to rip out his soul. I point the scythe at him, still smirking. “Take.”

Nothing happens at first, which seems to make him laugh harder—until it cuts off completely.

His eyes shoot to mine, wide and scared as he pales. “What are you doing? You shouldn’t be able to do this.”

“And yet, here we are.” My smirk only grows as I watch the first strand of his soul slip out of his body, heading straight for the scythe.

“No. You can’t do this.” Michael is panicking now. “I know who your father is. If you kill me, you’ll never know.”

I shrug. “I’m not sure I really care.”

“Audrey! Stop!” Wren rushes up and grabs my arm. “You might not care, but I do.”

I sigh, rolling my eyes. I don’t release my hold on his soul, but I stop pulling on it. “Fine. Tell us who he is.”

“Only if you promise to not rip out my soul.”

“Done.” That’s easy to agree to. Not that I have any intention of keeping that promise. I don’t even feel bad about lying to him—not that I feel bad about anything currently, but that’s neither here nor there.

Michael considers me for a moment, trying to figure out if I’m lying to him, probably. “You might want to sit down for this one. Your father is...”

I roll my eyes with a scoff when he trails off. I bet he doesn’t even know who our dad is. He was probably bluffing since he knows I can kill him now.

“You don’t know shit.” I lift my scythe toward him, and he shakes his head frantically. “Take.”

“Lucifer. Hades. Whatever you want to call him,” he spits out. “He’s your father.”

Shock reverberates through me, my hold on his soul dropping, and that’s all the opportunity he needs.

Wings burst from his back as he smirks, lifting into the air. “Tell your daddy Michael says hello.”

He flies toward the large windows, crashing straight into them and outside. A few stray pieces of glass fly across the room, and I lift my arm to cover my face. I hiss when a piece lodges into my forearm, but better there than in my face.

“Troublemaker, are you okay?”

Wraith is suddenly there, pulling my arm away from my face as he examines it. I turn my head to find it’s a huge piece of glass. Weirdly, I’m barely bleeding around it.

It almost looks as if my skin is trying to heal around it.

“Is it—“

Wraith snorts, shaking his head. “Trying to heal itself? Yes. Yes, it is. This is going to hurt.”

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“What’s going—motherfucker!” I scream when he yanks the glass from my arm. I pull my arm to my chest, lifting my hand to cover the wound that’s throbbing—but only for a second.

I stare in awe as I realize the wound has already healed. “Well, that’s new.”

“Did you just heal yourself?” Wren asks, her voice shaky.

My eyes find my twin, and I let out a sigh of relief when I see she’s untouched. In fact, no one else was hit with glass, which makes sense since I was the one closest to the window and most of it would’ve gone outside.

I nod slowly, just blinking at her for a moment. “Apparently.”

“Are we going to talk about the fact that Wren’s ex-husband is an angel? Or that he announced that the two of you are Lucifer’s daughters?” Cassian asks. He shrugs when everyone turns to him. “Sorry. I don’t think it’s something we can ignore.”

“No. It’s not.” Wraith pulls his hand out of his pocket. “Nor is it the most pressing matter at the moment. I need to find a new soul for Wren to reap so she doesn’t fail her final.”

It’s only then I realize Wren’s shaking almost uncontrollably. I hurry over and pull her into my arms. “What’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong?” She scoffs but doesn’t pull away from me—in fact, she tries to burrow into my arms. “Michael is an angel? A demigod? How did I never know that?”

How could he have hidden so much from me? How didn't I notice all of it? And we're the devil's daughters? All these questions are swirling around in my mind, and Wraith is worried about me passing my final."

Donovan joins us, pressing a kiss to the top of my head. "Yes, he's worried about it. If you don't pass, then your soul gets sent to be judged. Clearly, we don't want that to happen, so he's doing what he can to prevent it. Everything else can wait until after. For now, you're going to have to push aside those questions and reap your first soul."

"Got one!" Wraith holds his phone up in triumph. "Why don't the rest of you head back to the house? We can meet you there."

"No." I shake my head. "I want to go to my mom's place. Wren died six months ago, so I'm assuming she's made it home by now. I need to make sure she's okay."

Wraith looks like he wants to argue, but Wren glances up with tears in her eyes. "Please, Wraith. If I know I can go see my mom, then I'll be able to focus."

He runs a hand through his hair with a heavy sigh. "I'm going to be in so much trouble, but fine. We'll go see your mom. But I want you four to wait here for us. Once Wren is finished, we'll meet you back here. While she's reaping her soul, I'm going to try to get a hold of Lucifer. He and your mom are the only ones who can confirm Michael's story. Not to mention, Lucifer needs to know about him. There shouldn't be any angels earth-side."

"Why not?" Wren asks, pulling away from me and straightening her shoulders. "Why wouldn't they be here?"

"Because they're supposed to be locked in Olympus—Heaven?" Wraith shakes his head. "It would be so much easier if humans would stop changing the name. When the gods began going into deep slumbers from which they couldn't be woken, the

remaining gods decided to close the gates. No one in and no one out. Even Lucifer hasn't been able to enter in a long time—hundreds of years, at least.”

I thought we'd shared all of this with my sister, but I guess we didn't. Or, if we did, she didn't retain it. Not that I can blame her. There's been a lot of information forced on her over the last six months. Scythe Academy is no joke.

Finally, she shakes her head. “Yeah, I can't think about that. My brain is going to implode. You said you found a soul?”

“I did. It's not too far from here. It shouldn't take long at all for you to finish up and deliver it.” Wraith hands his phone to Wren before pulling me into his arms. “I know this wasn't how you saw this going, but I promise you, we'll get to the bottom of it.”

Tilting my head back, I meet his lips for a soft kiss. “Is Lucifer being our father actually a possibility?”

He shrugs. “He's been known to go earth-side for weeks at a time. I don't expect he's celibate during those times. It's not impossible, but without talking to him, I have no idea. I'll call him as soon as we make it to the underworld—once Wren has passed her final. We'll meet you back here, and hopefully, I'll have some answers for you.”

“I guess there's not much more I can ask for. Take care of Wren.” I lean into him, kissing him once more before stepping back. “I love you, and thank you for trying to help me get vengeance on Michael. Hopefully, none of us will be in too much trouble.”

“Let's hope not.” Wraith smirks as he takes his phone back from Wren. “I'll be trailing you through the shadows. You know how to get there with the address, right?”

Wren nods. "I've got this."

Then they're both gone, leaving me with Brenden, Cassian, and Donovan.

Silence surrounds me, my eyes moving back to the broken window. I can't believe Michael got away. Or that he's an angel.

Like Wraith said, there's no reason he should've been earth-side. How did an angel end up here and married to my sister? I think back on everything Michael said and realize I wasn't paying as good of attention as I thought I was.

"Did Michael say my mom is an angel?" My head whips back to face my mates. "If she's an angel and was living earth-side...and so was Michael...How is any of that possible?"

Cassian shrugs. "I have no idea. From my understanding, angels weren't given a choice on whether they could leave or remain in Olympus. I don't think the gods trusted them with humans when the gods were succumbing to sleep out of nowhere."

Brenden steps over, cupping my face in his hand as he tilts my head back. "I thought you would be more upset that Michael got away. You seem...calm? No. That's not right, but you're not angry."

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“How can I be angry about Michael not being dead when I feel like my entire world has been ripped away from me? Nothing makes sense to me right now. Michael told us just enough to distract us, but he was up to something—I know it. But what? It doesn’t make any sense.” I shake my head again. “If my mom was an angel, how didn’t she know what Michael was? Shouldn’t she have known? She could’ve warned Wren off. Then none of this would’ve happened.”

“You’re freaking out. That’s why you’re not mad.” Brenden nods. “That makes sense.”

Donovan snickers. “Pretty girl, I didn’t know Michael was an angel. Hell, Wraith didn’t know. I don’t know how he was hiding his power like that. I thought he was a human.”

“So did I.” Cassian wraps his arms around me from behind, setting his chin on my shoulder. “There aren’t many angels who can hide what they are as he has.”

Squeezing my eyes shut, I try to rein in my thoughts. They’re bouncing all over the place, and I don’t know where to begin or what to do at this point. I need answers, and I need them now.

Brenden’s right. I should be mad that Michael is still alive, but right now, I’m just glad he’s out of sight. He just dumped more than one bomb on me and Wren, and we can’t even prove if he was lying or telling the truth—at least not yet.

I hope Wraith is able to get some answers from Lucifer.

Holy shit.

I might be Lucifer's daughter. If my mom's a demigod and my dad is a god, then what does that make me and Wren? Is this why no one could figure out what I am?

So many questions.

"He said he came after us because of our family. Does he mean Lucifer or my mom? Or both? And why did he come after us? What was the point in all of this? What is he planning?"

I glance around at my men, but none of them have any answers.

Of course they don't.

Chapter Two

Wraith

As I promised Audrey, the moment I follow Wren into the underworld, I have my phone to my ear.

The phone rings a few times before going to voicemail, and I curse. Of course he's not going to answer.

Biting back my irritation, I wait for his voicemail to pick up. "Lucifer, it's Wraith. There's some shit going on that you need to know about. This is important. I need you to call me as soon as possible. This is more important than whatever you're doing right now. I promise."

Not trusting that he's going to listen to his voicemail anytime soon, I also send him a

quick text asking him to call me as soon as possible.

My eyes drift back to Wren, watching as she transfers the soul to Charon. He inclines his head to her before lifting his eyes to meet mine. Unlike most people, I can see beneath the hood he wears.

I know many reapers wonder why he hides his face away, thinking he must be hideous, but he's far from it. He has his reasons for hiding beneath his hood.

The only reason I'm privy to those reasons is because he's my friend and a damn good one at that. Which is why I've been known to punish anyone speaking rumors about him or coming up with crazy stories among the reaper ranks.

We should probably all get together soon. I'd like him to meet Audrey properly. That'll have to wait, though, since there seems to be so damn much going on in my and Audrey's lives right now.

I nod in his direction before returning my attention to my phone. I don't want to return earth-side without having answers for Audrey. She loves me, but that doesn't make me exempt from her wrath. If I show up without answers, she's going to be pissed.

Hell, I want answers.

Could Michael be the Michael? Or did this angel just choose a human name so that he could live among them?

Have the angels escaped Olympus? And if they did, then why haven't we seen more of them? What are they planning?

My head jerks down as my phone alerts me to a new message, and I grind my teeth.

LUCIFER

I'm busy.

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WRAITH

Don't give a shit. We need to meet.

NOW.

LUCIFER

I think you've forgotten that I'm the boss.

WRAITH

Damn it, Lucifer.

I have six words for you, and if you don't think they're more important than what you're doing, then I'll leave you alone.

LUCIFER

I hate you, but fine.

WRAITH

You're a father. Michael says hello.

“What the fuck do you mean I'm a father?”

Lifting my eyes, I smirk when I see Lucifer standing there with his pants unbuttoned and shirtless. “I told you it was important, didn’t I?”

“Don’t fuck with me right now, Death. You don’t know what you just made me walk out on. An orgy. You made me walk out on an orgy.”

“Who’s this?” Wren asks quietly as she joins us.

Lucifer frowns, spinning toward her. “Who are—“ He goes white as a ghost when his eyes land on her.

“Luc?”

When he doesn’t answer me, I lay my hand on his arm, and his eyes jerk toward me.

“I’m a dad.” It’s not a question.

“Wren, this is Lucifer. Apparently, he is yours and Audrey’s dad—“ I cut off at the look on Lucifer’s face. “What?”

He glances at Wren. “I have two daughters?”

I nod slowly. “Wren’s twin, Audrey, is my mate. She’s with her other mates earth-side—“

“I want to meet her.” Lucifer’s face softens as he smiles at Wren. “Hello, Wren. I wasn’t aware I had a daughter—let alone two of them.”

Tears swim in her eyes as she glances between the two of us. “If you didn’t know you had daughters, then how do you know I’m your daughter?”

Lucifer lays his hand on his chest. “I feel it here. I recognize you as mine. I’m not sure why, but the gods have always been able to recognize their offspring. It makes it much harder for someone to lie to us about us being their child’s parent. But I don’t understand how I have any children. Unlike most of the other gods, I’m unable to impregnate humans or supernaturals.”

“What about an angel?” I ask, cocking an eyebrow.

“I mean, yes...but I haven’t...I couldn’t...” Lucifer frowns. “You said Michael said hello. Michael who?”

I shrug. “All I know is he’s an angel. He was masquerading as a human and married Wren before killing Audrey and Wren both, six months apart. Ishe—“

“Damn it,” Lucifer roars, the sound echoing around us as his eyes flash with hellfire.

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Wren whimpers, stepping slightly behind me, and that seems to pull Lucifer straight out of his rage. “I’m sorry, Wren. I would never hurt you, but considering you just met me, you have no reason to believe me.”

When his attention turns back to me, his face is sober. “Michael, as in the archangel Michael, previously known as Hercules. Asshole and all-around troublemaker. There’s no way he should’ve been able to leave Olympus, but clearly, the angels aren’t as secure as Seph led me to believe.”

“Your mother being an angel is the only thing that makes sense.” Lucifer directs this at Wren. “That means at least two angels have been earth-side in the last...however many years you’ve been alive.”

Wren giggles. “Technically, I’m not alive anymore, but Audrey and I would’ve been twenty-nine if we hadn’t died.”

Lucifer considers her for a moment. “Which means I met your mom thirty years ago. This is going to sound terrible, and I’m sorry, but that doesn’t even narrow things down as much as it should. Also, if we’re being technical, you’re not actually dead.”

“She’s not?” I frown, trying to figure out how that’s possible.

“Obviously, her mortal side was killed by Michael, but she’s still very much alive. She—and her sister, I guess—are...” Lucifer snorts. “I have no idea what they are. Gods and humans together make a demigod. Two gods, another god. In the history of time, there’s never been a demigod and a god who had a child together. There’s no name for what you and your twin are. But dying earth-side sent you to the

underworld, where your other powers should've kicked in."

Wren scoffs. "Maybe for Audrey, but not for me. I can't do half of what she can."

"And what can she do?" he asks, sounding truly interested.

I hold up my hand when Wren goes to answer him. "Why don't I just take you to meet her? I promised her I would return to her with her sister and some answers—answers that I think only you and their mom can answer. And I think I'm going to need some answers about how their souls were sent to the academy if they're not actually dead."

Lucifer's eyes narrow. "Where did you say my other daughter—Audrey, was it—was?"

I flush as I mutter, "Earth-side."

"With her other mates, isn't that what you said? And she attended the academy, which means she's a reaper. So would you like to explain to me why a reaper is earth-side if they're not reaping?"

I shake my head slowly. "No, I don't think I would like to at all. Surely, meeting your daughters is more important than why we were there in the first place, right?"

"Wraith, it seems there's been a lot of shit going on that I haven't been made aware of. I'm more than a little annoyed about it. It might be in your best interests to tell me what I want to know." Lucifer's eyes flash with hellfire again. "Being my friend won't protect you from my wrath."

"Damn. Audrey's definitely his daughter," Wren muses as she nods her head slowly. "Which means I am too. We really are the daughters of the devil."

Lucifer nods at her without taking his eyes off me. “Yes, you are. Wraith?”

With a sigh, I fill him in on the entire story—starting from the moment Audrey appeared at the academy until now. Lucifer might be my friend, but he’s also a god, and I’m nothing more than his creation. I’ve seen him pissed before, and I don’t want to be on the other side of it if I don’t have to be.

Although, based on the look on his face when I finish, I still am.

“That’s...interesting,” Lucifer finally says, clenching his jaw. “We’ll be discussing this in more detail later, Wraith. Do you understand?”

“I understand. Can’t say I’m looking forward to it, but I understand.”

Wren’s eyes narrow on her dad. “You know he’s Audrey’s mate, right? You can’t hurt him. If you do, she’s going to be pissed. Since you’re the ruler of hell or the underworld or whatever, I’m sure you’re scary, but you haven’t seen my sister on the warpath before. Just something to keep in mind.”

“I’m sure I can deal with any blowback that might come from Wraith being punished.” Lucifer smirks, rolling his eyes, and I bite back a laugh.

Poor Lucifer. He has no idea what he’s getting himself into with Audrey. Wren’s the quieter twin. I don’t think things will be quite so chill when he meets my mate, but I know he can take care of himself. He might be a little surprised by his prodigy, though.

Even if she’s not completely herself right now, that’s not something to worry about right now.

It really does make sense that Audrey’s his daughter. The two of them are a lot

alike—something that never would've crossed my mind because why would it? It explains her ability to use hellfire and probably the whole ripping a soul out of a living person's body. I've never seen that before.

I can't even do that, and I'm death incarnate.

There wasn't time to bring it up before having to rush off so Wren could reap her first soul, but we will be talking about that when I see her next. She didn't seem surprised by the power.

It makes me wonder if she already knew about it, and if she did, how?

If she's been keeping things from me, I'm going to turn her hot little ass pink.

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“Okay.” Wren shrugs, a smirk pulling at her lips. “It’s your funeral.”

Lucifer narrows his eyes on his daughter before shaking his head and brushing off her words. “Where are we going, Wraith?”

“Just grab hold, and I’ll get all three of us there,” I tell him, biting my lip to hide my smirk when he rolls his nose up in disgust. “I’d rather you arrive with us and not ahead of us. Audrey...well, she can be a little reactive, and she’s likely freaking out right now. The last thing I want is for her to try to take your head off during your first meeting.”

He scoffs. “I can take whatever she can dish out. Just tell me where we’re going.”

I exchange an amused glance with Wren as I tell him the address. As soon as he’s gone, Wren breaks out into giggles.

“Is it bad that I’m kind of glad he went ahead of us? I get that he’s our dad or whatever, but if he’s going to underestimate Audrey like that, he kind of deserves it.” She shrugs. “It’s probably best that he learns it now. If she was standing here when he brushed off my warnings?”

I snort. “I almost wish I could see her react to that,” I admit. “But we should probably follow him so she doesn’t get into too much trouble.”

“I guess.” Wren hesitates, her hand hovering over my arm. “Will we still get to go see Mom?”

“I don’t see why not. The two of you are his kids. If you want something, then you stand a better chance of getting a yes than the rest of us. Even if we can’t do it today, I’ll make sure you and your sister get to see her.” I make a face. “No matter how much trouble I end up in with Luc.”

She offers me a soft smile and a nod as she lowers her hand to my arm. I pull us into the shadows, wondering what we’ll find when we make it back earth-side.

Chapter Three

Audrey

I hate waiting.

Yes, I’m impatient. I’m aware of this, but it doesn’t change the fact that I really hate waiting around. I’d much rather be doing something.

Especially when my head is such a mess as it is right now. I have so many questions and no answers.

I am not a fan.

The air flickers around me, and I freeze before spinning on my heel and sending hellfire toward the man who just appeared in the living room.

I smile as a look of shock flitters across his face moments before it hits him, but it quickly falls away when I realize it’s not damaging him. It just seems to be circling him.

I have no idea who the fuck this man is, but he fits tall, dark, and handsome to the tee.

“What the fuck?” I mutter as my mates come crashing into the room.

“Umm...pretty girl, why are you throwing hellfire at Lucifer?”

My mouth drops open, and my hand falls to the side. My hellfire doesn't immediately return to me or disappear. No, it seems to be dancing along his limbs.

“Did you just say that's Lucifer?” I ask Donovan, eyes never leaving him.

“That would be me,” Lucifer says with a smug grin before dismissing the hellfire. “And you must be my other daughter, Audrey.”

“That's still to be determined,” I can't help saying, eyeing him suspiciously.

He just laughs. “Oh, there's no doubt about it. You're my daughter. I've already met Wren. She said you were powerful, but I'll admit, I didn't expect you to be quite so strong.”

I wrinkle my nose. There's nothing I hate more than people underestimating me, but considering he's a god—and apparently my dad—I bite my tongue.

“Donovan. Cassian. It's good to see both of you again. You, I don't know.” Lucifer's eyes narrow on Brenden.

I grab his hand, squeezing it. “This is one of my mates, Brenden. He's currently teaching at the academy.”

“Hmm...just how many mates do you have, daughter?”

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At his question, everything inside of me goes cold. I'm reminded why I've been feeling so badly—reminded of everything that's been pulling me down until I was distracted.

“Yeah, we're not talking about that.”

If I let it, the sorrow and dejection will swallow me whole. I squeeze my eyes shut, feeling myself shutting down once more. I can't do this right now.

“What—” Lucifer cuts off as Wraith and Wren appear beside him, and I have to hold myself back from launching myself at them and dragging them away from him.

No one says anything for a moment, then another, and another.

“Are we seriously just going to stand here in silence?” I grit my teeth, trying to rein in my impatience.

I want answers.

I need to see my mom.

I need to know what the hell is going on.

“Where are we exactly?” Lucifer asks, eyes finding the broken window.

“This is Michael's home—where he's been staying since he killed Wren,” Wraith offers, finally coming to join me and the others with Wren right behind him.

Lucifer hums before turning his attention back to me and Wren. “I’m sure the two of you have questions. I might not be able to answer all of them, but I’ll answer what I can. Why don’t we have a seat?”

“You want to talk here?” I ask, glancing around. “What if Michael comes back?”

He grins wickedly. “I hope he does.”

Well, okay, then.

I grab Wren’s hand and pull her to sit beside me on the couch. Brenden sits on my other side while Donovan lowers himself to sit on the floor between my legs. Cassian and Wraith sit on the arms of the couch, leaving Lucifer to sit in an armchair opposite us.

He doesn’t look intimidated in the least as the six of us stare him down, but I guess that’s to be expected when he’s aliteral god.

“How can you be so sure we’re your daughters?” I blurt out the question, unable to hold it inside any longer.

He inclines his head. “I already explained this to Wraith and Wren, but it’s an innate ability all gods have. We’re able to tell when a child is ours. That includes any offspring generations down the line—we can tell they’re of our blood, even if it’s watered down. As soon as I saw you and Wren, I knew you were my daughters. I do want to apologize, as I had no idea you existed. I’ve never been able to procreate with anyone but another god before. Because angels were supposed to be locked in Olympus, I never thought to use protection when I’ve been earth-side. Although, I wouldn’t have thought I could impregnate a demigod either, but that’s the only thing that makes sense.”

I wrinkle my nose again. Yeah, this isn't a conversation I want to be having with one of my parents—even if he wasn't the one who raised me.

It feels...icky.

“Great. Yeah, we can skip over all of that,” I tell him, fighting back a gag. “No one wants to hear about their parent's sex life.”

Lucifer chuckles. “Yeah, okay. I can see how that would be weird since you were raised among the humans and supernaturals. It's not uncommon among the gods and their offspring. Or at least it wasn't.”

Wren leans forward, squeezing my hand. “You said you didn't know what to call us because what we are has never existed before?”

“Unfortunately, yes. Until today, I would have said that a three-quarters god couldn't exist. Clearly, that's not the case, but there's no telling what powers you'll have or how they'll show themselves. I'm sure that's not what you want to hear, but I'll gladly work with both of you on that front. It'll be best if we speak with your mother first to see whose descendants you are. Between the powers I hold, the powers she has, and whoever her godly parent is, we can probably narrow it down—at least a little.”

It's not exactly what I want to hear, but it's better than nothing. Plus, I have a pretty good idea of the powers I have, but Wren has been struggling.

“Okay, and the more immediate problem? Who the hell is Michael, and how is he earth-side if he's an angel?” I have more questions than that, but I feel like this is a good place to start.

“I don't know how he was able to leave Olympus. He shouldn't have been able to.”

Lucifer leans back in the chair, running a hand through his hair. “But I shouldn’t be surprised since he’s always been one to cause trouble. He’s always wanted more than what he is. As far as who he is—he’s the archangel Michael. Besides that one, his most well-known name was Hercules.”

My mouth drops open, my eyes finding my sister. “You were married to fucking Hercules? I always thought he was supposed to be one of the good guys.”

Lucifer scoffs. “The stories the humans tell of our escapades have never been accurate.”

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I can feel the overwhelming sorrow pushing at me once more. Waves and waves of melancholy threaten to pull me back into the pit of despondency.

I don't like it there. I don't like how I feel. I want it to stop, but I don't know how.

Blinking, I know I won't be able to fight it for much longer—if at all.

“What could he be planning?” I ask, my voice once more devoid of emotion as I sink deeper and deeper into that pit.

Lucifer tilts his head as he stares at me. “What's wrong with you?”

“Nothing.” I stare at him blankly.

Lucifer's eyes move to Wraith, who lets out a sigh. “We believe she's going through rejected mate syndrome.”

“Excuse me?” Lucifer sits up straight, his eyes flashing with...holy shit. Is that hellfire? “Who rejected my daughter?”

I wave off his unnecessary anger. “It doesn't matter.”

“The fuck it doesn't. I want to know what happened, and who I need to kill.” He really does look pissed, which is weird since he didn't know I existed an hour ago.

“It's irrelevant to the current situation,” I tell him, ready to talk about anything else but Nex.

I don't want to think about him, let alone talk about him. Not only does it hurt, but each thought of him sends me deeper and deeper into despair.

"I don't think it's irrelevant," he starts, and I cut him off with a shake of my head.

"I don't want to talk about it." Anger bubbles along the despair, there and then gone again. "I want answers."

Lucifer looks like he wants to argue but stops when Wraith clears his throat.

"I have no idea what Michael could be planning," he finally answers, clearly not happy about the change of topic, but he can suck a dick. "I need to figure out how he was able to leave Olympus. How your mother was able to. Maybe once I figure that out, I can get an idea of what he's planning. All I know is that whatever it is, it's not going to be good."

I roll my eyes. "Great. More questions. Just what we need."

"Little mate, you can't expect him to have all the answers," Cassian says quietly, drawing my attention to him. He's been very quiet since Lucifer appeared.

Actually, it's not just him—it's all of my mates.

Frowning, I glance at each of them. Wraith and Cassian are giving me worried looks, while Brenden's face looks as blank as I feel. Donovan is clinging to my leg, but his eyes are on Lucifer.

"It sounds like we need to talk to Mom," Wren finally says, giving my hand another squeeze.

Lucifer nods. "It might be best. That'll give all of us some answers. After we speak

with her, I might be able to offer more answers. I just don't know. But don't think that this conversation about this rejected mate is over. Mainly because there are only three ways to deal with it, Audrey. Either the mate accepts you, the death of the mate, or time—and we're not talking weeks or months but years and years."

My eyes fall closed as pain shoots through me. The only option that sounds good to me is the first, but even if Nex decides he wants to be with me, how can I allow that with how he hurt both me and Brenden?

No. I'm definitely not doing this right now.

I push to my feet, knocking Donovan over in my haste as I drag Wren and Brenden with me. "Mom's address is 123 Brightstone Ave right here in Leyton. We'll meet you there."

Without waiting for a response, I step into the shadows with the two of them clinging to me.

I've spent nearly thirty years without a father. I certainly don't need one now. Especially if he's going to keep picking at the open wound that is my relationship—or lack thereof—with Nex. Brenden and I are going through enough. We don't need the rejection thrown in our faces again and again.

Instead of stepping out at my mom's house, I keep us in the shadows as I take a deep breath.

"Are you okay, Ree?" Wren's voice is quiet, and even without looking, I know her worried gaze is on me.

I shrug. "It's a lot. All of it's a lot. I just...I can't."

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“Talking about him hurts,” Brenden adds, moving closer until he’s practically wrapped around me without releasing his hold on my hand.

If he were to do that, we could lose him in the shadows. I don’t know if I’d be able to find him, and he can’t shadow walk himself.

“We’ll just have to make him understand it’s not a topic to be discussed then.” Wren squeezes my hand until I meet her gaze. “We don’t need him. All we ever needed was Mom and each other. If he won’t let it go, then we’ll just cut him out of our lives.”

I scoff, knowing it won’t be so easy to cut him out, but I love my sister for being willing to give up our father for me. “Hopefully, it won’t come to that.”

Knowing we’re likely to be the last to arrive due to me taking this moment, I step out with them at my side and stare up at the house we grew up in.

Now we get to confront our mom about her lies.

The day just keeps getting better and better.

Chapter Four

Audrey

It looks just like it always has. As if my life hasn’t changed irrevocably since the last time I stood in this exact spot.

I'm not sure if that makes me happy or if it crushes me a little bit more.

"What took you so long, troublemaker?" Wraith asks from where he, Donovan, Cassian, and Lucifer stand on the porch.

I shrug, releasing my hold on my sister and Brenden, walking up to join them. "I just needed a moment."

Pushing past them, I grab the doorknob and hesitate for a second, wondering if it's okay to just walk inside. After all, Mom thinks both of us are dead. There shouldn't be anyone else walking into her home right now. I don't want to freak her out.

Although, I guess seeing her dead daughters is going to freak her out, regardless.

Fuck it. It's my home too.

I step inside, listening for any sounds as the others follow me inside. I don't hear anything, but Mom's car is parked outside. She should be home.

"Mom?" I call out, forgetting for a moment that she thinks I'm dead.

Well, I guess I'm still dead. Undead? I have no fucking clue.

Footsteps hurry down the stairs, and Mom stops at the bottom of the stairs. Her eyes are wide as they find me and then Wren. Her face pales, and she leans heavily against the wall.

"How? I..." Mom shakes her head, stepping off the stairs and starting toward us, pulling up short when she realizes there are others with us. "What's going on?"

She's just as beautiful as I remember, and I don't know how we never questioned

what she was. She hasn't aged a day since my first memories. Her red hair falls around her shoulders, much like Wren's. Her face is still unlined, and she probably looks more like our sister than our mom.

We probably should've noticed this sooner, but how were we to know she wasn't what she said she was?

Shaking my head, I force myself to focus on the question she asked. I don't even know how to begin to explain this to her.

"Ana?" Lucifer steps forward.

Mom's eyes go even wider when they find him. "Luke?"

"Lucifer, actually," he says with a shrug.

"I slept with Hades." Mom snorts. "Wouldn't Dad be so proud?"

Lucifer hums. "That's part of the reason we're here. Is there somewhere we can all talk?"

"First, I'd like to know how my babies—who I buried six months apart—are standing in front of me. Second, I'd like to know who the hell the rest of you are and why you're here." Mom straightens, her I'm-taking-no-shit look on her face.

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“The quarter of them that’s human died. Their souls were sent to the underworld. Because they were murdered—“

“Excuse the fuck out of me?!?!” Mom cuts off Lucifer without a care in the world.

Lucifer runs a hand over his face. “There’s a lot you need to be caught up on. Why don’t we sit down?”

She looks like she’s going to argue with him, so I step forward and lay my hand on her arm. “Please, Mom? There really is so much to share, and it’ll probably be easier to hear if you’re sitting down.”

“Fine. Yes, of course. We’ll use the dining room table. It’s probably the only place there’s enough seating for all of us. But then I want introductions and an explanation.”

I nod, following her to the dining room, where she sits at the head of the table. I sit on one side of her and Wren takes the other. Lucifer takes the seat opposite Mom and my mates sit beside me and Wren, filling in the remaining chairs.

“This is mine and Wren’s mom, Ana,” I tell the guys, tone flat. “Mom, these are my mates: Wraith, Donovan, Brenden, and Cassian.”

“Don’t forget to tell her about the one who rejected you,” Lucifer snarks, and I feel the anger bubbling up once more.

“If I tell you what happened, will you stop fucking bringing it up?” I ask, voice still

completely devoid of emotion. I'd love nothing more for it to hold the bite I felt for a mere second before it was overwhelmed by melancholy.

Lucifer blanches. "I didn't...I mean..."

Wren snorts. "What's wrong? You don't like that she talks back? You should be glad she's dealing with rejected mate syndrome. If she wasn't, she'd probably have set you on fire by now."

"Oh, honey." Mom takes my hand in hers and squeezes. "I'm sorry you're going through that. I've heard it's hell."

I nod slowly. "Both Brenden and I are. Look, it's a whole long story that I'd rather tell all at once. And I'll tell it to shut him up, but first, I'd like to know more about the human quarter of me that died."

"Of course. As I'm sure you're aware, all supernaturals and humans are mortal. Every creature can die, but it's harder to kill demigods because of the godly blood running through their veins. When they're killed for the first time, it's their human-side that dies. If they choose to stay in the land of the living, it's their god-side that's still alive. It doesn't make them any easier or harder to kill, but someone who has died once already tends to be a little more wary of their surroundings." Lucifer takes a deep breath.

"It's nearly impossible to kill gods, but we each have our vulnerabilities. Even though a three-quarters god hasn't existed before, following this logic, it was your human-side that died. All reapers are 'alive' in a way—that's something that's granted to them when they receive the title—but it's not the same way the two of you are alive."

He pauses. "It's really weird trying to explain this. A reaper can't die again because they're not alive in the same way you are. You could still be killed again, but I don't

know how easy it would be. For demigods, better known as angels, they couldn't have been killed in the way you were—or how I'm assuming you died in order for your souls to be sent to the academy.”

“I was burned alive, and Wren was stabbed—both by Michael.”

Mom's hand tightens on mine almost painfully. “I'm sorry. Did you just say that Wren's husband killed both of you?”

“That's the start of the story,” I say before filling her in on what's happened since I died. When I reach the part about the Fates, I can see both Mom's and Lucifer's attention eyeswander over my four mates. I choose to ignore that for now, telling them the rest of the story until the only thing left is Nex.

I lean back in my chair, looking at Mom. “Before I continue, there are some things we need to have you answer. Lucifer glossed over it, but you mentioned your dad. You're an angel? A demigod?”

“I am.”

“Then why did you tell us you were a fire witch? That we were fire witches?” Wren asks, and without looking up, I can tell she's fighting tears.

All we had growing up was Mom, and we looked up to her. Finding out that she lied to us about something so important hurts—not that I can really feel it right now. Not with the rejected bond pressing down on me.

Mom grabs Wren's hand and sighs. “When Olympus was being locked down, I snuck away. My dad, Hephaestus—your grandfather—had already been put to sleep. Neither he nor I are well-liked in Olympus, so I left while I could. And you're sure Michael is Hercules? I never had much to do with him because my family was

frowned upon.”

“Being the daughter of Hephaestus makes sense with how you were able to pass as a fire witch. As far as Michael, the only one who would be able to escape Olympus with it being locked down would be one of the archangels,” Lucifer admits. “The others wouldn’t have the power to do so. I still don’t know how he managed it. Or why. But I’ll figure it out.”

Mom’s eyes drift to me, and I know she wants to ask about my missing mate, but she won’t push me. Not on this, at least.

She always had a way of getting us to open up to her without trying. She would just sit there, quietly supporting us until it came spilling out of us.

“My fifth mate’s name is Nex. He’s an incubus, who my father apparently cursed to never be happy in his love life or something. He sought vengeance over his sister being killed by murdering those who attacked the village where she was killed.” I shrug. “He said he tried to stay away from us—for our protection or whatever bullshit he seems to believe—but that didn’t last long. He seemed like he was giving in. The three of us slept together, and in the morning, he was gone. He left us a note.”

Lucifer scowls. “I can see why you didn’t want to hear about my sex life. This is disturbing, but more than that, your mate is a stupid, stupid demon. His only punishment was to work for the horsemen for a thousand years. He’s the one who stayed and continues his punishment. The curse was a joke. I didn’t think he would take me seriously.”

All I can do is blink at him.

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Did he just admit that not only there wasn't a curse, but it was all a joke?

This is what ruined my life? My relationship?

Tears prickle at my eyes, and I almost feel relieved to know I can still cry, but they never actually come.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Wren roars, surprising me as she jumps to her feet and stabs a finger in Lucifer's direction. “You jokingly told someone that their love life was cursed? Someone who turned out to be your daughter's mate? Who the hell does that?”

Look at my non-confrontational sister standing up for me.

Another time I wish I could feel something more than bone tired because I'm so fucking proud of her. Although, it would be better if she learned to stand up for herself. At least she is standing up for something.

“I'm not a fortune teller, Wren. There was no way I could know that Nex would be Audrey's mate. Or that I would even have daughters.” He sighs. “But I am sorry for the pain it caused you, Audrey. Don't worry, I'll make it right.”

I don't think I like the sound of that. “There's nothing to make right.”

“But there is,” he assures me before straight up disappearing.

What. The. Actual. Fuck?

“Are there any other secrets that need to be shared? Anything else that’s going to throw us for a loop when it’s revealed?” I ask, ready for a nap.

I’m glad I was able to see my mom, but like most things right now, being here is weighing on me. I don’t think I’ve ever felt this tired before. Where it hurts to move. Where even the smallest tasks feel like they’re insurmountable.

“None on my part. I really am sorry, girls. I’m not supposed to be earth-side, so I needed to find a way to be able to pass in the supernatural community. The two of you were unexpected—the best surprise of my life, might I add—so all I could think to do was to perpetuate the lie to keep us all safe.” She sighs, burying her face in her hands. “Maybe it was the wrong choice—I don’t know. I just did what I thought was best. I know I’m not perfect, but it wasn’t done to hurt you intentionally. I never thought it would even come up.”

“It’s fine, Mom.” I stand up and pull her into a hug. “I love you, and I’m sorry if it sounded like I was berating you or anything. Nothing feels like it should right now. Nothing comes out sounding like it’s supposed to. Just know I love you.”

Mom sobs as she clings to me, waving her free hand at Wren, who quickly joins us. Mom pulls her into our hug as the two of them cry. I pat their backs, wishing there was more that I could do, but even that leaves me exhausted.

“I’m just so glad you’re both okay,” Mom says once she’s calmed down. “Losing the two of you was devastating, and I didn’t know what to do with myself.”

Before either of us can respond, there’s a thump that has us breaking apart and staring at Lucifer, who has just reappeared, but he’s no longer alone.

Chapter Five

Nex

Isit at my desk, staring out at my students as they work with their magic.

It's been over a day since I walked out on Audrey and Brenden, and to say I'm in a shitty mood is putting things lightly.

I didn't want to leave them, but it had to be done. I'm not going to allow this damn curse to hurt them.

Fuck. Maybe it's time to see Lucifer about it.

It's been a very long time, and technically, I guess my original punishment is up. Maybe he'll be willing to revoke the curse on me. Surely, that's a thing, right? There has to be a way to reverse curses.

I run my hand through my hair, likely leaving it in disarray as I sigh.

My students glance up at me, but when they notice me looking their way, they duck their heads.

Yeah, I might have been taking out my bad mood on them for the last two days.

"Nex Novak," a menacing voice says near my ear, and I startle. "I believe you're needed for a conversation."

Jerking my head around, I try to figure out who the hell just snuck into my classroom, but their hand slips into my hair and jerks my head back before slamming it forward.

Pain courses through me as my face meets the table—which is not my desk. Blood explodes from my now-broken nose.

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“What the fuck?”

The man scoffs, finally releasing his hold on me. “That’s what I’d like to know.”

I look up, blinking against the tears in my eyes. This isn’t the first time I’ve broken my nose, and it’s unlikely to be the last, but it never gets any less painful.

Frowning, I realize I recognize the faces around me. Brenden is the first my eyes focus on as he stares at me blankly. Wraith, Donovan, and Cassian are here, which means Audrey must be here as well. Lifting my eyes, I find her and Wren standing with another woman who looks just like them. Their mom, maybe?

Why am I here?

Finally, spinning on my heel to face my attacker, I blanch when I see it’s Lucifer. “What’s going on?”

“I’ve just been informed that you rejected my daughter as your mate.”

Uh...I’m so fucking lost.

“I haven’t rejected anyone?” I glance over my shoulder at the scoffs that sound out behind me. “Wait. Did you say daughter?”

I know Lucifer had children with his previous consort, Persephone, but I’ve met them before, and they haven’t been around in a long time. I’m fairly certain they’re sleeping in Olympus with the other gods.

So what daughter is he talking about?

My eyes lock with Audrey's, widening as the realization hits me.

"Audrey and Wren are my daughters," Lucifer states, drawing my attention back to him. "I believe there is something I must clear up with you. There was never a curse, Nex. I was fucking with you. The only reason you were punished is because the Fates informed me that you changed too many people's destinies with your killing spree. We had to be sure it wouldn't happen again. Anyone else I told I was placing a curse on their love life would know it wasn't exactly something up my alley, so I wonder why you chose to believe it was true and for how long. Were you just punishing yourself?"

"I...I...I..." I don't even know how to respond to that.

I've never been under a curse? Then why did everything fall apart the way it did? Why wasn't I able to find my happily ever after?

Fuck.

Because neither of them had been born yet. My fated mates didn't exist yet, so of course, nothing worked out with others. Because I didn't want them to. I didn't think I deserved to be happy.

I can already see how everything played out in my head and how I was the one sabotaging myself—just like I did with Brenden and Audrey.

My shoulders droop forward, agony rushing through me at the pain I've caused the two people I love, even when I wanted nothing more than to not love them.

I'm the one who did this. There's no one else to blame except me.

“I didn’t reject them,” I croak finally, unable to get anything else just yet.

“Felt like a rejection to me,” Brenden says, his voice weird. I turn back to see his blank face still staring at me, and another realization comes to me—an even more uncomfortable one.

Lucifer clears his throat. “And how much do you know about rejected mate syndrome and what causes it, Nex?”

“It’s caused by the person’s belief that their mate bond is being rejected.” My eyes flash between Brenden and Audrey, watching their blank faces. “Whether it was the intention of the other party or not. The syndrome will only clear up with time and space, death of the mate, or acceptance of the mate bond by both parties.”

I fucked up so badly.

I knew I fucked up, but I didn’t realize just how badly I fucked up until right now. I’ve destroyed the only two people I’ve ever truly loved.

Fuck my life.

“I didn’t...that’s not what—” I break off at Donovan’s snarl. “It doesn’t matter what I meant or didn’t mean. It matters how you perceive it. I understand.”

My attention turns back to Lucifer. “I’m not sure what you wa—”

“I want you to fix it. Make it right. I don’t remember you being this much of an imbecile, Nex, so please stop playing stupid.”

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I'm not sure I've ever seen Lucifer this angry before, as hellfire flashes in his eyes. He wasn't even this mad when he was handing out my punishment.

"There's nothing for him to fix. I already tried to tell you this." Audrey's voice is just as devoid of emotion as Brenden's, and I fucking hate it. "Even if his intention wasn't to reject us, he did. We can't trust him not to do it again. Instead of worrying about this, you should be trying to help us figure out how I keep the fourth mate, who actually wants to be with me."

"Audrey, I'm sorry—"

She cuts me off with a look. "I don't care what you are or aren't. Your presence isn't needed, so feel free to leave."

When she looks away from me, it's almost as if she forgets I'm there.

Maybe she does. Or maybe she just wants to forget.

I hang my head, unsure how to handle this—of what I'm meant to be doing.

Lucifer leans in close. "You're not to leave until you fix this, or I'll kill you and fix it for her. But we both know if the Fates told her she'd have three mates or five, there's no way for her to have Cassian without also having you. Although, maybe your death will solve both problems—I'm definitely willing to find out. I don't care what you have to do to make it right, just do it. I want to get to know my daughter, and I can't do that right now."

I grit my teeth because I don't need him to threaten me to want to fix this, but based on their reactions, I'm afraid my relationships with Audrey and Brenden are irreparable.

That doesn't mean I won't try to repair it. I'm just at a loss at where to even begin.

I'm not cursed—I was never cursed.

Fuck.

It's unhelpful, but that's all that keeps crossing my mind.

How the hell am I going to fix this? How am I going to make it right?

How do you make something better when it's caused your mates to feel rejected?

I wasn't even sure if Brenden was my mate—

No. I'm done lying to myself. I knew he was my mate, and I just wanted to ignore it. I was willfully blind about the whole situation with my mates. I thought it was to protect all three of us—more to protect them than myself—but that was a lie.

How many lies have I told myself over the years? How many times have I denied myself in order to punish myself?

I take a step away from the table—a table there's no room for me at—wondering where we are and why.

I'm afraid to voice my questions—afraid I'll be forced to leave. I need to know what's happening so I know how to keep my mates safe.

Because, yes, they're my mates. Whether they accept me or not, they're still my mates. I might not know how to fix this, and it pains me to admit that, but I will do what I can to keep them safe, even if they want nothing to do with me.

"So, now what?" Audrey asks, her eyes on Lucifer as she retakes her seat.

"Now, I need to figure out what Michael is up to."

A dark chuckle draws our attention to the doorway opposite Lucifer. "Well, I think I can make that pretty easy on you. I knew you'd run to your mommy next. So predictable."

I bare my teeth, realizing this must be Michael. The man—make that angel—who killed my mate and her sister. I should take care of him now before he can do any further harm, but when no one else at the table moves, I remain standing against the wall, wondering what exactly is going on.

Chapter Six

Audrey

I want to snarl at Michael when he reappears, but I can't even hold on to my anger and annoyance with the man.

Rejected mate syndrome is no joke, and I'm over it.

"It's good to see you again, Lucifer—that is your preferred name now, isn't it?"

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Lucifer's lips curl back into a snarl. "It is. It's usually easier to use whatever name the mortals are using for me currently. Less confusion that way."

Michael nods. "I can understand that. I can't imagine using Hercules or Sigi now. The looks I would get, but that's not why I'm here. I was hoping you would come once you knew you had daughters. It's very hard for an angel to get an audience with you."

"There's a reason for that." Lucifer's face has evened out. His snarl is a thing of the past as he cocks an eyebrow. "There should be none of you earth-side, and all communication to Olympus is shut down. You have my attention now."

"It took a very long time for me to find a way out of Olympus and even longer to make it back that first time. I wasn't able to bring anyone with me, which made it harder to make plans, but you fathering these two fixed that problem for me. The angels are no longer trapped in Olympus. We can all now travel freely."

Lucifer's eyes narrow for a moment. "And what do my daughters have to do with that?"

Michael smirks. "The local witches here in Leyton have been very helpful, and they created a spell to unlock anything. It just required two great sacrifices. It turns out that the first two ever known three-quarter gods were perfect sacrifices. The lock on the gate shattered with Wren's mortal death. We've spent the last six months setting everything in motion."

When Michael doesn't continue, Lucifer leans forward. "Clearly, you want to tell me

what you have planned, so stop beating around the bush. I'm a busy man, Michael."

"I'm getting there. I'm sure you're curious about the gods. Don't worry, they're still safely sleeping. Even the strongest of gods can't overcome Hypnos's sleeping powers in large enough doses."

I frown at the same time as Lucifer—I honestly don't know if I'll ever be able to think of him as my dad. It's still weird as fuck.

Hypnos is one of the gods of the underworld and is still awake. Did he help the angels put the other gods to sleep? Why would he do that? What does he stand to gain from whatever plan the angels are set to enact?

"Don't worry, Lucifer. Your dear friend, Hypnos, had absolutely nothing to do with it." Michael laughs, and the sound sends shivers down my spine—and not in a good way. It's sinister and more than a little unnerving. "But he's a deep sleeper and never noticed the angels sneaking into his home and stealing away his powers a little at a time. It was harder for us to condense it into a powder form that we could use on the gods without them knowing. But where there's a will, there's a way. We just didn't expect them to lock us in Olympus with them. It delayed our plans but didn't stop them."

"And what are those plans?" I ask, voice flat. "I get that you're having your villain monologue or whatever, but if there's a point to this, then you should get to it."

Michael's head turns slowly toward me as he licks his lips. "I really do prefer you like this, Audrey. All emotionless and unfeeling. You would've been perfect at my side like this—until I had to sacrifice you, anyway."

Growls fill the air as my mates begin to stand, probably planning to beat the shit out of the angel. I can't blame them for wanting to do that, but that means we'll have to

wait even longer to find out what the hell he's up to.

With a flick of my wrist, shadows surround each of them and wind around them. They bind them to their seats—or the wall, in Nex's case, but I'm still not acknowledging his existence.

Having shadows do my bidding is a new development. I wasn't sure what would happen when I flicked my wrist, but I knew I could keep them where I wanted them with my powers.

How did I know that? I have no fucking clue.

“What the fuck, pretty girl?” Donovan's eyes flash with his hellhound as they meet mine.

“I want to know what Michael has to say, and that's never going to happen if you go after him,” is the only explanation I offer before returning my attention to the asshole angel.

Michael chuckles, his smirk only growing. “The things we could've done, baby. Oh, well.”

Disgust rises in my chest, there and gone in a moment, as I stare back at him blankly. Let him say whatever the hell he wants. It's not like it'll affect me now.

“I'm here to make a deal with you, Lucifer.” Michael finally tears his attention away from me. “Without the gods to interfere, we're going to destroy the mortals—humans and supernaturals alike. Once they're gone, we'll wake up the gods—eventually. I'm thinking about making this the angels' own little playground for a while. Maybe we'll even keep a few alive to play with. We'll see.”

“And what does that have to do with me?”

Michael glares at Lucifer, clearly not appreciating the fact that the god cut him off. “We’re not stupid, Lucifer—no matter how many gods have deigned to think of us as such. There are still six gods awake, and they all dwell in your domain. The plan was always to put as many of you to sleep as we could, but because we started with the other gods, we lost our chance. If you choose to go against us, it’ll make our lives harder. If you and the other gods are willing to stay out of our war on the mortals, then we’ll leave the underworld as it is.”

“And if we’re not willing to stay out of it?”

“Then be prepared to be wiped out. We’ll slaughter those you send to the battlefield. Then, we’ll take the war to the underworld. We’ll destroy the demons and every single soul resting there. Honestly, it’s what most of the angels want. They want to wipe out all existence of the mortals, but I’ve convinced them it’s in our best interest to allow the souls to remain—but only if the six of you remain out of our war.”

Lucifer leans back in his seat, rubbing his chin as he considers Michael.

There’s no way he’s actually considering this, is there?

What Michael is talking about is genocide.

I might not be able to feel much right now—at least not for long—but I don’t think I’ll have a problem ripping apart my new father if he’s willing to let the mortals die.

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They don't stand a chance against the angels. At least not the humans, who don't even know the supernatural world exists. Even the supernaturals would struggle because they're also mortal. It'll be a lot easier for the angels to kill them than it'll be for the mortals to kill the angels.

"You know...I just don't think I can stand by and watch you kill the mortals, Michael," Lucifer finally says, and I let out a sigh of relief. "I'm not really into the mass murdering of all species that aren't gods. Especially not when it's from demigods who have mommy and daddy issues because they don't feel like they got enough love. You can phrase it however you want, but this vendetta you have against mortals? It's pure and unadulterated envy. You're jealous."

Anger flashes in Michael's eyes as he scowls, turning his handsome features into something sinister. "I am not jealous of the mortals. We just don't see why so much effort is put into people who die in the blink of an eye. When they're gone, then the focus can be where it should be."

"You do realize you're part human, right?" I ask. "You're half mortal. By hating mortals, you hate yourself."

"Shut the fuck up, whore," Michael snarls. "You don't know what the hell you're talking about. Let the adults talk."

My lip curls up at the corner, knowing I hit the nail on the head. Too bad my satisfaction disappears in seconds.

Growls and curses spill from my mates as they struggle against my shadows' hold on

them.

“Are you sure this is what you want to choose, Lucifer?”

My dad nods. “Yes, Michael. I’ve never been more sure of anything in my life.”

“You’ll regret this when everything is said and done. Be prepared for you and your people to be wiped out, and remember, we offered you a way out of this.” Michael takes a step backward and then another.

“Oh, Michael. You’ve always thought highly of yourself, but this time, you’ve bitten off more than you can chew.” Lucifer shakes his head, standing slowly. “Come for us, Michael, and we’ll see who’s left standing at the end. I can assure you, it won’t be you.”

“I do love that the gods always underestimate us. We’re stronger than you know, and we have a few tricks up our sleeves.” Michael laughs again. “But I wouldn’t want to spoil the surprise. I know you’ll be scrambling to figure out what exactly we have planned, so I’ll even be sporting and give you a hint. We’ll strike within the next month.”

Lucifer lifts his hand, blue hellfire shooting across the room toward Michael, but he ducks out of the room. “I’ll be seeing you.”

A flap of wings and breaking of glass are the only sounds that follow his words as Lucifer pulls back his hellfire. The wall is completely untouched, surprising me. Usually, everything my hellfire touches is destroyed.

“Did he just fly through another window?” Wren asks with a frown. “Why not use the fucking door?”

Wraith snorts. “I’m assuming he likes the dramatics of destroying things. Now, troublemaker, could you release your shadows?”

Oh. Right. I did that.

I wave my hand toward them again, and the shadows fall away.

“That’s new,” Cassian comments dryly, and I shrug.

Lately, it feels like new powers pop up out of nowhere. At least I know why I’m so powerful now.

My eyes find Wren’s, and I wonder why I’m the only one able to access their powers. Wren should be just as powerful as I am, and yet, she’s still only able to access the fire magic that came from our mom.

“It seems like our girl’s powers are still coming in.” Donovan moves around the table and leans over so he’s in my face. “Never do that to me again. If you want to use them on me in the bedroom, I can get down with that, but never restrain me outside of that.”

“I’d say I’m sorry, but I’m not, so I won’t lie.” I meet his gaze, completely unfazed by his anger. I know he’s not going to hurt me. “I also can’t promise I won’t do it again, but I understand it upset you, and I will refrain from doing so whenever I can.”

Donovan’s eyes snarl. “Never again, pretty girl.”

I can’t give him what he wants, so I just shrug. I won’t lie to him.

“Personally, I have no desire to know what you do in the bedroom, so I’d prefer if you don’t mention it in my presence again.” Lucifer sounds disgusted, which is more

than a little amusing.

“Good luck with that.” Wren giggles. “I swear they’re always like this.”

Mom clears her throat. “I admit, I’m not sure I want to hear it either, but I’m very happy you’ve found your mates, Audrey. I didn’t get to say it earlier, but it’s nice to meet you all. Well, most of you.”

Mom’s eyes narrow at Nex—or at least I’m assuming that’s who she’s glaring at since I refuse to turn around. I don’t want to see him.

I wish he would just leave.

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But no matter how much I want that logically, my heart tugs at the idea of him being any further away from me than he is right now.

It's fucking bullshit.

My mates echo back my mom's sentiments, except Nex, who remains silent.

Returning my attention to Lucifer, I ask, "Why would he tell us he's going to attack within the month?"

"He's taunting us, and his ego is big enough that he truly believes we won't be able to stop them."

Gods, I hate that man—angel, whatever.

"Now what?"

Chapter Seven

Audrey

"Now, we start preparing for war." Lucifer shakes his head. "I'll need to get with the other gods, and we'll need to come up with a strategy. But that's not for you to worry about."

I scoff. "If you think I won't be fighting in this war, you're sadly mistaken, Lucifer."

“Me, too.” Wren nods, hands on her hips as she joins me.

Lucifer’s eyes find my mom. “Do you share their stubbornness with them?”

She grins. “I sure as fuck do. I want to be included in the plans. I know Olympus and the angels better than most of you. You might be gods, but I lived among them my entire life. I know how they work and how they think.”

He doesn’t look happy about it, but he agrees. “Fine. You’ll be an excellent asset for us.”

“We should be there for planning, too,” Wraith says, eyes moving to me. “You’ll need the horsemen, and you don’t know your daughter well enough yet to know she’ll be at those meetings whether you want her there or not. It would be easier on everyone if you just allowed them to join us from the start—including all of her mates.”

I knew I loved him. Plus, he’s right. I’d find a way in, and if Wren wants to join us, I’ll bring her along for the ride.

Then I realize he said all my mates. I don’t want Nex there, but that’s something I can bring up when he’s not in the room.

“I want Celeste and Diana there, too. Probably Melody and Warren as well.” When Lucifer opens his mouth to argue, I cut him off. “You’re going to need the reapers. Yes, they might be limited in what powers they have, but we’re going to need the numbers, aren’t we? I don’t know how many angels there are, but based on the stories we were taught earth-side, I’m going to assume gods weren’t great at keeping it in their pants.”

Lucifer sighs. “There are millions—even if every single angel doesn’t take part, there

are millions. There are more of them than I have demons. You're right. Wraith, we're going to need every last reaper you have to fight, including the ones that join the academy every day. Your curriculum will need to be adjusted to focus on combat and learning their magic. If they fight and don't die, then we'll make them into reapers once the war is won."

"You realize how many reapers that'll be, right? We're talking at least a thousand a day. Where are we going to keep them?" Wraith's eyes widen. "We don't have enough room on campus."

"Then we'll build more dorms. You tell me what you need, and I'll make it happen."

Wraith looks bewildered as he nods. "If that's what you want, but I don't know what I'm going to do with thirty thousand plus reapers in a month."

Lucifer waves off his concerns. "Your reapers will just have easier days. Or we can find another use for reapers and allow them to choose between the jobs we can offer them. We'll figure it out, but that's a problem for later."

None of that sounds like it's going to be easy, and I don't like the idea of Wraith having that much pressure on him. I'll do what I can to help carry that burden, as I'm sure my other mates will as well.

"But before all of that, I'd like to spend some time getting to know my daughters," Lucifer announces as shadows close around me and Wren.

I hear my mates letting their displeasure be known before all sound disappears. When the shadows lift away, we're somewhere else—some kind of living or sitting room with wingback chairs and a roaring fire.

"What the fuck?" Wren screeches, eyes flying around the room before landing on

Lucifer.

I sigh. My mates are going to be so pissed off. “Where are we?”

“We’re back in the underworld in my home.” Lucifer beams at us.

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“And why are we here? My mates will not be very happy about you absconding with me and Wren.”

Lucifer’s smile dims slightly. “I want to get to know the two of you. I’ve missed out on the last almost thirty years of your life, and I don’t want to miss out on any more of it.”

Wren scoffs. “Maybe ask next time?”

Our dad’s cheeks flush as he nods. “Uh. Yeah. I guess I can do that next time, but since you’re here, maybe we can spend some time together?”

He sounds so hopeful, and I don’t want to burst his bubble—even if I don’t have the bandwidth to do much of anything right now beyond just existing.

“Sure. Since we’re already here.” I force a smile, hoping it doesn’t look too pained. “This is where you live?”

He nods, offering each of us an arm. “Let me show you around the House of Hades.”

“The House of Hades? That’s the name you went with for your palace?” Wren snorts.

“I’m not exactly the one who named it.” His voice is gruff as he scowls. “I tried to get the demons to call it something else, but they wouldn’t. So here we are with a place called the House of Hades.”

I’ll admit that our father isn’t anything like I thought he would be. When you hear

stories about Lucifer, Hades, and pretty much any other underworld god, they're always talked about with fear. Usually, they're cast as the villains of the story. It's hard to reconcile the stories I've read and heard with the man who wants nothing more than to show his daughters around his home.

Speaking of stories I've read...

"I know you said most of the stories told by the mortals are wrong or only partially true, but as Hades, you've always been linked with Persephone. If you have a consort, why are you earth-side sleeping with mortals?"

Lucifer chuckles. "There are parts of that story that are accurate. I'll give the mortals that. I most certainly didn't trap her in the underworld. Why would I when she was here willingly? Seph and I were together for a long time, and we loved each other. But eventually, we were nothing more than friends, and neither of us saw a reason to stay together. We weren't fated mates or anything. Chosen mates, I think, is the term most commonly used now. Our children were grown, and we just went our separate ways.

"She was one of the last gods left awake, but she was fading when communication cut off with Olympus. She's the one who made sure the gates were closed. She couldn't prove it, but she was sure it was the angels doing and since no one knew what they were planning, she did what she could. This was well before I met your mother. I don't know how much she told you about our meeting."

"You mean the fact that you were nothing but a drunken one-night-stand?" Wren grins. "We know all about that. Don't worry. We don't think you just abandoned us or anything. She made sure we knew it was a one-time thing and that you never knew about us. How could you when she never saw you again?"

He groans. "That doesn't really make it sound any better, does it? It is what it is. If

Seph and I had still been together then, I never would've slept with your mother. I might have loose morals compared to some, but I would never cheat on a partner. When I make a commitment, I stand by it. If I had known about the two of you, I would've been there for you. But there's nothing any of us can do to change the past. So from here on out, I'll be here for you."

I consider that as he leads us down the hall, pointing out each room as we pass it.

"I don't know that I need a father," I admit.

His face falls, but he nods. "I understand. Then maybe I can be your friend."

I don't like how I feel about seeing his disappointment.

"We can start there and see how it goes." I hesitate. "This is probably the worst time you could've come into my life."

"The damned rejected mate syndrome." Lucifer shakes his head. "You should just let me kill him. It would fix the issue."

My heart drops into my stomach as I shake my head. "No. I don't want him dead."

I don't think...

"Then what do you want?"

I can feel both his and Wren's eyes on me as I stare forward. I don't know how to answer that because I have no idea what I want, so I choose to remain silent.

Eventually, he leads us into the massive kitchen with its top-of-the-line appliances. Wren lets out an excited squeal as she rushes ahead to check everything out. She

loves cooking, whereas I prefer not to. It was great when we lived together because she's an amazing cook. When I had to rely on myself to be fed, well, let's just say I ended up eating out or at my mom's a lot.

"I know you don't know me," Lucifer begins, and I snort. "Meeting your father as a grown woman can't be easy—especially not for you, since you're already going through something difficult—but I just want to help. You're going to need to make a decision about Nex—and soon. You don't want to go into a battle with this hanging over your head. You don't want to fight like this.

"The apathy you're feeling will be a detriment. It'll make you put yourself into dangerous situations without thinking about the possible consequences. I just found you, and I'm not ready to lose you. Think of your other mates and what it would do to them if they lost you."

"So, what? I should just forgive him or let you kill him? Neither of those options sound like ones I want to choose."

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He nods. “Of course not. I want to offer you another option. You can complete the mate bond with him without forgiving him. It might be hard to live with being bonded to someone you can’t trust, but it’s better than the alternatives. I’m not saying you need to make a decision now, but I wanted to make sure you had all the options available to you.”

“Please tell me we can cook something,” Wren begs as she rushes over to join us. “I’m starving, and I have to cook in this kitchen. And don’t tell me it sits here and is never used, or you’ll break my heart.”

Lucifer chuckles. “I enjoy cooking from time to time, and my chef uses it when I’m not. I promise I didn’t add it just to look good. Why don’t we cook something together?”

When his questioning gaze lands on me, Wren laughs. “Yeah, it’s probably better if Audrey just watches. She doesn’t have the patience to cook.”

“It’s true.” I shrug. It’s not like I have a problem admitting to my faults. Or at least some of them.

I don’t mind waiting for someone else to cook me a delicious meal, but I hate having to be patient while being the one doing the cooking. I can pop something pre-made into the oven and warm it up with no problems, but if I have to stand in the kitchen waiting for something to sauté?

Yeah, it’s probably going to end up burned because I bumped up the heat and scorched it.

“Well, that’s just fine. You can sit at the island, and we can chat while Wren and I do the cooking.”

And that’s exactly what we do. The two of them have a blast, and I can see the two of them growing closer in front of my eyes. Part of me is jealous, but as with every other emotion beyond the despair of the rejected bond, it doesn’t last long.

They put together a garlicky pasta that’s divine, and at least my appetite isn’t affected by the damn rejected mate syndrome.

Once we’re done eating, Lucifer glances at the time and groans. “I guess I should get you back to the academy. I’m surprised your mates haven’t come crashing through my front door yet.”

I try to cover up my yawn as I nod. “That sounds good. I think I need some sleep, anyway.”

“Then, off we go.”

Shadows wrap around me, and a moment later, I’m standing in my living room with my glaring mates. Not that they’re glaring at me but at Lucifer.

“Thank you for showing us your home and cooking with me,” Wren says as she wraps her arms around Lucifer, who looks shocked before he hugs her close.

His eyes meet mine over her shoulder. I can see he knows I won’t be giving him a hug, which is good. I don’t know how differently I would react to getting to know him if I was myself, and I wish things could be different.

Just because I don’t need a dad doesn’t mean I don’t want one.

I just can't right now. Something I think he understands.

"I brought my daughters back in one piece." Lucifer smirks as his eyes rove over my mates—including Nex.

Ugh. Why is he still here? Can't he get a hint?

"I appreciate you not breaking down my front door to find her," he continues.

Wraith nods. "If you'd kept her much longer, I don't think I could've held them back. You'll let us know when you'll be meeting with the others?"

"I will. Good night."

Just like that, he's gone.

I turn to Wren with a tired sigh. "Do you want me to shadow walk you back to your dorm?"

"No, I could use the fresh air." She starts for the door, hesitating. "I guess I won't be staying in the dorms anymore since I graduated."

Wraith's smile is tight. "Usually, you'd be given a week off and moved into one of the reaper buildings. I'm not sure how we're going to handle everything, but for now, stay in your dorm. We'll worry about that tomorrow or the day after. There are a lot of changes coming, and I need to figure out how to make it work before worrying about where graduates are going to stay."

"Perfect. Thank you, Wraith. I'll see all of you tomorrow."

Then it's just me and my mates—including the unwanted one.

Fuck. I really just want to go to bed.

Chapter Eight

Brenden

I'm glad that Audrey is back. I didn't like her being so far from me—especially since I didn't have any idea where she actually was. Wraith, Cassian, and Donovan might have, but they didn't seem to want to share that information.

It was probably for the best. Storming the devil's house wouldn't have been the best idea.

Stepping around the others, I pull Audrey into my arms and bury my face in her neck.

Not only did I miss her, but Nex has been here the whole time since we returned to the underworld.

He tried to speak to me a few times, but Audrey's other mates were having none of it. They allowed him to stay, but on the caveat that he left me alone. While I've felt his eyes on me the entire time, he hasn't tried to speak to me since he was given the ultimatum.

That hasn't made it any easier to be in the same room as him, but it is what it is.

This isn't the first time in my life I've felt void of emotions, and it might not be the last. Audrey and I have spoken about how she feels, and I know all she feels is anguish with other emotions popping up for a moment or two before sinking beneath the cloud of gloom.

I felt the same way at first, but I also know how to turn off my emotions. It's harder now that Audrey is in my life because I want to feel the love I have for her and the comradery that I feel with her other mates, but the misery I was in was sending me spiraling.

I found myself thinking about tearing Donovan's throat out after he pulled Audrey away from me. And when I say thinking about, I mean I was imagining it in vivid imagery. My cock was hard at the thought of spilling all that blood.

I'm sure Monty, my old therapist, would say that's unhealthy, but you know what else is unhealthy? Killing another of Audrey's mates. She would never forgive me for that, and I wouldn't be able to hold it against her. I'm not sure I would've been able to forgive myself. It's better to feel nothing than to risk hurting someone Audrey or I love.

Even with my ability to shut off my emotions, I still sense them there at the back of my mind. They're heavy and overwhelming, fighting against the box I buried them inside. It won't take much for them to spring free and send them rushing through me.

"Are you okay?" she asks, clinging to me just as hard as I'm holding her.

"It's not me I'm worried about," I admit, just as quietly in return. "My emotions are contained. Yours, on the other hand, are not. We can make him leave."

She sighs. "But then he'll just come back, won't he? Now that he knows there's no curse?"

"You act as if we can't hear you," Nex says quietly, and I heave out a breath as I tear myself away from Audrey.

"So what if you can? The polite thing to do is to not listen," I snarl, flashing him my

fangs.

Another downfall to locking down my emotions is I'm a lot more bloodthirsty and a whole lot more impatient. I want to rip out his throat and end Audrey's suffering, but she'd told her dad—fucking Lucifer—that she didn't want him dead. I'm fairly certain that means I also can't kill him.

Nex grimaces, dropping his gaze from us. "I know none of you want me here, but I need to talk to the two of you. I need you to understand—"

"Understand that now you want us?" Audrey shakes her head. "Honestly, I couldn't care less. You left us after telling us you were going to stop fighting it. You broke us, and now you want us to let you back in? Did you really think it would be that easy?"

I hate hearing Audrey's voice so devoid of emotion. She's always been passionate about everything, and now, it's almost like she lacks life. I could deal with the hurt he caused me if he hadn't hurt her.

I might not want to admit that he broke me, but she's right—he shattered both of us and now we're forever changed.

Nex's head drops as he lowers himself to his knees. "I know I don't deserve you—either of you—but I truly am sorry for how I handled everything. If I would've just gone to Lucifer instead of punishing myself again for something I did lifetimes ago...Just know I was hurting myself just as badly as I was hurting you."

"Doubtful," Cassian all but snarls, surprising me. It's clear the fallen angel loves our mate, but of all of us, he's been the best at keeping his cool when dealing with Nex. I was too wrapped up in my obsession with him to see anything clearly.

All I wanted was to make him mine like Audrey was mine.

“I’m done fighting against the fated mate bonds with the two of you,” Nex continues as if Cassian never spoke. “I’ll prove to both of you that I’m not going anywhere. I don’t care if it takes thousands of years for you to forgive me—or even if you never forgive me—but I’m not going anywhere. I’ll be whatever you need me to be. If you need me to be your whipping boy, I’ll gladly do so. And when this war with the angels comes, I’ll be fighting at your side—where I belong, even if I don’t deserve it.”

“And if all I want you to do is leave me alone? Then what, Nex?” Audrey brushes her hand against mine with a heavy sigh. “I’m tired, and I’m going to bed. You should go home. From the sounds of it, we’ll need all the help we can get in the coming war, so I won’t turn away your help with that. But that doesn’t mean I want you around me. It doesn’t mean I want to see you or even hear you. I want you to leave me alone.”

Without another glance at any of us, she heads upstairs.

Nex’s head follows her progression until he can no longer see her, then his head falls forward once more.

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Deciding I don't want anything to do with him right now either, I take a step toward the stairs, intending to follow my mate. His head snaps up, his eyes imploring me, and I fucking hate it.

"Please, Brenden," he begs. "If you listen to me, then she will. I know I fucked up. I know I have a lot to make up for, but if she won't even allow me to be around her, then I can't do that. Help me, please. Let me make it up to you and to her."

I shake my head. "Begging the other person you broke to help you is a little desperate, Nex. Until Audrey says otherwise, you're to stay away from her. Beseeking me to help you will not go the way you think it will. Audrey's the only person who matters in this situation. What she says goes. Whatever decision she comes to, I'll stand behind. I won't jeopardize my relationship with her for anything or anyone. That's something you never understood.

"Without Audrey, there was never going to be anything between the two of us. When I still thought you were redeemable, I allowed things to grow between us, but I don't care that we're fated mates. I don't care that you rejected me. I care that you hurt her—that you broke her. If she never forgives you, then neither will I. Maybe try begging one of her other mates for help, but I don't think you'll find a warmer welcome with them."

Tears stream down Nex's face, and I tilt my head as I watch him. I don't think he's faking, which is interesting but changes nothing.

"Please, Brenden..."

“No.” I march over to him, jerking his head up by the chin until he meets my eyes. “You will stay away from Audrey and me. You won’t be given another chance to hurt her. If she decides she wants you back, then and only then will I consider it. She is my world, and you tried to break her. There’s no world in which I can be okay with that.”

Releasing him, I step back as he collapses to the floor, sobs wracking his body.

It’s kind of pathetic if you ask me.

I glance over my shoulder to find Cassian, Donovan, and Wraith watching me warily.

“I’m joining Audrey. I’ll run us a bath so she can relax, and then we’re going to sleep. Make sure he’s gone before you join us. I don’t trust him in the house while we’re sleeping.”

Wraith nods. “I’ll make sure it’s done.”

“Good.”

I don’t bother glancing at the sobbing incubus again as I stalk across the floor toward the stairs. The sounds follow me up the stairs, and I know I should care that I caused him pain, but I can’t.

Not only can’t I feel anything, but after the way he’s hurt Audrey, he deserves to hurt. He’ll be lucky if he makes it out of this alive if he continues to bother my firecracker with his presence.

She might not want him dead now, but that could change at any moment. I’ll gladly take care of him for her—fated mate or not, Audrey will always be my number one priority.

I might have told Nex that I would stand behind whatever decision she makes—and I will—if she chooses to forgive him, I don't know if I can.

But that's a worry for another day.

Now, I want to help my firecracker relax and unwind before bed. Everything else can wait until morning.

Chapter Nine

Audrey

“Nothing here either,” Cassian says with a huff before another book hits the table.

I snort, rolling my eyes. “Lucifer already told us that there were only three ways to remedy rejected mate syndrome. I don't know why you keep looking through books that are just going to tell you the same damn thing.”

“Lucifer doesn't know everything,” Donovan argues, and I shrug.

That might be true. I have no idea. I've met my father once and spent a few hours with him. I'm definitely not the best judge of what he might or might not know. But it feels like he was telling the truth.

Brenden's arms tighten around me, and I bury my face in his neck.

Neither of us are doing well.

It's been over two days since we last saw Nex. I don't know if the others said something to him after I left or if he's just taking me at my word, but he hasn't shown his face since then. I also know that's going to change.

Lucifer called this morning to let us know the first war council was being held tonight. I wish he would've given us a few more details before hanging up on my mate, but I get the feeling he does nothing he doesn't want to do.

I run my nose along Brenden's neck before nipping at his skin. I'm not trying to start anything with him—let's just say that being rejected by your mate puts a damper on your libido—I'm just trying to get a reaction out of him. Something. Anything.

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He's completely shut down, and I don't just mean his emotions. He has eaten nothing in the last two days and has been refusing blood for just as long. He won't even feed from me, which is unlike him.

All he does is cling to me as he stares off into space. He barely responds when anyone speaks to him—even me.

The worst part is that I'm in no place to help him through this. Unlike him, I can't just cut off my emotions. I can't stop losing myself in the abyss of desolation inside of me.

Most mornings, all I want to do is stay in bed and sleep. I know my other mates are worried about us, but I just can't seem to pull myself out of this.

When I was alive, I dealt with a few bouts of depression, but I was one of the lucky ones. It was never there for long, and I could still function. This is nothing like that.

I would love nothing more than for it to stop.

Another heavy sigh leaves me when I realize Brenden isn't going to respond.

I don't know what else to do. If I felt up to it, I'd suck his cock and see if that would get a response out of him. Maybe I can work myself up to that.

I'm a terrible fucking mate.

“Wraith, you texted Celeste, Diana, Melody, and Warren, right?” I ask, even though

he's already assured me at least ten times that they'll be there.

"Yes, Audrey. I texted them. They'll be there." Wraith apparently has endless patience because not an ounce of annoyance slips into this tone.

I hum, trying to sit up, but Brenden's hold only tightens. Giving up, I lay back down on top of him and suck his scent into my lungs. We're laid out on the couch in the living room while Donovan, Wraith, and Cassian pour over books, looking for another way to cure rejected mate syndrome.

I know they're not going to find anything—even if I have no idea how I know that. I wish they would just listen to me and give up.

"Do you need help getting up, little mate?"

I turn my head to find Cassian kneeling beside me. "No. I'll stay here as long as Brenden needs me. Or until we have to go to the meeting. How much longer?"

Cassian glances at his watch and makes a face. "We should actually head out soon. Wraith, the meeting is starting in ten minutes."

"Damn it!" Donovan hurls a book into the wall, and if I hadn't watched it happen, I would've jumped at the loud thump it makes when it hits. "Why can't we find anything?"

"Because there's nothing to find, Donovan," I tell him gently. "But it's okay. For now, we need to get ready for this meeting. I don't think Lucifer is going to appreciate me showing up in booty shorts and a crop top."

Cassian grins. "He might not, but I'd love to see his face if you did."

Wraith slaps him on the back of the head before leaning over. “Brenden, can you please let Audrey up? We need to get ready for the war council meeting.”

Instead of answering, Brenden’s arms fall away and Cassian helps me off him. He leads me toward the stairs, and when I glance back, I see Wraith and Donovan helping Brenden stand as well.

Tears prickle at the back of my eyes. I hate seeing him like this.

I blink, and the tears are gone. I force my head forward to watch where I’m going so Cassian doesn’t have to do all the work for me.

When he sits me on our bed and ducks into the closet, I know he’ll pull out clothes for all of us. All I have to do is stay right here and make sure I don’t lose myself to the anguish that’s always trying to pull me down.

Pain hits me square in the chest when I see Brenden being led into the room. He doesn’t even look at me as they sit him beside me on the bed.

I have to make this right for him. I can’t live like this. I don’t want to live like this. And I certainly don’t want to lose my mate because of it.

Maybe it’s time to really consider what Lucifer said the other night.

Can I complete the bond with Nex without forgiving him? Or will it tear me apart even more?

A glance at Brenden has me steeling my resolve. It doesn’t matter if it’ll hurt me more. This is no way to live, and I want my mate back—all of my mates.

Not Nex, though.

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If I bond with him, he'll be a mate in name only.

Decision made, hope rises in me for a moment and then two before being sucked down beneath the sorrow.

Cassian has to help me dress because I don't have the energy to do it myself. It takes both Donovan and Wraith to dress Brenden, and I know I've made the right decision. No matter what comes of it, I'm going to do whatever I have to in order to bring Brenden back to me.

My mating with Nex won't be enough. Somehow, I'll need to get through to Brenden so he can agree to mate with him as well. Although, I believe their bond started the night we shared with the other man. Maybe all I need is for Nex to complete the bond with him.

As much as I'm horrified by the idea—even though it only lasts a few seconds—I think I need to talk to Lucifer more about this. Maybe I can do that after the meeting.

“Do you think you can shadow walk and bring me with you, little mate?” Cassian's face appears in front of mine, and I blink up at him.

“What?”

Cassian's smile is strained, and I can see the worry in his eyes. “Donovan and Wraith are going to take Brenden with them, but I can't shadow walk. Can you take me with you?”

I nod. “Of course.”

He pulls me to my feet, and I link our fingers together before stepping into the shadows. I might not know the exact location of the room we’re meeting in, but I know it’s at the palace—which I will not be calling the House of Hades. I don’t care what the demons call it, but I won’t be using that name. It’s ridiculous.

When we step out of the shadows, we’re in the kitchen.

Cassian looks around with a frown. “Something tells me this isn’t where we’re meeting.”

“It’s not.” Lucifer’s booming voice bounces off the walls as he walks in with Wren at his side.

Well, shit. I hadn’t thought about how my sister was going to get here.

Not only am I a shitty mate, but I’m also a shitty sister.

“I thought you might end up here,” Lucifer says with a soft smile, reaching out to shake Cassian’s hand. “Cassian, do you remember where the war council room is?”

Cassian glances between me and my father before nodding. “I do.”

“Excellent. If you’ll head up there, I’d like a moment to speak with my daughters.”

Cassian’s eyes lock with mine. “Audrey?”

I wave him off. “Go ahead. I need to speak with him about something, anyway.”

“If you’re sure.” He kisses the top of my head before stepping away. “I’ll see you

soon. I love you.”

“Love you, too,” I echo back, mostly out of habit. I do love him, but it’s hard to remember that right now. Or maybe remember is the wrong word.

As soon as Cassian is gone, Wren turns to me with narrowed eyes. “And what do you need to speak with him about?”

When I don’t respond, Lucifer chuckles. “Can I assume that this has to do with what we spoke about?”

I nod, keeping my eyes locked on Wren. She knows I’m keeping something from her, and that hurts her, but there’s no way I’m talking to him about this with her here.

My sister loves me, but she wouldn’t approve. I don’t need her trying to talk me out of what I need to do.

“Wren, why don’t you head up to the meeting room so I can talk with Audrey?”

My twin crosses her arms over her chest, and I know she’s about to lose her shit.

“Wren.” Lucifer’s voice is stern as he waits for her to look at him. “You and Audrey are close, but that doesn’t mean you get to know everything that’s going on with her. Just like she doesn’t get to know everything that’s going on with you. If she wants you to know, she’ll talk to you about it, but right now, she’s not ready. It’s not fair of you to expect that she is.”

My sister’s face falls as she nods. “Of course. You’re right. I’m sorry, Ree.”

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She gives me a tight hug before disappearing down the long hallway.

When I open my mouth to speak, he holds up his hand as his head tilts to the side. Finally, he nods. “Okay, she went where she was supposed to. What can I do for you?”

“I’ve decided you’re right. I’m going to complete the mate bond with Nex. We’ll deal with everything else later, but right now, I’m worried about Brenden. I think they have a one-sided bond right now because Brenden bit him...” I trail off, not wanting to talk to my dad about one of my mates railing the other.

Lucifer grimaces. “I think I get the idea. It’s hitting him harder?”

I shrug. “I don’t know. He told me he was locking away his emotions—whatever that means—so he could be there for me. But since you revealed there was never a curse, he’s eaten nothing—not even blood. He’s stopped responding when we speak to him.”

“I’m sure he thought locking away his emotions would help, but it’s possible it made things worse. Especially if he has a one-sided bond.” Lucifer shakes his head. “I’m going to kill that demon.”

“No,” I blurt out. “No killing Nex.”

Lucifer rolls his eyes. “Fine, okay. Maybe some light torture? A little maiming.”

My hand goes to my chest as pain flares there as if pushing on it will ease it. “No.”

“Shit. I’m sorry. Of course. No threatening the asshole. Got it.” He makes a face. “I’ll talk with him after the meeting and see if there is a partial bond.”

“That’s great and all, but what if I can’t get Brenden to agree to bond with Nex?”

“Then you’re going to have to tell Nex to do it, regardless. I know that’s not what you want to hear, but if Brenden cannot consent, you’re going to have to decide for him.”

Yeah, I don’t like that at all. Can I force a bond on Brenden that he might not want?

“We’ll figure this out, Audrey.” Lucifer pulls me into his side, and for some reason, I believe him.

Is this what it means to have a dad? To have someone always in your corner?

Will he always be in my corner, though? Only time will tell.

“Come on, let’s get to the meeting before your mates come looking for you.”

I allow Lucifer to lead me down the hallway to the room where we’re meeting, wondering if I really have what it takes to get this done.

Chapter Ten

Audrey

The room is already full when Lucifer leads me inside. There are more than a few unknown faces. I guess they’re the other gods, but I count at least seven unfamiliar faces, so I don’t know who the others are.

The room itself isn’t anything special. It looks like every boardroom I’ve ever set foot

in—which isn't many, I'll admit. There's a long table with seats lining each side and one at both the head and foot of the table.

"Wren?" Lucifer calls, grabbing my sister's attention and holding his arm out to her. "I know introductions need to be made, and I'd like to start with my daughters. Yes, I know, I have daughters? What? Surprise!"

Wren snickers as she ducks under his arm, but her face grows serious as she meets my gaze.

"Are you okay?" She mouths, and I nod—even if it's a complete lie. There's really no way I can talk to her about this now. Not knowing what I might have to do to Brenden.

"This is Audrey and Wren. They're twins, and before you ask, we do not know how they came about—besides the obvious. Their mother is an angel who's been hiding earth-side. She's at the back of the room there. Ana?"

Mom lifts her hand and waves, looking highly uncomfortable with everyone's attention on her.

Lucifer seems to realize that and clears his throat. "That's a story for another time, though. If you'll all take your seats, we can begin the introductions and get the meeting started."

"Lucifer, I don't know why they're all here," one of the women says. She's tall, close to six feet, if I had to guess, with alabaster skin and dark, flowing black hair. When her eyes glance between my sister and me, I see that they're just as black. She's beautiful but also kind of terrifying as she glides toward the chair beside what I'm guessing is Lucifer's. She's clothed in a black cloak that covers her skin from neck to toe, leaving only her face bare.

“I’ll get to that, Nyx. Please, just sit for now. I know this is strange for all of us, but I promise to explain everything.”

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The others slowly settle into their seats, with my mom sitting at the far end of the table with two empty seats beside her. Brenden, Cassian, Donovan, and Nex sit on one side of the table, while Wraith sits with the horsemen on the other side. Beside them, I'm surprised to see the ferryman. His dark cloak is still pulled over his head, but he nods toward me when my eyes pause on him.

Shaking my head, I find Celeste at his side with a strange woman beside her. Opposite them are Diana, Melody, and Warren. Beside them are two men and then Nyx, whose name I recognize. She's the goddess of the night. I believe she's the goddess most vampires follow—if they even believe that the gods exist. So many people in the world have stopped believing in the gods.

Which isn't important right now, is it?

I turn my gaze to the opposite side of the table to find two men surrounding a woman. Four of these unfamiliar faces must be the remaining gods.

“As I'm sure you picked up, this is Nyx, the goddess of the night. Beside her is her consort, Erebus, the god of darkness and shadows. On his other side is Cerberus—”

“Cerberus?” I ask, cutting him off. “As in the three-headed dog that guards the entrance to the underworld?”

The man in question lifts his brows as he smirks. “Do I look like I have three heads?”

Tell me why my eyes fall to the table hiding his crotch. At least I don't blush since the embarrassment is there and gone again.

Cerberus throws his head back as he laughs. His brown hair is thick and falls down his back like a lion's mane. He's not classically handsome like most of the other men in this room, but that doesn't make him any less attractive. "I like the way you think—Audrey, was it?"

"Yes."

Not daring to meet his eyes, I run my eyes over Erebus instead. Whereas Nyx's skin is pale, Erebus's is as dark as her hair. His hair is a shocking white as it spills over his shoulder and down his back. His eyes are the palest blue, almost white, and as soon as they meet mine, I tear my gaze away.

I'm not going to lie. Meeting gods is intimidating as hell.

"Cerberus is the guardian of hell and he does guard the gates into hell, but it's not just him. He's a hellhound shifter like your mate but bigger." Lucifer points to the woman at Celeste's side. "That's Meg. She's one of the furies. I know what you're going to say, and no, they're not gods. They're demigods like the angels. They've just chosen a different path."

"A path of vengeance, rage, and anger," Meg says with a smirk as she brushes her blonde hair over her shoulder. "You would've made a fine addition to our numbers, Audrey, if you'd been born with a little more mortal blood."

I need to remember not to fuck with her or the other furies. She's terrifying.

"Beside her is Thanatos, the god of death, Hecate, the goddess of magic and witchcraft, and last, we have Hypnos, the god of sleep. Since there are no modern gods based on them, they've chosen to stick with their Greek aliases."

I barely allow myself time to glance at them before my eyes find the floor once more.

“Of course you already know Charon.” Lucifer pauses. “Audrey, would you like to introduce your friends and mates?”

Fuck no, I don’t want to introduce them. Why does he want me to draw more attention to myself? I pull up my big girl panties and do what he asks.

“On the other side of Cerberus are Warren, Melody, and Diana. Diana and I were in the same class at the academy. Celeste, who’s beside Charon, was also in our class. The three of us were placed in the same dorm and remained close. Wraith, or Death, is one of my mates. I’m sure you’ve met him and Donovan. And probably Cassian, as he is one of the judges. Brenden’s my vampire reaper mate. Then there’s Nex.”

I glance up at Lucifer to find him smiling. “Thank you. Why don’t you take your seats beside your mom while I explain what’s going on?”

I want to scurry to my seat as the weight of the gods’ gazes sits on me, but I don’t have the energy for that. Instead, I plod my way over with Wren at my side. I take the seat beside Brenden while Wren moves around to sit beside Wraith.

Lucifer is still standing, filling everyone in on what’s been happening over the last few days, and I kind of tune out. It’s not like I don’t already know what happened—I was there for most of it.

My head lifts when someone takes my hand, and I look over at my mom, who’s frowning at me.

“Are you okay, honey?” she whispers.

It’s a whole lot harder lying to her than it is to Wren, so I shrug.

“Not really, but there’s nothing anyone can do about it.” I hesitate. “But thank you.”

Mom doesn't look convinced, but why would she? It's not like I told her I was fine. I admitted I wasn't, so of course, she's going to worry.

“So the angels are rebelling? Isn't that quaint?” Meg snorts. “And the furies are the ones with the bad name. Make it make sense.”

“We all know that most of the angels are pompous jackasses who have their heads stuck so far up their asses that they can't find their way out.” Cerberus chuckles. “There's no way they're all working together.”

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Lucifer cocks an eyebrow. “You don’t think so? After being locked together in Olympus for thousands of years? You don’t think they jumped at the first chance to escape their prison? Even if it meant working with others?”

Erebus pats the other man’s hand. “I can see how that would be unbelievable to someone who hasn’t had many interactions with them, but most of them were pampered by their parents. Made to think they were more than what they were. Being locked away and unable to do anything about it would’ve sent them into a frenzy. And we all know how charming Michael can be. He might not have fooled most of us, but the other gods saw what they wanted to see.”

“He shouldn’t have been earth-side,” Nyx muses. “If he found a way to leave, then we have to take his threats seriously. It’s not hard to believe that the angels would want to wipe out the mortals. At least not to me.”

“Nor me,” Hecate says with a nod.

Hypnos leans forward. “They truly snuck in and stole my powers? They couldn’t have taken much from me at a time, or I would’ve noticed. That would’ve taken a lot of planning, and it explains why no one could wake them. It’s possible we might never be able to wake them, depending on how much of my powers they used. It’s something most of the gods feared and why they shunned me.”

“That’s all good and well,” I say, annoyed that they’re still discussing if this is a genuine threat or not. Why wouldn’t they just believe Lucifer? He was there. “But what are we going to do about it? How are we going to stop them?”

All eyes find me once again, and I immediately regret my decision to speak up.

Meg leans forward, sniffing in my direction.

“Oh, a rejected mate bond. That’s why you’re the way you are. Interesting.” Her eyes rove over my mates, stopping on Nex as she smirks. “Very interesting, indeed.”

She’s really freaking me out.

My eyes lift to Lucifer, who’s laughing as he shakes his head. “Oh, daughter, you’ll come to learn that you can’t force gods to work at the pace you want them to. They usually get there, but they sure do love to take their time.”

“We don’t have time for that!” I slam my hand into the table before slumping forward, the momentary frustration leaving me feeling exhausted. “He said we have less than a month. None of you are mortal, and I understand I’m not either, but I was raised among them. They deserve to be saved, and we don’t have enough time for all of you to argue if the threat is real or not. It is.”

Thanatos turns, staring at me for a moment before nodding. “The three-quarter blood is right. This isn’t something we can debate for hours. I might be the god of death, but I don’t want to see the annihilation of all mortals. We need to figure out what their plan is and how we can circumvent it.”

The table falls silent as everyone looks around at each other.

This is getting us nowhere.

I lay my head on the table, startling when Brenden’s arm wraps around me and pulls me into his lap. He maneuvers me around until I’m resting my head on his chest, practically lying across his chest. I attempt to meet his eyes to see if he’s finally

rejoined the land of the living—or nonliving as it may be—but he won't look down at me. A glance at Wraith has him shaking his head, and I sigh.

I need my mate back with me—and soon.

My back is to the rest of the room, so all I can see is Mom, Wren, and Wraith, but I wish I could see Nex. I have to figure out how to complete this bond with him.

Unfortunately, this isn't something I'm going to be able to keep from my other mates. I'm going to have to let them know what I intend to do and hope they'll support me. If they don't, I'm going to have to move forward, anyway.

Gods, I really hope they'll support my decision.

Burying my face in Brenden's chest, I allow my eyes to fall shut. I can't talk to them about it until after this stupid ass meeting, so I might as well rest while I can.

This is going to be a hard conversation, and I need to make sure I have enough energy to make it through the entire thing.

With that thought in mind, I feel myself drifting off to sleep as the others talk around me, safe in my mate's arms.

Chapter Eleven

Donovan

Staring down at Audrey's sleeping form, I finally allow myself to let the worry sink in.

I have no idea what I can do to help her and Brenden. Audrey seems to be fighting a

losing battle with her emotions, and Brenden is practically catatonic at this point.

And it's all Nex's fault.

All I want to do is kill him for the pain he's caused the pair of them, but that wouldn't help either of them.

After Audrey fell asleep in Brenden's arms at the war council meeting last night, we hadn't been able to wake her. I'd carried her home and left the others to deal with Brenden. I'm so afraid she will not wake up this morning, but I can't voice those concerns.

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We're all worried, and I'm not going to make it worse if no one else has had the same thoughts as me.

Wraith and Cassian are already up, crawling out of bed about an hour ago. Wraith is still working on a plan for the academy and how it'll be run over the next few weeks. He's worked most of it out, but there are still a few details to be ironed out. Building of new dorms will commence tomorrow, with Lucifer coming himself to help.

Cassian also still has a job to do, so he headed to Ephonia to judge the souls awaiting him and the other judges. He won't be gone too long, but it usually takes them a few hours to get through all the souls from the previous day.

Even in sleep, Brenden clings to Audrey, and she to him.

I want to be the one to comfort her, but I have no idea what I can say to make any of this any better.

Brenden's the only one who understands what she's going through, and he's too lost to do much good.

It's so fucking frustrating. I run my hand through my platinum blond hair, gripping the ends in irritation.

Shuffling beside me has me dropping my hands and forcing a smile to my lips as Audrey rolls over to blink up at me.

"Everything okay, Donovan?" Her voice is husky with sleep, and my cock hardens

with just that one sound.

Not now, asshole.

As much as I'd love to make love to my mate, she's in no mood for that. I've considered trying to seduce her to make her feel something besides the despair that seems to run rampant through her, but with just one look at her vibrant green eyes, I always know it won't work.

She's too hurt. Too broken.

"Of course, pretty girl. Why wouldn't everything be okay?" I wince at the sarcasm lacing my words. I've been doing such a good job of keeping my bitterness locked down, and now I'm just laying it all out there for her to see.

That's not going to help her.

She frowns, reaching up to cup my cheek. "It's okay to be frustrated, Donovan. This sucks. We all know it. I actually want to talk to all of you about an idea I have, actually."

I hate the way she speaks now—we all do. I hate that this is happening to her.

"Wraith is in his office, working out the last of the kinks in his plan for the academy. But Cassian is in Ephonia with the other judges. I don't know when he'll be back." Not knowing what else to do, I pull her into my lap and wrap my arms around her.

"It can wait." She sighs as she lays her head on my shoulder, clinging to me just as hard as I am to her.

Brenden scoots across the bed, his hand closing around Audrey's ankle. His eyes are

still closed, and I think he's still sleeping. It's like he can't help himself from reaching out to her at all times.

Audrey's vampire mate has never been normal in the head and is more than a little obsessed with our mate—which I don't think is a bad thing. But it's gotten worse since Nex abandoned them.

We sit there for a few minutes in silence before she pulls back. "I need a shower. So does Brenden. Will you help me?"

"Of course." How can I tell my mate no? Even if it means helping the vampire get clean. It's not like it's the first time I've seen him naked, nor will it be the last.

I always hoped I would get to share a mate with Wraith, so sharing isn't a new concept for me. I just didn't expect to have to share with others—besides Cassian. That was a happy surprise.

But I'm not interested in Brenden like that, so I wasn't sure how I'd feel about sharing our mate. It turns out I don't have to be sexually attracted to the man fucking my mate to be turned on. It just gets me hot seeing her fucked and being pleased. I might prefer to take part, but I also don't mind watching.

New kinks have been unlocked, that's for sure.

Shaking my head, I push away thoughts of anyone fucking Audrey. If I don't get my thoughts under control, then my dick is going to stay hard.

Audrey leans over and shakes Brenden until his eyes pop open. He gazes up at her with adoration, but his eyes quickly glaze over. Audrey's frustration is clear in the sigh she releases as I help her get Brenden out of bed.

I know she keeps hoping that he'll just wake up one day and be himself, but I doubt that's going to happen. I'm afraid that if we don't resolve this situation, this might be all we get from Brenden, which would break my mate's heart even more.

Fucking Nex.

I want to hate the guy, but part of me understands why he did what he did.

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Okay, maybe not sleeping with them, then abandoning them. That was all kinds of fucked up, and if Audrey and Brenden ever choose to forgive him, I hope he realizes he'll have to prove to the rest of us that nothing like this will ever happen again.

Within a few minutes, all three of us are naked and in the shower. There's nothing I can do to hide my erection, but Audrey doesn't pay it any mind as we wash Brenden before cleaning one another. It makes for a longer shower, but I don't mind. It means more time with my love.

Once we're done, I lead the two of them downstairs to the kitchen so I can make us some food and shoot off a text to Cassian and Wraith to let them know Audrey has something she wants to discuss with us.

Audrey picks at her food but manages to eat most of it, while Brenden doesn't even touch his. I have no idea how long a vampire can go without food or blood, but I'm worried about him. I know Audrey is too. She might not be showing many emotions right now, but her eyes rarely leave him when he's in the room.

We have to figure something out, and fast. I don't want to think about what losing Brenden would do to my pretty girl.

"Sorry," Wraith calls as he steps into the room. "I was almost done, and I knew Cassian would take a little longer, so I finished up everything before coming down. Anything from him yet?"

I tilt my head when I hear the front door open and close. "Pretty sure that's him."

“It is,” Cassian confirms as he joins us. He heads straight for Audrey, kissing her before doing the same to me, then hesitates in front of Wraith.

This is something else I hate—the hesitation between the two of them. They want to be together—I know they do—but they’re trying so hard to make sure they don’t end up fighting. It’s getting harder and harder for them the longer Audrey is affected by the rejected mate syndrome.

“Can you all sit down, please?” Audrey asks, breaking the standoff between Wraith and Cassian. “There’s something I want to talk to you about.”

I sat Audrey at the head of the table with me and Brenden sitting on either side of her when we came down, which only leaves Wraith and Cassian to sit beside one of us.

Wraith offers me a soft smile as he pulls out the chair beside Brenden, letting Cassian sit beside me. He’s such a damn good mate.

“What’s going on, little mate?” Cassian asks as he grabs my hand, twining our fingers together under the table.

She glances around the table before nodding to herself. “Lucifer suggested another way to deal with the rejected mate syndrome, and I think it’s what I want to do. Not just for me but for Brenden. He’s not doing well.”

I turn my attention to the vampire, finding his eyes on Audrey, but he remains silent.

“He’s still not eating?” Wraith asks, glancing at the untouched plate of food. “And you can’t get him to drink from you?”

She shakes her head as she leans toward Brenden, lifting her wrist to his lips. “Feed from me, Brenden. Please.”

The vampire's only response is to blink at her.

"Clearly not." Even if I can't hear it in her tone, I know just how exasperated she's feeling right now.

"Then tell us what the suggestion is, pretty girl," I urge her.

I'm not sure what Lucifer could've thought of since he was the one who told us there were only three ways of resolving a rejected bond. But I'm definitely down to hear it. If it means helping Audrey and Brenden, I'd do just about anything.

"It's obvious Nex wants to bond with us, but, clearly, it's not that simple. He hurt us—made us feel like he rejected us. We're broken because of him. That's not something that's easy to forgive. Is it even forgivable?" She shakes her head. "But I can't go into a war—a battle, whatever—like this. I could get myself or someone else hurt or killed. Brenden is barely existing, and I don't know how much longer he can keep going when he's not eating."

She takes a deep breath, her eyes locked on the table. "I'm going to bond with Nex, but I'm going to make it clear he's not forgiven. It doesn't mean I want a relationship with him or that I'll ever be ready for a relationship with him."

Silence follows her announcement.

I don't even know how I feel about this. I understand where she's coming from. If she completes the bond, then she'll no longer have to deal with a rejected bond. But even if she intends for them not to have a relationship now—or maybe ever—that still means he'll be in our life. Bonded mates don't do well away from one another for long periods of time, whether they're chosen or fated mates.

"This is not me trying to talk you out of this," Cassian says slowly, "but have you

thought of the logistics of this? You can't just bond with him and go on with your life. You'll need to be close to him. He'll need to live with us. You already know how hard it is to have me away so frequently. Although, that would change if you bond with Nex. That should mean the end of this bullshit between me and Wraith."

"I have, and I understand. That's why I'm bringing it up with you now. It doesn't just affect me. It's going to affect you as well." Her eyes find Brenden again. "But that's not all of it. If I bond with Nex, it won't help Brenden. I think I know why this is harder for him. He initiated a matebond with Nex, and now it's a one-sided bond. Nex has to complete the bond with him."

I turn my gaze to the vampire in question, swallowing hard. "Brenden is in no position to say if he's okay with this."

Audrey nods. "I'm well aware, but I don't think I can take that into consideration right now. He's going to die if he doesn't start eating soon—whether that's food or blood. I can't let him die, even if it means he'll hate me."

"You want Nex to bond with Brenden without his permission?" There's no judgment in Wraith's tone. I think he just wants to confirm what he's hearing.

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She lifts her chin. “Yes.”

Her gaze flits between us, and I know she’s waiting for us to judge her, but that’s not going to happen.

“I think it’s a good idea—both of them,” I tell her. “If you want to bond with Nex, then I think you should do it. Nex might regret bonding with you when he has to deal with me all the time, but I’m happy to show him the error of his ways—without killing him. I just want you to get better, pretty girl—both you and Brenden. And I don’t think Brenden will be angry with you. He’ll understand. He doesn’t want to leave you either. You’re his obsession.”

Her face softens for a moment, a hint of a smile on her lips as she stares at Brenden. “You’re probably right.”

Cassian runs a hand over his face. “This isn’t something I would usually condone. Forcing a mating bond on someone without their consent is cruel, but Brenden already has a connection to Nex. And you’re right, little mate, he’s dying. Even without the one-sided bond, I’d agree this is the best option to move forward. And if you want to mate with Nex, then I support your decision.”

“And you?” she asks Wraith when he remains silent.

“This is a decision you have to make, Audrey. We can tell you our thoughts, but you’re his mate. You have to decide what’s best for the two of you. As far as Nex goes...” Wraith makes a face as he trails off, letting his displeasure be known. “I hate the idea of you bonding with him—of you letting him into our lives. I also agree you

can't go into war like this, and it's the only option besides killing him—which I know we're not allowed to do—so I vote yes.”

A sigh of relief leaves our mate, clearly a heavy weight lifting from her at our agreement.

“Now, I just have to figure out how to get him to agree to bond with us after I told him I didn't want him anywhere near me.”

I grin. “You let me worry about that, pretty girl. Just keep your day open tomorrow, and I promise to deliver you a willing incubus.”

Because, now that Audrey has decided what she wants to do, I'm going to damn well make sure it happens. Even if it requires threatening Nex—but I don't think I'll need to. I think he'll come willingly. The hard part will be convincing him to complete the bond with Brenden.

Tomorrow, Nex will become a part of my pack—because they are, even if none of them are hellhounds like me—whether he wants to or not.

Chapter Twelve

Audrey

One upside to the rejected mate syndrome is I really can't stress too much while I wait for Donovan to arrive with Nex.

I'm not sure how he plans to get Nex here, but I don't really care as long as he shows up and bonds with the two of us.

This isn't how I want to bond with anyone—especially someone I don't know if I'll

be able to forgive. But I also know there's no chance of forgiving him while I'm falling apart, which is exactly what I'm doing right now.

This is the right choice, even if it's the only choice.

I lie back on the bed, facing Brenden.

He's why this is the only choice. I refuse to lose him because of Nex's actions, so he's going to man-the-fuck-up and bond with us before it kills my vampire mate.

I stiffen, feeling the exact moment they step into the room. Forcing myself to relax, I roll onto my side to find them standing just inside the doorway.

"Nex."

He bites his lip, eyes moving between me and Brenden. "Audrey."

Donovan sighs, shoving Nex toward the bed. "You have two jobs, incubus—bond with Audrey and Brenden and make sure they feel good. Don't fuck this up. If you do, you're not going to like the consequences."

Then he's gone, leaving a blushing Nex standing there by himself.

He shakes his head, refusing to meet my eyes. "This is what you want?"

"Yes, and no. Yes, because it needs to be done. No, because if I could feel something more than absolute agony, I'd be really annoyed with you right now." I sigh, knowing my words aren't helping his uncertainty. "I don't know exactly what Donovan told you, but I need to make some things clear to you before we proceed."

When he nods, I continue, "This doesn't mean you're forgiven. This doesn't mean

we'll ever have a relationship. It means you'll be in our lives, and we'll be the ones to decide how that goes—not you. You'll live with us because we'll need you close, but that doesn't guarantee a damn thing when it comes to us. Bonding with you is a means to an end. We're about to go to war, and I can't do that with how I'm feeling right now. Brenden isn't able to do anything on his own. He's going to die if he doesn't bond with you, Nex, and you're the one who did this to him.”

“I know.” Nex finally lifts his head and meets my gaze with his sorrow-filled eyes. “I fucked up beyond belief, and I know this bonding has nothing to do with me. No guarantees and no expectations. I told you I'd do anything to make this right, and this is the first step.”

His eyes drift to Brenden, his breath stuttering. “Donovan said he wouldn't be able to consent to bonding with me. You're sure this is what he'd want?”

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I follow his gaze, finding Brenden looking up at me. His eyes are still hazy, and it's clear he's not really here with us. I fucking hate it.

“It doesn't matter what he wants. I won't let him die. That's something else you need to be aware of. He might hate both of us for this, but I'm selfish and willing to make this decision if it means keeping him here with me.”

I stare at Brenden for another moment before slowly pulling off his clothes and then mine. I turn back to Nex to find him licking his lips as his eyes rove over both of us.

“This isn't going to be like it was the night we were together. I've had zero desire to have sex since we discovered that you'd walked out on us. I don't know if I even can, but no matter what, this has to happen. You do whatever you have to do to make it work, but I also don't want you touching Brenden. It's my understanding that you don't need to touch him to bond with him. You should be able to bond with him while I fuck him and you fuck me. Is that correct?”

Nex nods. “Yes. I'll be able to send my incubus magic into him as he comes—even if it's not because of me. But he will have to come. If he's not responsive, are you sure he'll be able to perform? I can use my magic to help him along if I need to.”

I'm glad to hear that I'm right. I know I'm already violating Brenden by having Nex bond with him without consent, but I refuse to allow anything more than that to happen when he's not in his right mind. That's a decision he'll have to make on his own.

I scoff, reaching over, wrapping my hand around Brenden's soft cock, and stroking

him. Within seconds, he's hard as a rock. "That won't be a problem. There's lube in the bedside table. You'll need it."

"I'll grab it, but I'd like to at least make sure you enjoy it, Audrey. I know this is a means to an end, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy yourself." I hear him move behind me, grabbing the lube before climbing onto the bed.

"As long as it doesn't involve you touching Brenden, you can do whatever you want to me. I make no guarantees that it'll help anything, though."

I'm not holding out hope for much of anything during this encounter. It would be nice to feel good, but is it even possible with the amount of anguish inside of me? It's better to have low expectations.

Nex frowns, and I can tell he doesn't want it to be like this just from the look on his face, but that's too fucking bad. He sets the lube onto the bed, crawling up until he's hovering over me—careful not to touch Brenden in any way, which I appreciate.

"I'm going to kiss you now," he tells me, pausing to see how I'll respond, but when I just lie there, he leans down and brushes his lips across mine.

A spark of electricity sparks where our lips touch, shifting out into my body and shocking me. No, not literally.

When he pulls back, I can't help chasing his lips and the sensation. It's the most I've felt in days. I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him into another kiss. I must pull harder than I thought because Nex ends up splayed across me, lighting up my body in every spot we touch.

Okay, maybe bonding with him won't be so bad after all.

My body practically vibrates as desire rushes through me. I kiss him desperately, wanting oh so much more of this feeling.

Should I feel bad that I'm now desperate to have sex with a man that I kind of hate? Even if he is my mate?

Fuck it. I honestly don't care.

Nex finally breaks free of my hold, breathing heavily as he stares down at me. "Audrey?"

"It feels good. Don't stop." I try to drag him down for another kiss, but he shakes his head and starts to pull away. A whine spills from me as I reach for him again. I told him I don't want him to stop, so why is he stopping?

"I've got you, Audrey. Let me take care of you." Nex slips down my body until he's kneeling between my legs.

I lick my lips as he lowers himself further, his hands gripping my thighs and pulling them apart. My back arches when his hot breath brushes along my pussy. It's like I'm feeling everything tenfold after feeling nothing. Each little touch is erotic and sends me closer to the edge before he's even really touched me.

My hands drift down to sink into his hair as he licks from ass to clit before sinking his tongue into my wet cunt and fucking me with it. His magic rises, rushing through me as his nose brushes my clit, and I'm already done for.

I scream out my orgasm as Nex continues to fuck me with his tongue. My body undulates beneath him, another orgasm already building as my magic rises to tangle with his. When he lifts his head, his beard is glistening as he smirks.

“One more, gorgeous. I want you to come on my fingers. Then, you’ll ride Brenden while I fuck this gorgeous ass of yours. How does that sound?”

I shiver at the picture he paints in my mind, and all I want to do is make it a reality. “Then you best get to it.”

I didn’t say I was going to make this easy for him, did I?

Nex seems to take this as a challenge, his fingers pushing inside of me with a bit of a pinch. Then his mouth is closing over my clit and my eyes fall shut once more. With each thrust of his fingers, they unerringly find my G-spot. Before too long, I’m riding his fingers as moan after moan spills from me.

“Almost there,” I pant. “Please, Nex. Please.”

He adjusts his hold on my hips, and his fingers seem to hit me differently as another wave of his magic washes through me. I buck against him as my back comes off the bed, a silent scream on my lips as I come harder than I had the first time.

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This time, he doesn't fuck me through the orgasm. Instead, he lifts me up onto wobbly limbs and helps me straddle Brenden, whose cock is rock-hard.

My eyes find Brenden's, and I swear I see a flash of desire there as I lower myself onto his cock. It's there and gone in a second, so I'm not sure if it's wishful thinking or if it really happened. Either way, I know my mate would never turn down a chance to have his cock buried in me, making me feel less like I'm taking advantage of him.

Once I'm fully seated, Nex's hands fall away, and the sensations that have been working through me completely disappear.

"No," I cry out, sitting there in horror.

"Shh, it's okay." Nex is suddenly pressing against my back, and a sigh of relief falls from my lips as the sensations return. "I just needed to get situated so I could do this without touching Brenden."

Nex presses me forward until I'm lying flat against Brenden's chest, making sure to keep his hand on my back. A glance over my shoulder shows Nex has placed pillows between his and Brenden's legs to keep him from touching my vampire mate, and that sends a flutter of warmth through me at him, making sure he sticks to his promise.

Just as quick as it appears, I squash it down. It changes nothing.

I hiss when the cold lube dribbles down my ass crack. Nex offers no apologies as his finger finds my puckered hole, slowly working it inside of me. My eyes fall shut at

the stretch, his fingers working me open.

I grind down on Brenden, needing the friction against my clit as Nex preps me to take his cock. I drift in a cloud of pleasure, coming back to myself as Nex notches his cock at my ass.

“Are you ready, gorgeous?”

“Yes,” I whine, pushing back against him in invitation.

Nex takes me at my word, pushing into me slowly. My eyes roll back as I continue to grind down on Brenden’s cock.

Usually, when I take two of my mates like this, I get to be a pillow princess and lay there while they fuck me. That’s not going to be the case with Brenden still out of it, so as soon as Nex is fully seated, I take over.

I fuck myself on their cocks, ecstasy racing through me as my pussy pulses around Brenden. Lying here and waiting to be able to move has me already teetering on the edge.

My magic reaches out and laces itself with Nex’s once more, ready to complete the bond.

They feel so good inside of me, and while I’ve enjoyed letting my men fuck me, I might need to take control more often. I hold the power as I drag the three of us toward climax, and it makes it so much hotter.

I work my hips harder and faster, ready to come. I’m buzzing from head to toe, and it’s only then I realize I no longer feel the anguish of the rejected bond at all.

Joy and fear rush through me as I stare down at Brenden, who's still unmoving beneath me. This has to work.

"Come for me, gorgeous. Come all over our cocks. Soak us." Nex's hand comes down on the side of my ass, and I scream as I come.

My body locks up, no longer able to move as my body shakes, pleasure rushing through me from head to toe. I'm so lost in bliss, I almost forget to have my magic bond with Nex's. His hips stutter, and I know his orgasm isn't far off.

"I want Brenden to come in my mouth," I tell him, and he jerks me off my mate's cock, lowering me between Brenden's legs—all while still fucking my ass.

The moment my lips close around Brenden's cock, he comes and fills my mouth. I moan around him as it sets off another climax, and this time, I pull Nex over with me.

Nex's magic twines with mine, and I feel the bond lock into place before his magic courses through Brenden, who jolts upward as I swallow his cum.

"Fuck," Nex hisses as he slams into my ass, his cock pulsing and filling me with cum.

I sit up, dislodging Nex, so I can cup Brenden's cheeks. "Brenden?"

"Fuck, I love you, firecracker," he murmurs, leaning in to kiss me. "I'm not angry with you. I never could be. I'm sorry I left you. I didn't want to...I just couldn't."

I feel the bed shift behind me, but I ignore Nex as I exchange kisses with Brenden. It still feels like there's a hole in my heart, but it's nothing like it was before bonding with Nex. I can only assume it feels similar for Brenden.

Finally, breaking away from my mate, we both turn to look at Nex, who's hovering

near the end of the bed.

“Thank you for bonding with us, but as I said, this changes nothing, Nex. Brenden and I are going to shower. I want you gone by the time we get out. One of my mates will contact you about moving in. Now that we’re bonded, hopefully, Wraith won’t lose his shit when I suggest Cassian moving in again.”

Nex nods, dropping his head, but not before I see the tears in his eyes. “I understand.”

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He says nothing as the two of us climb off the bed, walking away without glancing back. It's not quite the same way he left us, but it makes me feel vindicated in leaving him there by himself, knowing he's not welcome with us.

But it also hurts my heart, and I find tears welling in my eyes.

Yes, this is so much better than it was, but I don't want to feel like this about Nex. I want to hate him for what he's done for us, but I don't think I can. That doesn't mean I forgive him.

As Brenden and I climb into the shower, I turn back to him. "Are you sure you're okay? I know I shouldn't have let him bond with you when you couldn't consent—"

"I would have," he assures me. "I could hear everything you and the others discussed. I just couldn't respond. It was like I was there, but not. You've done nothing wrong. You saved us."

Sobs shake my body as I cling to him, so grateful that he believes I made the right call.

We might no longer have to deal with rejected mate syndrome, but something tells me nothing is going to be easy from here on out.

Once I've calmed down, Brenden tilts my chin back so he can meet my eyes. "Can we make the shower quick? I'm fucking starving."

I snort out a laugh, more tears spilling down my cheeks as we help wash each other.

Whatever comes, I'm willing to take it—no matter how hard it is—because it brought my mate back to me, and that's honestly all that matters.

Chapter Thirteen

Audrey

“Little mate, your mom and sister are here.” Cassian shakes me slightly, and I blink my eyes open to find him smiling down at me. “Good morning.”

I return his smile easily, even if I wish I was still sleeping. “Good morning is right.” I roll onto my back, and when I don't see Brenden, worry courses through me.

“Shh, it's okay. He's downstairs eating. I swear he's done nothing but eat since the two of you bonded with Nex. It's like he's trying to make up for the days he didn't eat all at once.” Cassian chuckles as he pulls me into his arms, and I snuggle into him.

“Wait. Did you say my mom and sister are here?” I pull back enough to see his face, frowning when he nods. “Why?”

Cassian's body shakes with laughter. “Probably because they want to see you. Wraith let everyone know that you and Brenden bonded with Nex and were doing better. Lucifer, of course, appeared in the house immediately, but Wraith sent him packing. Or so he tells me.”

My eyebrows shoot up. “Like, last night? Or this morning?”

“Last night. He managed to tell everyone else to wait until today to bother you.”

I snort. “So my dad showed up while I was getting railed by Brenden and Donovan. That tracks.”

“Hey, they weren’t the only ones doing the railing. I was assisting Donovan in his railing.”

“By railing his ass? Yes, I’m aware. I was there.” Laughter spills from both of us.

I had a lot of sex with my mates last night in lots of combinations. Brenden might not be the only one trying to make up for lost time.

I sigh, realizing I’m going to have to get dressed to see my family. It’s not that I don’t want to see them. I just know they’re going to have questions, and they’re not going to like my answers.

“Tell them I’ll be down in a minute. I’m just going to freshen up first.”

Cassian kisses me quickly before setting me on my feet. “I’ll let them know. I love you, little mate.”

I grin as warmth fills me. “I love you, too.”

I spin on my heel, knowing if I stand here any longer, I’m going to climb on his cock and take it for a spin. I’d rather not have to explain to my mom and sister what took so long.

Taking care of business in the bathroom, I head for the closet to grab something to wear.

It’s packed with clothes since we added some of Cassian’s last night. He’s officially moved in and has his own room, but like the rest of us, he expects to spend most of his time in the bedroom we all share.

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Nex hasn't moved in yet, and I can already feel the distance weighing on our bond. But if I was able to put up with Cassian not being close for months, I can deal with Nex not being here for a few days.

Last night, I informed Wraith he was in charge of getting Nex moved in. He agreed but didn't seem to be in a hurry to make it happen.

My mates are just as pissed off at him as I am.

We bonded last night, but it's almost like the bond knows something is wrong. A pang of pain rushes through my chest, reminding me of the remnants of sorrow that still remain. Rejected mate syndrome is a thing of the past, but as I guessed, going forward isn't going to be as easy as bonding with Nex.

It's nothing compared to the blanket of suffering I carried around for days on end. This I can deal with, and I'll have to because I'm not ready to forgive him.

I'm not even ready to consider forgiving him.

Deciding I need to be surrounded by my mates today, I grab one of Brenden's T-shirts and a pair of Cassian's sweatpants that I can tie tight enough to mostly stay up. They're baggy as hell, and I'm sure I look like a child playing dress up, but it settles me to wear their things.

I pad down the stairs, finding my mom and sister sitting in the living room and talking with my mates.

As soon as Brenden's eyes find me, he's up and out of his seat. He used his vamp speed to make it to me in a second, dipping me down and kissing the hell out of me. I'm grinning when he sets me upright once more, finding my mates and family grinning at us.

It's not just me who's happy to see us doing better.

Each of my mates comes over to kiss me before Wraith leads me to the couch.

"Brenden and Donovan are coming with me to meet with Lucifer. I'm sure he'll stop by to check on you again at some point, but hopefully, it's after he helps get the new dorm building put up. But if you need us, all you have to do is text us, and we can be here in a second."

I pat his hand. "I'm okay, Wraith. You don't have to worry about me anymore."

"I'm always going to worry about you, trouble. Enjoy your time with your mom and sister." He kisses my forehead before joining Donovan and Brenden. They step into the shadows, here one moment, then gone the next.

"And I have souls to judge." Cassian shoots me a wink. "I'll be harder to reach, but I'll get any texts as soon as we're out of session. Behave."

With one last kiss, he heads for the door, leaving me alone with my sister and mom.

"It's so good to see you smile, Audrey." Mom's eyes fill with tears as she tugs me to her for a hug. "I was so worried."

Wren snorts. "You were worried? You weren't here when it happened."

"I really am doing better. Lucifer was right. Completing the bond made the rejected

mate syndrome disappear like it had never been there.” I shrug as if it’s no big deal, but I can tell neither of them is buying what I’m selling.

“I’m a little surprised you forgave him so easily,” Wren admits, and I wince.

Here we go. I prepare myself for the judgment I know is coming.

I clear my throat before moving to sit on the coffee table across from them so I can see both of them at once. “I didn’t forgive him, Wren. I made the decision to bond with him independent of forgiving him. I may never be able to. I just don’t know yet.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not sure I’m following.” Mom tilts her head to the side as she considers me. “Wren filled me in on some things, but maybe it’ll make more sense if you start from the beginning.”

So I do. I start way back at the beginning when Nex was nothing but hot Professor Novak, explaining the push and pull between us and Brenden before ending with the day we woke up alone in bed with nothing but a note from him.

Mom shakes her head. “I can understand why you haven’t forgiven him and why you might not be able to. But if that was the case, then why bond with him?”

“Why?” I snort. “Because I was lost in an abyss of misery because my mind and body thought he rejected us. We’re planning a war, and I felt nothing beyond sorrow for more than two seconds at a time. Because Brenden was catatonic and not eating. He could’ve died.”

Wren hums, her face carefully blank. “That was something I was curious about as well. Brenden wasn’t there. How did he mate with Nex?”

“I’m not sure that what happened with Brenden is any of your business, Wren, but he initiated a bond with Nex that night the three of us were together. If Brenden wants you to know any of the other details, that’s up to him to decide.”

Wren looks affronted. “Since when do you keep things from me, Audrey?”

My brows shoot up. “Is that a game you really want to start, Wren? I wasn’t the one who started keeping things from my twin, was I? And as far as Brenden is concerned, that isn’t your business. That’s Brenden’s business, and I’m not just going to tell you everything about my mates because you’re my twin.”

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Wren's eyes flash with anger, her mouth opening—to argue with me, I'm sure—but Mom cuts her off.

“Enough, girls.” She doesn't yell, speaking in her normal tone, but it's enough to shut both of us up. “Wren, Audrey is right. You're not entitled to know what happened to Brenden. Audrey, maybe try not snapping at your sister when you want her to back off. You'd think you'd know one another well enough by now to know what will set the other off. Or maybe you did it on purpose. Either way, that's enough.”

Fuck. What is it about my mom that makes it so easy for her to make me feel guilty? She's right though. I was baiting Wren, and we all know it.

“I'm sorry, Wren. I shouldn't have spoken to you like that,” I tell her with a forced smile. The smile might be forced, but my words are truthful. I'm sorry for talking to her like that. I just didn't want her to probe too deeply into the Brenden of it all because I know she won't approve of the choices I made. I can already see the judgment in her eyes for what I've done.

Wren gives me a sharp nod. “I'm sorry, too. You're right. As much as I'd like to know everything going on in your life, when it comes to your mates, I shouldn't expect to know everything.”

“Thank you, girls.” Mom pauses. “Are you sure this was the best idea, Audrey?”

“Honestly?” I shake my head. “No, I'm not sure, but all the options were shitty, and this seemed like the least shitty.”

Mom considers me for a moment before nodding. “You know you’re tied to him for life, even if you never forgive him?”

“I am, and I don’t regret my decision.”

Wren tugs a hand through her red curls. “I just don’t understand how you can bond with someone you don’t love, let alone someone who betrayed you like he did.”

“And you don’t have to, Wren. All you need to know is I made the right decision for me and my situation. Maybe we’ll eventually be able to work everything out with Nex, but even if we don’t, I’ll never regret this decision.”

“And that’s all that matters,” Mom says as she smiles. “All we want is for you to be happy, and if this works for you, then I’m happy for you.”

Wren scoffs. “I’m sorry, Ree, but I just don’t understand how you could do this to yourself.”

It hurts to hear her words, but they’re better than I expected from her. “You don’t have to understand. My decisions don’t affect you or your life in any way. You don’t have to understand it, but you have to accept it. Mainly because it’s already done, but also because you’re my sister, and I want you in my life. But that’s exactly what this is—my life.”

Tears fill her eyes as she forces a smile, giving me a small nod. “Using my own words against me, Audrey? Dirty pool.”

“What are you talking about?” Mom frowns as she glances between the two of us.

“I never wanted her to marry Michael,” I admit. “I kept quiet about it for a long time, but when I finally brought it up with her, Wren told me I didn’t need to understand it,

that I just needed to accept it. Because I'm her sister, and she wants me in her life, but that she's the one who makes the decisions about her life. She always wanted me to tell her what I thought, but I needed to understand that it didn't mean she'd make the decision I wanted her to."

"Neither of you mentioned that."

Moving to sit on one side of Mom, Wren scoots over until she can lean against her other side. Mom sighs as she wraps her arms around both of us, holding us close.

"That's because you didn't need to know. We're grown-ass women who should be able to handle our shit without needing our mom's help," I tell her with a laugh. "We were trying, anyway."

That sends us into peals of laughter as we cling to our mom, and that's how Lucifer finds us a few minutes later when he pops into the room.

"Oh, I guess you are doing as well as your mates said you were." Lucifer winces. "I'm sorry. I just needed to see it with my own eyes. Enjoy your girl time."

Then, he's just gone again.

"Fates, he's so weird and nothing like I thought he would be," I say with a laugh, and Wren nods.

"The stories make him sound all scary and shit." Wren shakes her head. "He's squishy, not scary."

Mom laughs. "I never would've thought he was Lucifer that night, but I guess the stories have it all wrong. I guess I didn't do too bad when choosing your father, did I?"

I roll my eyes. “As if you had anything to do with choosing him as our dad. You got drunk and slept together, then whoops, you’re having twins.”

“Yeah, Mom. Don’t try to play it off like you planned it.” Wren grins, and I know we’ll be okay.

Neither of them may agree with or understand why I decided to bond with Nex, but they still love and support me, and what more can I ask for?

Chapter Fourteen

Cassian

I land in front of our house—no, our home. Finally, I get to be with all the people I love, and it almost feels like a miracle. I wasn't sure we'd ever get to this point with the animosity between Wraith and me. Not that either of us wanted to feel it anymore, but fucking destiny and all that bullshit.

As soon as Audrey bonded with Nex, it all disappeared—the need to pick at Wraith until he lost his shit, the anger over how we ended, and the desire to be far away from Wraith. It's insane the lengths we had to go to in order to prevent the two of us from fighting, and then it was just gone.

I've never been happier in my life—not just when it all fell away but now.

The fact that I have three people I love waiting for me inside the home we share means the world to me. Plus, the vampire, who I'm coming to like a little more with each passing day.

The incubus also moved in yesterday, which I could do without, but Wraith says we need to get used to him being in our life. I know he's right, but I don't have to like it. Not after what he did to Audrey and Brenden.

Shaking off my thoughts, I pull my wings into my back and hurry inside. I smile when I hear Audrey in the kitchen, heading straight toward my mate.

"I'm hungry. Just let me have a snack." Audrey is staring down Wraith, who is wearing a ridiculous apron as he waves a spatula at her.

“No. You’re not allowed in the kitchen when I’m cooking. Not after last time.”

Audrey straight up stomps her foot as I join Brenden and Donovan, who are grinning as they watch everything play out before us.

“It’s not like I meant to set the damn thing on fire,” she tells him with a shake of her head. “Fine. If you won’t let me in, then you can get me a snack.”

Wraith shakes his head. “No, then you’ll ruin your dinner.”

Audrey looks like she wants to murder Wraith, so I decide to step in. “You know, I’m starving too.”

“Cassian!” Her face lights up as she throws herself into my arms.

I love how she’s always excited to see us, even if we’ve only been gone for a few hours. Pressing a kiss to her lips, I lift her in my arms, and she wraps her legs around my hips. I carry her toward the table, an idea coming to me, and I don’t hide the wicked grin on my lips.

“Hello, little mate. I think I have the perfect snack in mind for the two of us.”

She perks up at that. “Oh?”

Instead of answering her, I set her on her feet and move the chair at the head of the table to the side. I reach for her shirt, pulling it over her head before she has time to question me. My lips crash into hers as I unsnap her bra and toss it to the side.

I hear movement behind us, but I don’t stop kissing her to see what the others are doing.

Audrey moans into my mouth as I run my hands up her bare sides until I'm cupping her tits in them.

Fates, I love my mate's tits.

My thumbs brush across her pebbled nipples, and I break the kiss. I smile when she whines, but it quickly turns into another moan as I suck her nipple between my lips. I mimic the movement of my tongue against her with my fingers on her other nipple, and she leans against the table as her knees weaken.

"I don't know what your plan is, Cass, but I want in on it," Donovan murmurs as he presses against my back, his hard cock sliding against my pants-covered ass.

Look at him acting like he's the top.

I pull off Audrey's tit with a pop, grinning at him over my shoulder. "Of course you're welcome to join. You and Brenden, but not Wraith since he's cooking."

"It can wait," Wraith argues, now standing beside me, and I shake my head.

"Nope. You wouldn't let Audrey have a snack and this is your punishment. You can watch, but you can't touch."

Audrey chuckles, drawing my attention to her as she bites her bottom lip. "But you can definitely get out your cock and make yourself feel good—as long as you don't ruin dinner."

"Oh, trouble... You're going to pay for this one, little girl." Wraith swoops in to kiss her, and I use her distraction to pull her leggings off, finding her bare beneath them.

"Fucking hell. You haven't had anything on under these all day? What a naughty,

naughty girl.” I grin as she breaks away from Wraith.

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With a quick shrug, she licks her lips. “With so many mates always willing to dick me down, why would I?”

That pulls chuckles from all of us men before I shoot Wraith a look. He holds up his hands in surrender and makes his way back into the kitchen—where he’ll have a great view of the show we’re about to give him.

“Up on the table, little mate.” When she turns around to do just that, I smack her ass. She glares at me over her shoulder but continues onto the table. When she goes to turn around to face us, I stop her. “No. I want your head hanging off the end of the table.”

She frowns before shrugging and getting into the position I want her in.

Hell yes.

Too bad I’m not the one going to be burying my cock in her throat. At least not this time.

I pull my shirt off, tossing it to the side before kicking off my shoes and pulling off my pants. I stand there in just my boxer briefs, my cock hard and throbbing as I turn back to Brenden and Donovan, who have both stripped down as well.

I give them a quick nod before moving more chairs away from the table and climbing onto it with Audrey. She sits up on her elbows to watch me settle between her legs.

“You’re gonna suck Brenden’s cock, while I get my fill of you—my very favorite

snack—and Donovan will play with your tits.” When she nods excitedly, I laugh. “You like the sound of that? Especially knowing that Wraith is watching but unable to join?”

She clenches her thighs together, her hips rocking slightly. “Yes. Please.”

“You heard our mate.” I give the other two a pointed look, and they jump forward as I lower myself to lie on the table. Pulling Audrey’s legs over my shoulders, I grin at her glistening pussy. I knew she’d like this.

I bury my face in her cunt, licking the length of her slit before flicking my tongue across her clit. Her back arches off the table as she cries out my name.

That’s when I hear footsteps coming down the stairs. A glance up at Donovan and Brenden shows they hear it, too, but I don’t think Audrey has.

This was bound to happen eventually, and I have zero intentions of stopping what I’m doing. I guess we’ll just see how it plays out.

Because I know what’s coming, I tease her until her hands grip my head and she tries to grind against my face.

“Hey, Wraith,” Nex calls before he’s reached the bottom of the stairs. “I know you’re cooking dinner, but should I figure out something for myself? I’m not sure if I’m supposed to share meals—”

He cuts off, his mouth falling open as he takes in the scene before me, and I grin before flicking my tongue against Audrey’s clit rapidly.

“Fucking hell,” she cries out, her eyes locked on Nex.

“Oh. I should...” I turn my head to find Nex flushing, his hand falling to his cock before spinning around. “I’ll just—”

“No.”

We all freeze at Audrey’s response.

She glances down at me and lifts her brows. “Did I tell you to stop?”

“No, you didn’t, little mate.” I grin before ducking my head back down and fucking my tongue into her core.

Her back arches again as she whimpers, then she turns her head toward Nex. “You’re going to have to get used to this. This isn’t going to be the last time you walk in on us having sex. You should stay and watch.”

“Umm...I...I...” Nex stutters before clearing his throat. “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Let me rephrase this,” she tells him, her voice going cold. “You’ll stay and watch us.”

Silence follows her demand, and I want to see how Nex is taking this, but I have my own orders from my mate. I’m supposed to make her feel good, and I plan to exceed her expectations.

“Okay,” he finally whispers, barely audible.

“But you’re not allowed to touch yourself or any of us,” Brenden adds. “If Wraith is being punished, then so are you. But your offense is much worse, so you’re not allowed to get yourself off.”

Audrey hums. “I like the sound of that.”

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Brenden laughs darkly. “That’s because you enjoy being watched.”

Our mate doesn’t deny his words, but I already knew that. After all, this isn’t the first time Nex has watched me with Audrey.

Thinking of our chase in the forest, followed by Nex watching me fuck our mate has my cock throbbing beneath me, and I have to readjust myself. I almost wish we were in our bed because it’s not nearly as hard as the table beneath us.

But then Nex wouldn’t have walked in on us, and this is the kind of punishment I like to see. He deserves this and so much more.

Sucking Audrey’s clit into my mouth, she lets out a long and loud moan. She grins at me before lying back as Brenden steps forward and feeds her his dick.

Donovan and I share a look before he nods, leaning down to tease Audrey’s nipples with his mouth and fingers.

Moving my attention back to her pussy, I fuck her on my tongue and allow her taste to fill my mouth before replacing it with my fingers. I tease her clit as I fuck her, groaning when she pulls me closer to her pussy.

She’s so demanding, and I fucking love it.

Her pussy flutters around my fingers, and I know she’s close. I double down on her clit, hitting her G-spot with each pass of my fingers, and it doesn’t take her long to fall apart.

She screams around Brenden's cock, but he never relents, continuing to fuck her mouth through her orgasm. Removing my fingers, I replace them with my tongue. Another groan leaves me as her juices coat my tongue, lips, and chin as she writhes above me.

I only stop when her body lies still once more. I sit up, grinning as Brenden finally backs off from abusing her throat.

When Audrey's eyes lock with mine, I swipe my hand across my face and collect her wetness before licking it clean. Audrey clambers to her knees and shuffles across the table, pulling me down to kiss her. She licks into my mouth, moaning as she tastes herself on me.

"I need you, Cassian. I need you to fuck me—fill me up with your cock."

Fuck.

I want nothing more than to do just that, but I think she'll like my next idea as much as she did the first.

"I have a better idea," I tell her with a smirk. "I think you should ride your vampire materight here on the table while Donovan sucks my cock. Then Donovan and I will take you together."

The grin that lights up her face is sinful. She glances toward the living room area, and I follow her gaze.

Nex is sitting in an armchair, not bothering to hide his hard cock tenting his pants. His eyes move back and forth between our mate and Brenden.

Did I decide to let the two of them put on a show for the man who hurt them?

Definitely.

Like I said, this is my favorite form of punishment, which is why Wraith isn't being allowed to join. For Nex, this will show him what he's missing out on because of his actions. Especially since Brenden said he wasn't allowed to touch himself.

At least I'm not that cruel.

Speaking of Wraith, my eyes find him in the kitchen. He's standing on this side of the island, so I can watch as he strokes his cock, and I lick my lips.

Maybe I shouldn't have said he couldn't join us.

"Off the table, angel." Brenden slaps my back, drawing my attention to the vampire.

Right.

I climb down and grab one of the chairs I set aside. I set it between the kitchen and the dining area before lowering myself into it. From this position, Wraith will be able to watch me and Donovan, while I can still watch our mate with Brenden.

"Pet?" I call, eyes locked on Wraith as he continues to stroke himself.

Fuck. I love his cock.

When Donovan kneels before me, I finally tear my eyes away from Wraith. My hellhound is completely naked now, his thick cock standing at attention.

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“You’re wearing too many clothes,” he tells me, and I realize I never took off my underwear.

“Then it looks like you have a job to do, doesn’t it?” I cock an eyebrow, but he just smirks as he reaches for them. I lift my hips, allowing him to slide them down my legs as my eyes find Brenden and Audrey.

She’s a goddess.

Audrey is riding Brenden, whose hands are locked around her hips as she rises and lowers herself on his cock. Her head is thrown back as she cups her tits, tweaking her nipples. She’s putting on a show for Nex and Wraith—and clearly loving every moment of it.

I gasp, surprised when Donovan’s mouth closes around my cock. My hands find their way into his hair as he takes me deep into his throat and swallows. My hips jerk, forcing me further into his mouth.

“Fuck, pet,” I murmur. “I love your sinful mouth. You suck cock so good, my little cock slut.”

Donovan growls, the vibrations making me thrust into his mouth again as he stares up at me.

“What’s wrong, pet? Do you not like it when I call you my little cock slut?” I already know the answer. Of fucking course, he loves it when I call him that—it makes him wild.

From the look in his eyes, he'd rather have my cock buried in his ass than in his mouth. He works his mouth up and down my length, popping off to lick and suck at my dick and balls.

A cursed groan followed by a long, loud, keening cry has my head jerking toward Audrey and Brenden once more. She grinds down on Brenden as she comes. Brenden has taken over, thrusting up into her as her body jerks until he gives a harsh groan, filling her with his cum.

As good as Donovan's mouth feels on my cock, I pull him off. "Go bury that thick cock of yours in our mate. I'll join you soon."

Donovan grins, pushing to his feet and hurrying over to the table. He pulls Audrey off Brenden, ignoring Brenden's growl. Within seconds, he has her back pressed to the wall as he bucks into her wildly.

I shake my head, turning back to Wraith. He's no longer stroking his pulsing cock, probably not ready to come yet since the show isn't over yet.

"Lube?"

Wraith's eyes are locked on Donovan and Audrey as he reaches behind him and pulls open a drawer. He feels around in it for a moment before a bottle of lube is being tossed my way. I grab it easily and head toward my mate.

Pausing beside the table, I try to figure out how to make this work while Donovan is feeling as wild as he is. I could wait until he's done and then have my turn with her, but I don't want to wait that long.

I could fuck his ass instead of Audrey's, but with Nex here, I want all three of us to have her.

Finally, I turn my attention to Brenden, who's still laid out on the table. "Want to help me prep Audrey?"

He's up and off the table in the next second, grinning. "Always."

"I'll hold her while Donovan goes to town. You can prep her and then help spear her on my dick—unless that's a little too much for you."

Brenden glances over my shoulder, his grin slowly morphing into a smirk. "I have no problems touching your cock, Cassian." He leans in, whispering just loud enough that I'm the only one that can hear him. "Even if I'm not attracted to you, I'm always up for helping my girl out. Plus, it'll piss Nex off."

I throw my head back as I laugh, handing the bottle off to him. "I like the way you think, Brenden."

We walk a few steps around the table to where Donovan and Audrey are, just in time to watch her come again.

"Fuck. That never gets old," Brenden says, reaching down to stroke his already hard cock.

"It sure doesn't." I run a hand down Donovan's back, loving the way he shivers at my touch. "Pet, it's time to share."

Donovan growls, continuing to pump into our mate, and I shake my head. "Donovan."

He glances over his shoulder, eyes narrowed as he slows his pace. "I don't wanna."

"Like I give a fuck." I slap his ass, grinning at his moan. "Turn her around so she can

rest her back against me. I'll hold her steady while you fuck her and Brenden preps her ass."

"Fine." Donovan leans in to share a dirty kiss with Audrey before pulling her away from the wall.

As soon as she's settled against my chest, he plows in and out of her pussy once more. I turn her head and kiss her, needing another taste of her.

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Fates, I love this woman so damn much.

It's crazy, considering I haven't known her that long, but I guess that's the thing about fated mates, isn't it? They're our perfect match, and it's easy to fall in love with them.

I feel Brenden drop to his knees moments before Audrey moans, telling me he's already hard at work prepping her ass for my cock. His hand brushes against my cock on more than one occasion, and even though it's not like that between us, it has my cock jumping.

I want to bury my cock inside my mate so fucking bad, but I won't hurt her in the process. Instead, I steal her moans and cries with my lips as her other mates pleasure her.

Brenden's hand closes around my cock, causing me to break the kiss with Audrey as he strokes me and spreads lube up and down my length.

"Fuck," I hiss, hips bucking into his touch. "That shouldn't feel so good."

Brenden chuckles as he notches my cock at Audrey's back entrance. Donovan stops moving, buried inside of her like a good boy, as I push into her.

Audrey thrashes between us, and it takes me longer than it should to realize Brenden's fingers have found her clit.

My eyes meet Donovan's once I'm fully seated. "Are you good, little mate?"

“So good,” she moans. “I feel so full. Fuck me, please.”

That’s all Donovan and I need as I lift her a little higher so we can fuck in and out of her. Thank the Fates that Donovan and I are close enough to the same height that we can do this easily.

She’s so fucking tight—especially with Donovan’s monster cock inside her cunt. I can feel his cock through her walls, and it makes this even better. I love fucking her with one of the men I love.

Unfortunately, I’m not going to last as long as I want to. Donovan’s mouth and Brenden’s hand have me closer to the edge than I want to be. I can already feel my balls drawing up as Donovan and I power in and out of her, her moans only adding to the fervor growing around us.

“I’m close,” I pant, never slowing my pace.

Donovan smirks like the brat he is. “Already?”

“The two of you just feel too good,” I tell him, and Audrey twists around to capture my mouth with hers.

“I’m almost there,” she admits against my lips, and that’s just what I need to hear.

I’d love to fuck her forever, but that’s just not going to happen. I’m too close, but I can hold out until she comes, at least.

My eyes find Brenden, who has only stepped back slightly as he works his hand up and down his cock. He must feel my eyes on him because he tears his eyes off Audrey to glance at me.

“Help us.”

That’s all I have to say for him to release his hold on his cock. He steps forward, his hand snaking between Audrey and Donovan once more and finding her clit. She tightens around me instantly, and with just another few pumps of my hips, she’s coming.

Her head falls back against my shoulder as I grind my hips against her ass, filling her ass with hot spurts of cum. I come so hard, my knees wobble beneath me.

As the two of us pant, coming down from our orgasms, Donovan continues to pound into her. His stamina is fucking insane.

Finally, I slide out of her and step back, glancing over my shoulder to find Wraith. He’s squeezing the base of his cock as he tries not to come. I lift my hand, gesturing for him to join us.

“Pet, Wraith is trying so hard not to come. Why don’t you come with him?” I ask when Wraith joins us.

Donovan’s eyes dart to Wraith, licking his lips as he watches Wraith stroke himself.

“Pretty girl, do you trust me?” he asks, his eyes never straying from Wraith.

“Yes.” One simple word, and I know how much it means to Donovan to hear it.

“Good. Cassian?” I lift my eyebrow at my hellhound, wondering what he wants from me. “Can you help her lean back and support her?”

I can already picture what he’s planning, and I’m here for it.

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“Brenden, you’re going to want to get over here, too,” I tell him, already helping Audrey lean back as Brenden and Wraith move closer, crowding her side so as not to block Nex’s line of sight. I support her shoulders, keeping her in position as Donovan’s pace picks up.

“Come on her,” he barks out, his face twisting as his hips stutter. A groan spills from his lips as his hand finds Audrey’s clit, working it until she’s falling apart once more. His hips rock against her slow and steady as he comes, his knot probably locking her in place, if I had to guess.

I watch as cum spurts from both Wraith and Brenden, splattering across her tits and stomach before Wraith turns his aim so that some hits her face and my abs.

A grunted curse comes from the living room, and I turn my head just in time to see Nex’s cock jerk in his pants before a wet spot spreads across the front of him.

I chuckle as a contented sigh leaves Audrey and help her back up, nuzzling her ear. “Nex just came in his pants—that’s how fucking hot that just was.”

She bites her lip but doesn’t turn to look at the incubus. “I think I need a bath.”

“I’ll get it started,” Brenden calls before darting off using his vampire speed.

Donovan, not seeming to care about the cum covering her body, kisses her before starting toward the stairs with her still locked to him. She snuggles into his neck, and I bet she’ll be asleep before she’s even in the bath.

The bathtub is big, but I'm not sure if we'll all fit in it. Not that it'll keep me from trying to fit so I guess we'll find out.

Wraith is already on the stairs, and I follow their path, pausing beside Nex. "If you hadn't fucked up, you could've been part of that."

"I'm aware." He doesn't sound annoyed in the least—just sad, and I feel sorry for him. I'm still pissed, but I understand why he did what he did.

"Just don't give up," I tell him, clasp his shoulder for a moment before heading up the stairs.

I don't know if Audrey or Brenden will ever forgive him, but I hope they do. Only because they'll feel like a piece of them is missing when he's not around, and they deserve to be happy.

Chapter Fifteen

Audrey

I step out of the shadows with Cassian and Brenden, finding that everyone else has already arrived. It always seems I'm the last one to arrive for the war council meetings.

Except, as I look around, not everyone is here. Neither Lucifer nor Mom is here yet.

That's...weird.

I shake my head, not liking the path my thoughts are trying to take. My eyes find Wren first, where she's being cornered by Gael, Octavius, and Riggs.

My eyes narrow as I take a step toward them, wondering why they're all surrounding her like that, but I'm pulled to a stop by Wraith. I didn't notice him join us, but he's quickly followed by Donovan and Nex.

"I wouldn't if I were you," Wraith warns me, and I tilt my head as I stare back at him. I feel like he's trying to tell me something, but I have no idea what it is.

"You're not my mates!" Wren yells, catching everyone's attention in the room as it falls silent. "Wouldn't I know it if you were?"

She says the last part so quietly that I have to strain to hear her words, and they hit me like a ton of bricks.

Of course, Wren wouldn't know who her mates were if she was anything like me. The only reason I knew my mates were mine is because they told me they were—and I hadn't believed them until I spoke with the Fates.

I should've known we'd have to deal with this eventually, but I didn't realize that the other three horsemen were her mates.

Even from where I stand, I can see the fear and pain on my sister's flushed face. I don't know what made them approach her today, but now isn't the time for this.

They don't even know half the shit my sister went through in her marriage with Michael. Hell, I still don't know everything.

Shaking off Wraith's arm, I storm over to the four of them and squeeze between Gael and Riggs so I can stand in front of my sister.

"Back off," I practically growl, baring my teeth.

“But Aud—” Octavius starts, but I cut him off with a glare.

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“This isn’t the time.” My voice is quiet as Wren buries her head in my back. “We’re planning a war, for fuck’s sake. Plus, you’re overwhelming her. Can’t you see that?”

All three of their faces fall as they take a step backward, then another and another.

“We’re sorry, Wren.” Gael ducks his head. “We didn’t mean to overwhelm you.”

Wren moves to stand beside me, grabbing my hand. “I know you didn’t, but I’m just not...I’m not ready for this.”

Riggs grunts but nods his head. “We understand.”

“Will you still sit with us?” Octavius asks, hope filling his voice.

Wren stiffens beside me before giving them a nod. “Yes, but I don’t want to hear any more talk about mates.”

The three of them agree before turning away and joining my men. I lift my brows as I turn to my sister.

“Do you have something you want to share with me?”

“No.” She ducks her head, her cheeks burning brighter. “At least not yet. We have more important things to focus on.”

I hum. “I’m not sure I agree that they’re more important, but I get your point. I’ll be here when you’re ready to talk.”

She nods, looking uncomfortable as I lead her toward my friends. I come to a stop when I realize they're not alone.

Celeste is speaking with Charon, flipping her long blonde hair over her shoulder as her green eyes sparkle. She's nearly as tall as him. He's only about two inches taller than her six-foot figure, and if I'm not mistaken, she's flirting with him.

Celeste is flirting with the ferryman? How? Why?

I can't even begin to wrap my mind around that, so I'm not going to try. At least not right now.

As if my mind wasn't just blown by the fact that the three horsemen think they're mysister's mate. I don't have the spoons to deal with any of this, considering what we're meeting about.

My eyes find Diana's blonde head, and I'm not surprised to see her with Melody and Warren. While I haven't gotten to spend a lot of time with the couple currently dating one of my besties, I really like them so far. They both look at Diana with hearts in their eyes, and there's nothing more I could want for her.

They're also gorgeous.

Melody with her beautiful terra-cotta skin, light brown braids cascading down her back, long legs, and soft curves. Warren's bronzed skin shows off his Hispanic ancestry, along with his black hair and pale blue eyes. The three of them together are striking.

Except it's not just the three of them. They're speaking with Nyx and Erebus, both of whom keep reaching out to touch the trio.

Seriously? What the hell is going on around here?

I'm all for my friends and family finding love, but I wasn't prepared for any of this. I know I've been dealing with my own shit, but shouldn't I have seen this coming? There's no way any of them are this comfortable if this was brand new.

"Sorry, I'm late again." Lucifer's voice pulls my gaze off my friends. He and my mom are standing at the head of the table. "Why don't we have a seat and get this meeting started?"

I've never been more grateful for Lucifer popping in out of nowhere before.

I hurriedly take a seat, dragging Wren to sit beside me, but she pulls away with a shake of her head. "I promised Octavius I would sit with them."

Before I can argue, she's already darting around the table to take the seat Riggs is holding for her. I kind of thought she was just saying that so they'd leave her alone. Then again, Wren's never been like that.

Brenden and Wraith sit on either side of me, my other mates filling in the seats around them as everyone sits. When Celeste and Diana wave at me, I quickly return them. I think we're going to need to have a girl's day soon so they can fill me in on what's going on with their lives. I'll bring Wren along, as the three of them get along well. Maybe Melody can join us as well.

"So why are you arriving so late, Lucifer?" Cerberus asks, leaning back in his chair.

"Ana and I were getting a forge set up for her. She believes she can provide weapons for the upcoming battle. In fact, I'll let her talk about that now."

Lucifer sits down, leaving my mom standing beside him. She looks around the table

awkwardly before filling us in on her plans. Like my grandfather—it's so weird to say that after growing up thinking Mom and Wren were the only family I have—Mom has the ability to create magical weapons. She believes with Hecate's help, she can make the weapons strong enough to kill angels.

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I tune out when she starts talking about the magic needed to make the weapons able to kill all angels and not just a specific one since they have different vulnerabilities.

That's all fine and dandy, but how does that help us figure out when the battle will be?

Sure, we need a way to fight the demigods, but until we know when and where, I can't focus on the rest of it. It's just not how my brain works.

When Mom joins us at our end of the table, I turn my attention back to Lucifer as he and the other gods speak.

It seems I'm not the only one who is focused on figuring out the details.

"We still don't know when or where Michael and the other angels will attack." Thanatos's fists clench on the table as he speaks. "We need to figure that out or everything else will be for nothing. We can't make a plan without knowing the details."

Lucifer nods. "I'm aware. Unfortunately, we've kind of stalled out on that front. Do you want us to just sit here and twiddle our thumbs while we wait for inspiration to strike?"

Thanatos grunts. "You know I don't."

"Has anyone been able to think of anything that might be relevant to us figuring out those particulars?" he asks, eyes running along the table. "I thought not, but Thanatos

is right. Until we can figure out his plan, we can't really move forward with planning. I think we'll take a break from these meetings until someone thinks of something."

Hypnos clears his throat. "And what if no one does?"

"Then we'll meet again in four days. Because we'll have to have some kind of plan, even if we can't figure it out." Lucifer runs a hand over his face, and I realize just how tired he looks. "If there's nothingelse—"

"Before we go, I'd like to say something." Hecate doesn't look worried about cutting off my dad, even when he shoots her an annoyed glare. "There are six of us who have had many interactions with Michael. We know him best. We have to be able to figure out what he's up to. We might have to delve deep into our memories, but we all know how much he likes to think he's smarter than all of us. He told Lucifer it would be within the month because he wants us to figure it out. And he's really not as smart as he thinks. There's no reason we can't figure this out."

"It's not just the six of you," I tell her, leaning forward. "Wren was married to him for a few years. She might not have known what he was, and he was very good at hiding his evil, but she might know more than she thinks she does."

Hecate inclines her head toward me before focusing on Wren. "Your sister is right. It might not be anything you remember consciously, either. If you can, try to go back through your interactions with him and see if there's anything you can glean from them."

Wren nods. "I'll try, but I'm not sure what you think I'll know—either of you. He hid somuch from me."

"He did," I agree. "But he might have slipped up. Even if it seems insignificant, bring it up. It could make something click in someone else's mind."

“Okay.”

Lucifer shoots me and Wren a smile before pushing to his feet. “Did anyone else have anything to add?” He looks around the table, and when no one speaks up, he nods.

“If anyone comes up with any ideas, please reach out, and I’ll call a meeting. If not, we’ll meet in four days. We’ll have to come up with something vague that we can adapt to any situation, which is probably going to be harder than us trying to figure out what the hell he’s up to.” He drags his hand through his hair before straightening up. “Wraith, I’d like to speak to you about the academy if you have some time.”

“Of course.” Wraith offers me a tight smile when I turn to look at him.

“Alright then, those of us who know or knew Michael will try to piece together what we can. The rest of you, I guess, enjoy your days off until we need to come back together again. Wraith?” Lucifer steps back into the shadows and disappears.

Wraith leans down and kisses me. “I’m going to take Brenden and Nex with me since they’re teaching at the academy.”

“Fine, if you must.” I wrinkle my nose but accept a kiss from Brenden while ignoring Nex hovering behind me.

I’m still mad at him, and I have no idea why I decided to tell him to stay and watch me be fucked by my other mates yesterday, but I don’t regret it. Brenden is right. I do like others watching while I have sex with my mates, but not just anyone. I only like it when it’s one of my mates—even if I’m pissed at him.

Shaking my head, I wave at them before standing and hurrying over to my friends.

“We need a girls’ night,” I blurt out without bothering to greet them.

Celeste shakes her head as Diana just grins at me. They're both used to my bullshit.

"I'm definitely down," Celeste says, nudging Diana, who nods.

"Tonight?" Diana asks.

I nod, and the three of us hash out the details. We drag Melody and Wren over to make sure they're willing to join us, and when I leave with Cassian and Donovan, I feel a bit more settled. Everyone better be ready to spill tonight. I don't know how much longer we have until we're all battling for our lives and the lives of millions of others, but I damn well plan on finding out what's going on with my friends before that happens.

Chapter Sixteen

Audrey

We're just getting ready for bed two days later when all our phones go off at once.

"No," I whine, already having crawled into the bed and snuggled up with Cassian.
"Please tell me that's not what I think it is."

Wraith chuckles as he comes to stand at the end of the bed with his phone in hand.
"Sorry, trouble. Lucifer has called a war council meeting, which means someone has an idea."

I pull the pillow over my head and scream into it. I'm tired and ready for bed, but who the fuck knows when I'll be able to if my dad has called a meeting.

Feeling slightly better, I pull the pillow off my face as there's a knock on the door—likely Nex.

"I need coffee and lots of it if you want me to make it through a meeting."

My mates chuckle, and I flip them off.

"I'll get coffee going. We can bring a couple of thermoses with us," Nex says, and I lean up on my elbows to look at him.

Unlike the rest of us, he's still fully dressed and looks sinfully handsome as he adjusts

his glasses.

Warmth rushes through my core before I tear my eyes away from him.

Fucking mate bond.

It's not happy that I've been pushing Nex away. It hurts when I don't see him, and I want it to stop, but I'm not willing to forgive him yet—no matter how hard he's been working.

Every morning, he makes sure breakfast is ready for all of us before he runs off to class. He makes sure to make mine and Brenden's coffee, leaving it sitting beside plates of our favorite foods, but he never tries to eat with us. I'm not sure if I'm grateful or annoyed by this.

Let's be real. Everything about Nex confuses the fuck out of me.

Every couple of days, he pops home during his lunch break to bring me food, and Brenden says he's been doing the same to him—just bringing the food to his classroom since that's where he is. He never tries to talk to either of us, just hands us the food before leaving once more.

Then there are the care packages he's been leaving for me and Brenden, filled with bath bombs, movies for us to watch, packages of AB negative blood—Brenden's favorite when he's not feeding from me—plus so much more. I've had new leather pants, shorts, and skirts just appear out of nowhere and since none of my mates are claiming the gifts, that only leaves Nex. Especially since new graphic tees in Brenden's size also keep appearing.

He's doing what we asked, staying away from us—kind of—but making sure we're taken care of, and I just don't know how I feel about it.

Part of me wishes he would just disappear so I never have to think of him, but I know that's not possible. If our bond is giving me this many problems when I see him two to three times a day, how bad would it be if I didn't see him at all?

And he's stupidly hot, and that doesn't help at all.

"Come on, little mate. We need to get dressed. As much fun as it would be to see your dad's face if you showed up wearing nothing but my shirt, I don't think that's what you want."

I allow Cassian to pull me out of the bed as I wrinkle my nose. As if I'd show up to see my parents without at least putting on panties first. If we'd gotten the message much later, I probably would've been naked. Because getting into bed for us usually means sex.

As soon as my feet hit the floor, Brenden is there with clothes for me. I shoot him a grateful smile, sighing when he helps me get dressed too.

Fates above, I love my mates.

It's not that I can't get dressed by myself or that they think they have to do it for me. They like helping me do things—including getting dressed, which is the opposite of what most men want to do with women.

Sure, they want to undress me, too, but that's not all they want from me. I've never had men who cared for me like they do. I don't know if it's the fact that we're fated mates or if it's just who they are as people, but they genuinely want to help me in any way they can. It's sweet, but I could see it getting to be too much if they did it all the time. Which is why I don't always let them help me, and they back off immediately.

They really are my perfect mates.

After I finish dressing, I throw my long hair up into a messy bun and turn back to my mates. “Are we ready?”

Of course, my stomach decides to let out a loud growl just then.

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“Here.” Nex shoves a warm sandwich into my hand before passing one to Brenden and then my other mates. “I figured a breakfast sandwich would help keep anyone from getting too hungry, and I have two thermoses of coffee as well.”

I step forward, ready to throw myself into his arms for his thoughtfulness. Then I remember that’s not the relationship we have and why we don’t. I pull up short and nod. “Thank you.”

“Of course.” He nods, eyes averted.

I take a bite of my sandwich, waving over Cassian and Brenden, who each grab a hold of me before I step us into the shadows and then into the war council room.

Everyone is already seated around the table, many of them with sleepy gazes. I take my seat as my other mates step out of the shadows and join us.

“Good, I’m glad everyone could make it on such short notice.” Lucifer cocks an eyebrow at me, and I flip him off. If he wants us here quickly, then he should call meetings during the day.

He just chuckles. “Hecate and Wren have been working together to comb through both of their memories, and they think they have an idea of what his plan might be. Ladies? The stage is yours.”

When they both stand up, I realize Wren was sitting between Hecate and my mom instead of at this end of the table, like she usually does.

“So, umm...” Wren looks around the table, her nervousness clear for all to see. “I remembered a conversation I had with Michael shortly after we got married. He wasn’t happy with the house we were living in at the time, and there wasn’t anything that met his standards in Leyton. He almost bit my head off when I suggested we look at some of the other cities in the area. He insisted we needed to live in Leyton. I didn’t really think much of it at the time. It’s not like I wanted to move away from Mom or Audrey, so I just never brought it up again, and then we found our house.”

Hecate offers her a soft smile. “Which led me to do some research on Leyton. Are any of you aware that the city is built on top of some of the most powerful ley lines? Not just that, but the three strongest ones intersect in the center of downtown. I think this is why Michael spent so long in Leyton and why there were so many witch covens there. They were all drawn to the power of the ley lines. They probably played a part in whatever spell Michael cast when he sacrificed Audrey and Wren.”

“Do you think that’s where he’ll attack?” Lucifer asks, and she nods.

She glances around the table, making sure we’re all paying attention. “It makes the most sense. He spent however many years living there. He would’ve been able to learn the lay of the land, and it’s a highly populated city by both humans and supernaturals. If he wanted to make a statement that he was coming for them, it’s probably one of the best places he could. It’ll make the angels stronger, but it can also make our forces stronger. I have a spell that I plan to weave into an amulet for as many of our people as I can. It’ll pull on the power of the ley lines and allow us to use it.”

“I’m glad that we’ve finally figured out the where,” Thanatos admits. “But we still need to figure out when.”

Wren grins. “We’re actually pretty sure we know that, too. After Hecate found out about the ley lines, we got to thinking about what else he could try to use in his favor.

That's when I remembered Michael's obsession with the moon and astrology. It seemed at odds with who he was as a person, but everyone believes in something, so I just figured that's what it was."

"With that new information," Hecate continues, "we started looking into different aspects of astrology, but especially the moon. We believe he'll attack on either a new moon or a full moon. The full moon brings illumination and clarity. It symbolizes release and closure, completion, and abundance. All things that Michael wants. Wren, why don't you explain about the new moon?"

"The new moon signifies a fresh start, a time for introspection, and the potential of new beginnings. It's also a time for setting intentions and manifesting desires." I'm not sure I've ever seen Wren more excited as she explains all of this to the room. It's a good look. "Once again, these are things Michael would see as a positive."

Nyx nods slowly, considering her fellow god and my sister. "I can see why you've brought this to our attention. Remind me, when is the next new moon and full moon?"

Wren grimaces at the question. "The new moon is in two days. The last full moon was the day he told us he'd attack within the month. We believe he'll choose the new moon because why wouldn't he have just attacked that day if he wanted a full moon?"

"So we have two days to come up with a game plan?" Erebus asks with a grimace of his own. "Less than that, actually, since it's already so late."

Lucifer nods. "I agree with Hecate and Wren, for what it's worth. That's why I called you all in so quickly. We don't have much time, and we're not leaving this room until we have a plan in place."

Fuck. There goes my sleep, but I know Lucifer is right. Sacrificing some sleep so we can figure out how to defeat the angels and save the mortals is nothing in the grand scheme of things.

I just don't know how much I'll have to contribute to the conversation.

Everyone starts throwing out ideas, and we get to work. I pour myself a cup of coffee and down it before making another.

It seems nearly impossible, but I know we'll figure this out.

Chapter Seventeen

Wraith

We end up staying at Lucifer's after the war council meeting ends at five o'clock in the morning. None of us can bring ourselves to head home, and I'm sure my mate would like to spend some time with her family before we go to war.

It's after noon when we drag ourselves out of bed and down to the kitchen. We're all starving since we hadn't given food much thought before passing out for the night.

I can't believe that tomorrow's the day.

Tomorrow can bring anything. Any of us could die—including my mates, which I'm not happy about, but I know better than to voice those concerns.

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I want nothing more than to beg them to remain home and safe from the angels' wrath. But I can't ask that of them when there's no way I can avoid the battle myself. I'm one of the four horsemen, and the apocalypse is coming if we can't stop it. It's literally what me, Gael, Octavius, and Riggs were created for—to prevent the coming apocalypse.

We're definitely not the ones meant to initiate it like the mortals' stories tell them. It's always been funny to me how they twist the heroes into villains and villains into heroes. I've never understood it, but it's not really relevant to my life, so I don't usually worry about it.

But this time, I hope they get it right. If they even realize what's going down. Humans especially like to bury their heads in the sand and ignore the world around them when they can't easily explain something away with their science or religion.

“Good morning,” Nex says as we step into the kitchen, his eyes moving to Brenden and then Audrey before he glances away. “Breakfast is almost ready. No one else is up yet—“

“Ahh, but we are.” Lucifer steps into the kitchen, eyes narrowed on the incubus. “I hope you made enough for everyone.”

Nex nods his head. “I did, sir. I probably made too much, if I'm honest with myself.”

Lucifer waves off his words and gestures for us to follow him. We step into the dining room to find Wren and Ana already seated at the table. Lucifer indicates the seat beside him. “Audrey, if you'll sit here?”

She glances at us, and we all shrug. If she wants to sit beside him, she can. If she doesn't, one of us will.

"Sure. Yeah." She moves to take her seat but freezes when Nex steps into the room.

"Umm...Brenden? Audrey? Would you mind helping me bring the food in?"

My eyes narrow on him, but he shoots me a pleading look, and I have to bite back a sigh.

None of us are happy about the incubus's actions, but he's doing everything he can to make it up to both Audrey and Brenden. Tomorrow, we're going to war, and I'm sure he wants to say his piece before then. I can't blame him for that.

I nudge Audrey toward him. "Go."

She stares up at me in shock. "What?"

"Go help him. You'll need to hear him out eventually, won't you? Do you really want to go into battle tomorrow with all of this hanging over your head?"

She looks uncertain, her eyes searching out Brenden, who just shrugs.

Brenden is much better at hiding what he's feeling, but right now, even I can tell he wants to hear Nex out. He also won't do it if it's not what Audrey wants.

"Yeah. Sure. I guess we can do that." She grabs Brenden's hand and they follow Nex back into the kitchen.

I stand beside the doorway, my back flat against the wall, as I nod for the others to take their seats. Cassian makes a face and sits in the seat next to Audrey's—asshole.

Not that I blame him. I would've done the same damn thing.

Donovan, on the other hand, shakes his head and flattens himself on the other side of the door.

We both turn our heads so we can hear what they're saying.

"I know neither of you is ready to forgive me, and I understand that. I'm not going to talk about how badly I fucked up because we all know that, and there's no reason to go through it again. But I can't go into tomorrow without saying this." Nex pauses. "I love both of you, and I plan to spend the rest of my days making this up to you. It doesn't matter if you never want anything to do with me. I will do what I can to make your life easier. I will do anything you ask of me except leave you. None of us will survive being apart.

"If you want me to clean the toilets every day or scrub the floors with a toothbrush every other day, I don't care. Anything you want from me is yours. If the worst happens tomorrow and I don't make it, I want you to know I've spent the last few weeks enjoying providing for you. It doesn't make a dent in what I owe you, but it's a start. I don't wish the pain of my death on either of you, but if that's what it comes to, I'm okay with it. Especially if it means I can protect you.

"And I just want to say I'm sorry once again. I don't want to be the man who does things like what I did to you. Both of you make me want to be a better man, and I'm working on that. I need both of you to take care of yourselves tomorrow. No playing the hero to save someone else." Nex clears his throat. "I know it's selfish of me, but the idea of anything happening to the two of you makes me want to lock you in a room and leave you behind."

"If you think for one second—" I snort at Audrey, who, of course, focuses on that one part of his speech.

“I said I wanted to—not that I would try to,” Nex says, cutting her off. “I know both of you will insist on being there tomorrow. All of your mates know that, Audrey. They know that arguing with you won’t do any good, so they’re not bothering. I know it’s hard to trust me, but if there’s anything you can trust me on, it’s this—if they could get away with it, they’d lock you in a room and leave you there where you’re safe.”

Audrey makes an outraged sound, but Brenden chuckles. “He’s right, firecracker. I’d lock you and all your mates in a room if it could keep them safe and you happy, but that’s not how we’re going to win this. Nex, you know where I stand on this.”

“I do. You stand beside Audrey and the decision she makes. I understand. I don’t expect forgiveness. I just needed to tell you to be safe and that I love you.”

“I’m glad you don’t expect forgiveness because I can’t give you that.” Audrey’s voice is much softer now. “But please keep yourself safe as well. I’ll never be able to forgive you if you die.”

Silence falls in the kitchen before I hear shuffling footsteps. Donovan and I hurry away from the door and drop into our seats just as Audrey and Brenden step into the room, with Nex following right on their tails.

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When Brenden leans over to place the platter of pancakes and French toast on the table, he turns his head. “Don’t think I didn’t know you and Donovan were listening.”

My eyes shoot up to Audrey, who’s taking her seat, but she is talking quietly with her family.

“She doesn’t know, and I understand why you needed to listen. We’re going to be okay, Wraith.”

When Brenden goes to straighten back up, I grab his arm. “You don’t know that.”

“You’re right.” His smile is sad. “But I’m going to keep holding onto hope that we’ll all make it out of this unscathed—that we’ll eventually be able to work this out with Nex.”

I nod, releasing him.

Hope can be a dangerous thing, but it’s the only thing that’s going to get us through the next couple of days.

“I know your answer, but I have to ask. Do you think the three of you can stay behind tomorrow?”

I bite back a laugh at Lucifer’s question, my eyes flashing to him, Audrey, Wren, and Ana. All three women roll their eyes as Lucifer slumps back into his seat.

“The Fates told me I have a destiny, and I think they were talking about this,” Audrey

says, her voice soft as she reaches for Lucifer's hand. "Everything in my life has been leading up to this moment, even if I didn't know it. Wren's too."

"I'm sorry, Dad, but Audrey's right. This is something we have to do." Wren reaches for Lucifer's other hand, tears shimmering in his eyes.

"You called me Dad."

Wren grins. "Isn't that what you are?"

Lucifer nods, turning his attention to Audrey, who snorts. "Yeah, no. We're not there yet. Maybe one day."

He beams at her before his attention falls to Ana. "And you?"

"If you think I'm letting my daughters battle a tyrannical angel without me, you're sadly mistaken."

Lucifer huffs but nods. He already knew what their answers would be, but I guess he had to try. It's the same thoughts that have been running through my head, but I know better than to mention them to Audrey. She'd hand me my ass if I implied she wasn't capable of taking care of herself.

"Well, now that we've discussed that. How's everything going with the plan?" Audrey asks, pulling her hand from Lucifer's so she can eat.

"The mortals are currently evacuating Leyton as we speak. There's an old nuclear station that's close enough to affect the city, so we made them believe it was still active and about to blow. All the cities and towns in the surrounding area are evacuating as well." Lucifer eats a few bites of his food before continuing. "As they leave, we have our forces moving into their places."

“And you’re sure the angels won’t realize what we’re doing?” Brenden asks, sounding unsure. “If they’re planning an attack there tomorrow, won’t they be watching?”

Lucifer nods. “I’m sure they are, but they won’t see anything we’re doing. Hecate, Nyx, and Erebus are in Leyton, using their powers to make sure the angels see what we want them to see. I’ll be joining them after we finish eating. I also recommend that you head there as soon as possible. We all need to be in place when they attack, and we don’t want the gods using all their power to keep up the illusions needed for too long.”

“As soon as we finish eating, we’ll head back to the academy. We’ll get all the students gathered and go to Leyton. I’ll send word to the reapers then, as well.”

“Good. Good.” Lucifer’s voice is gruff when he meets my eyes.

I can see how worried he is about the outcome of tomorrow, but it’s more than that. He just found his daughters, and he’s not ready to lose them. Something I can completely understand. I’m not sure how we’ll survive if we lose any of Audrey’s mates, let alone her.

Nope. We’re not thinking about that.

If I do, I won’t be able to do what needs to be done.

All I can do is hope everything works out in our favor, and at the end of this, that we’re all together.

It’s not a guarantee, but I’m damn well going to do what I can to make sure it happens.

A glance at Cassian, Donovan, Brenden, and Nex shows they plan to do the same.

We'll do our damndest to keep our mate safe, without smothering her.

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After all, apparently, this is her destiny—no matter how much I hate it.

Chapter Eighteen

Audrey

Ipace across the bedroom of the hotel suite we stayed in last night.

Today, we're expecting Michael to attack Leyton, and I'm slowly losing my mind.

All our allies are staying in various homes and businesses in Leyton, but I hadn't felt right staying in someone else's home, which is how we ended up in a hotel.

We had to push together the two king-sized beds in our room so I could sleep with all of my mates—minus Nex, of course. It had been a tight fit, but I'm not complaining since I ended up spending the night lying across all of them.

"Little mate, you're stressing me out." Cassian's tone belays his words, sounding just as patient with me as he usually does.

I pause my movements to turn and stare at him. "How are you not already stressed out? We're going to war tonight! We might have a plan, but there are still so many things that can go wrong. Any one of us could—"

"No." Brenden slaps his hand over my mouth, not allowing me to finish my thought. "That's not going to happen. I don't care what I have to do to make sure it doesn't."

Wraith is lounging on the bed in a pair of sweats as he chuckles. “I think trouble needs a distraction.”

Donovan nods, climbing onto the bed with Wraith and gesturing for me to join them. “I agree.”

“I’m not sure—“

“Cassian, shut the door so Nex doesn’t get an eyeful.” Wraith cuts me off, cocking an eyebrow—daring me to refuse him.

“No.”

Everyone freezes when I speak, but it’s Cassian I turn to. “Leave it open.”

Cassian glances at Wraith, and I let out an annoyed sigh.

“Don’t look at him. I want the door open.” I’m sure they think I want to punish Nex again, and I’d be lying if I said that wasn’t part of it, but it’s more than that.

I liked him watching us. I liked having his eyes on me as my other mates fucked me.

“Okay, trouble. If that’s what you want.”

I pull off Donovan’s tee I wore to bed last night and toss it to the side as I turn back to the bed, leaving me bare to them. “It is.”

Climbing onto the bed, I crawl over to kneel between Wraith’s spread legs. “Now what?”

“You’re always such a brat,” he says with a smile, sliding his hand into my hair and

tugging me toward him. Our lips crash together, and he proceeds to ravish me.

Around me, I can hear the rustle of the others undressing, but Wraith never makes a move to take off his sweatpants. Not even when I straddle him, rubbing my pussy against his cloth-covered cock.

Damn stubborn man.

I tear my lips from his to stare down at him with a frown. “Why are you still dressed?”

Wraith chuckles, shaking his head, but doesn’t answer my question as I feel one of my mates move up behind me.

I don’t need to know who it is to lean back into them, smiling when Cassian’s arms wrap around me—his cool taupe skin tone giving him away.

He presses a kiss to the spot behind my ear. “It’s always fun when you think you’re the one in charge.”

“I don’t—“ I’m cut off by Cassian’s lips on mine.

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His hands graze up my sides until he's cupping my tits, and when his finger grazes over my already pebbled nipples, he swallows down my moans.

"Pull up a chair," Donovan growls, and I break the kiss to find him speaking to Nex. "It seems our girl wants you to watch."

Nex's eyes find mine, and I give him a small nod. "Am I to assume I'm not to touch myself again?"

I'm not sure how I feel about it just yet because, like everything involving Nex, I'm confused about what I want from him. Luckily, Brenden is the one who answers. "You can touch yourself, but you don't come until I say you can."

Nex swallows, his Adam's apple bobbing as his eyes find Brenden. He nods, grabs an armchair, and pulls it over until he has a good view of the bed before dropping into it.

Suddenly, I'm not sure what to do. By the time he walked in on us before, we were already having sex. This time, he's come in at the very beginning, and I'm not sure how to handle it.

"Just turn your brain off, trouble. I can see it running a million miles a second from here." Wraith untangles himself from me and stands just long enough to push his sweats to the floor. Then he climbs back onto the bed. "Here's how this is going to go. We're going to take care of you and help you shut off your brain for a bit. You're going to be a good girl and do exactly what we tell you. Do you understand?"

Part of me wants to rebel against his words, but I could do with a little time where I'm not worried about everything. "Yes, Daddy."

"That's a good girl. You're going to suck my cock while Donovan eats out that pretty pink pussy. Then Donovan will take over sucking my cock so you can ride Brenden's face. After two orgasms, you should be able to take me and Cassian together without any problem. How does that sound?"

"Yes, please." I'm already trying to break Cassian's hold so I can get Wraith's cock in my mouth, but he just holds me tighter.

I glance over my shoulder at him, and he smiles. "Why won't you let me go?"

His smile grows. "You didn't say please."

"But I did."

"Not to me."

Rolling my eyes, I lean up to kiss him. "Can I please suck Wraith's cock so my mates can make me come?"

"Don't think I didn't see you roll your eyes, but yes." But he still doesn't release me, lifting me so I'm horizontal to Wraith, my back to Nex. "Ass up."

I lower my upper body, my hand wrapping around Wraith's cock as I run my tongue along his length. The grunt from behind me has me smiling as I realize Nex now has an uninterrupted view of my pussy.

I clench down on nothing, growing wetter with the knowledge that he's there and can't touch me. That shouldn't be as hot as it is.

Cassian's hand runs down my spine before slapping my ass. I squeak, my pussy clenching again.

I don't get a chance to say anything else as Wraith fists my hair and pulls me down on his cock. Breathing through my nose, I allow him to take control as he lifts me up and down his length. I love sucking cock, but I love when they take control.

The only thing better than this is when they fuck my face, which is harder in this position but not impossible.

A moan causes me to vibrate around the cock in my mouth as a tongue runs along my slit. Not just any tongue but my hellhound's. He licks, nips, and sucks along my entrance and clit before pushing two fingers into me. I'm so worked up over Wraith telling me what was going to happen that I know it won't take long for my first orgasm.

Even before Donovan started fucking me on his fingers, I was teetering on the edge. So when he sucks my clit into his mouth, I'm a goner.

I scream, the sound muffled by Wraith's cock as his hips thrust into me from below. Neither he nor Donovan stop their movements, sending me spiraling into a second orgasm in mere minutes.

"What a good girl you are, trouble. Giving us not one but two orgasms." Wraith pulls me off his cock and holds my head up so he can see me. "Are you ready to ride your vampire's face?"

I nod, but when he tugs harder, I realize he wants a verbal answer. "Yes. I would very much like to ride Brenden's face."

"Good girl," he purrs as he releases his hold on my hair. "Pet, get up here and keep

my cock warm while we watch Audrey take what she wants.”

“Yes, sir,” Donovan growls, helping me sit up. He turns me around before joining Wraith.

Brenden lies horizontally across the bed, his head on the side closest to Nex.

They really want me to put on a show for my wayward mate, apparently.

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“Come on, firecracker. I want you to smother me with your pussy.” Brenden sits up on his elbows, smiling when I crawl to him, straddling him, and pushing him onto his back.

I shimmy up the rest of his body until my cunt hovers over his mouth, and I slowly lower myself onto his waiting tongue. My hands shoot to my tits, rolling my nipples between my fingers in time with the rocking of my hips. My head falls back, and I can feel Nex’s eyes on me.

Moan after moan spills from my mouth as I build up to a third orgasm. Brenden’s groans send vibrations through my body.

I make a concerted effort to open my eyes and roll my head forward so I can see Nex.

For a moment, I forget how to breathe as I watch him. His pants are open, his hand stroking along his cock as his eyes stay locked on where I’m riding Brenden’s tongue.

When Nex’s hungry eyes find mine, I lose it. I come hard, grinding against Brenden’s face as if I intend to kill him. I can’t tear my eyes away from Nex as he continues to work his cock—and, believe me, I try. I’m transfixed by my entirely too-hot mate that I don’t want to desire.

Finally, Brenden lifts me off him as aftershocks rock my body. “Were you trying to kill me? Because that’s definitely how I want to go.”

“I would never.” I snort before it turns to full-on laughter, and I glance down at him.

His fangs extend, but he doesn't bite me.

"You're hungry. Bite me."

He doesn't hesitate as his head darts forward, his teeth sinking into my thigh. With the first pull of blood, I come again, undulating above him as the room spins and threatens to go black.

How many orgasms is that? Four? And I haven't even had a cock in me yet.

Holy shit.

"Not too much," Cassian warns Brenden just before he backs off, licking the wound closed.

Brenden glares at Cassian as he lifts me off his lap and shuffles across the bed so we can rejoin Wraith and Donovan.

Donovan still has Wraith inside his mouth, but he's just sitting there. I tilt my head to the side and recall Wraith telling my hellhound to warm his cock. Tingles of pleasure flicker through me as I realize this is what he meant.

Did he just hold him inside his mouth the entire time I was with Brenden?

Why do I find that so attractive?

"Thank you, pet." Wraith runs his hand through Donovan's head as the hellhound pops off his cock. "You were a very good boy. Why don't you and Brenden sit against the headboard and enjoy the show without blocking Nex's view?"

Donovan leans in to kiss Wraith, then Cassian and me before scuttling up the bed to

sit beside my vampire mate as they stroke their cocks.

I lick my lips, wanting to suck one or both of them between my lips. Not that I could fit Donovan's cock and someone else's in my mouth at the same time, but a girl can dream, right?

Wraith chuckles. "Such a greedy girl."

"Who? Me?" I ask with a grin, giving Wraith my attention. "Always."

"Come get on my dick, trouble." It's not a request but a command, and I quickly follow it.

We both moan as I sink onto him until he's fully seated inside me. I only get a chance to roll my hips once before Cassian presses against my upper back, forcing me to lie on top of Wraith. He pushes my legs further apart as I hear the cap of the lube being removed—or at least I assume it's lube. I'm not sure what else he would use right now.

Even knowing what he's about to do, I jump when his lubed-up finger brushes along my pussy lips, where they're spread open around Wraith's hard cock. I remind myself not to tense up when he pushes his finger into me, right alongside Wraith's cock.

Wraith pulls me into a kiss, distracting me as Cassian readies me to take both of them at once. I lose myself in the kiss, barely paying attention as Cassian adds more fingers as Wraith fucks me slowly from below. It's erotic the way the two of them work together.

When Cassian notches his cock at my entrance, pressing forward, I break the kiss to watch my mate from over my shoulder.

His eyes shut tight as he rocks into me, pushing forward an inch at a time.

“Fuck. You’re so fucking tight like this,” he murmurs when his hips meet my ass.

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I can't even respond, too lost in the sensation of being stuffed so full of cock.

Then they start to move, and I lose all coherent thoughts. All I can do is cling to Wraith as he and Cassian fuck me hard and fast.

This time, my orgasm grows slowly. Warm pleasure buzzes along my limbs as they bring me higher and higher until I feel like I'm going to die if I don't come.

"Please," I beg, thrashing my head from side to side. "Please. Please. Please."

I can't seem to do anything but beg them.

"Does my little mate need to come?" Cassian rasps into my ear, his movements never slowing.

"Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes," I chant over and over again.

Wraith's hands find my tits, flicking my nipples while Cassian's hand snakes between Wraith and me until he can give my clit the same punishment.

It's all too much and not enough at the same time—until it is.

I splinter, falling apart with a loud scream that I'm sure everyone in the hotel would've heard if we weren't alone.

My pussy clamps down on their cocks, slowing their movements some before they both lose their rhythm and spill inside of me simultaneously.

I faceplant on Wraith's chest, unable to move as my arms and legs spasm with aftershocks.

I still have two mates who haven't come yet, but I'm not sure I have the energy to fuck them right now.

Maybe five orgasms is my limit?

But I already know that's not true. I've definitely had more than that in a night before.

"Hey, pretty girl." I blink my eyes open to find Donovan lying in front of me. "Don't tell me you're out for the count already?"

I stick my tongue out at him. He just laughs, leaning in to kiss me.

A groan escapes me as Cassian pulls free, and cum slips from my pussy—likely down Wraith's cock.

"Are you okay, trouble?"

Donovan pulls back, and I lift my head so I can see Wraith as I nod. "That was just intense."

Wraith nods, curling his upper body so he can kiss me. "Just think about how easily Donovan is going to be able to slip that monster cock inside you."

"Mmhmm, that's true." I sigh. "Someone's going to have to help me up, though. I don't know if I can move yet."

Masculine laughter fills the room, and if I had more energy, I'd flip the lot of them

off.

Wraith takes pity on me as he sits up, his cock slipping from me. Donovan lifts me off our lover's lap, and, once again, I'm being shuffled across the bed.

"How do you feel about sucking Brenden's cock while I fuck you?" Donovan lays me down at the end of the bed, my head falling over the edge, and I get an upside-down view of my vampire mate.

"Like this? Always." I try to lift my arm to gesture for Brenden to move closer, but I barely lift it off the bed before it falls back down. Yeah, that's too much effort. "I want both of you to fuck me—use me."

They both chuckle as Donovan settles between my thighs, his cock brushing between my lower lips and sending a rush of pleasure through my body when it slaps against my clit. I guess I have more in me, after all.

I open my mouth, and Brenden doesn't waste any time to push between my lips. His hands land on either side of my head as he forces me to take all of him at once. It's one of the reasons I enjoy taking their cocks like this. I love choking on their cocks when they shove them down my throat, but it's so much easier in this position.

I swallow around him, then moan around him as Donovan thrusts into me in one go. Once again, I'm full of cock, and I've never been happier.

They both move in and out of me, alternating at first. Then they're both fucking into me at the same time, each chasing their orgasm. I don't mind because I know they'll make sure I come too. None of my lovers are selfish.

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Donovan's thumb finds my clit as his pace stutters. His cock grows impossibly hard inside of me, and I know he's about to come.

"Come with me, pretty girl," he begs, and my body responds to his desires.

I scream around Brenden, who continues to fuck my throat as I come. Donovan's cock pulses inside of me, spurts of cum filling me and spilling out around us. That's what happens when three of my mates shove as much cum as possible inside me.

"Nex, come here," Brenden commands as he pulls out of my mouth and strokes his cock. He waits until our mate is standing beside him before continuing. "You can come when I do. We're going to paint Audrey with our cum."

"Fuck yes," Nex hisses.

It's hard for me to see much more than their cocks, but I can tell Nex's head is turned toward Brenden. He's watching my mate jerk himself above me, and that's fucking hot.

"Oh, you like that, do you, dirty girl?" Donovan chuckles as my pussy flutters around his cock. "You want them to cover you in their cum?"

"Yes," I manage to get out before Brenden's cock jerks, cum spraying across my chest and face.

Nex groans, and then he's unloading on me as well.

They both continue to stroke themselves until they are empty. Then Brenden grabs Nex by the back of the neck and forces him to bend over until his head is hovering over me.

“Now, lick her clean.”

Part of me wants to say no—that I don’t want his tongue on me, but it would be a lie.

Nex only hesitates for a moment before leaning down and licking the cum from me. He closes his mouth around my nipple, sucking on it before circling it with his tongue.

I pant as Donovan chuckles. His hips begin rolling, his cock hitting every perfect spot inside of me as Nex cleans the cum from my chest before moving onto my face.

When he takes my mouth with his, our tongues moving together, I explode.

Donovan grunts, coming again as my cunt clamps down on him and milks him for all he’s worth.

As soon as Nex pulls away, I’m left feeling confused.

What the hell was that, and why did I let it happen?

Fucking hell.

At least Wraith did what he set out to do. I’m no longer worried about the upcoming battle.

Chapter Nineteen

Audrey

The sun set over an hour ago and still nothing. I'm beginning to think we might have been wrong about Michael's plans.

I'm sitting on the couch between Wraith and Donovan, a movie playing on the TV that none of us are paying attention to.

My eyes rove around the room, but when they catch on Nex, I quickly look away.

I still don't know what that was between us earlier, but I don't want to think about it right now. Not when we're supposed to be preparing to battle the angels—if they ever show up.

Whatever that was with me and Nex will have to wait until later.

As usual, every time my thoughts roam to him, confusion rushes through me. The mate bond is strung tightly between us, feeling like it could break at any moment. I'm still hurt by how he treated me and the things he said—the worst of the pain coming from when he left me and Brenden alone in bed at the hotel. But how long am I meant to punish him for?

Brenden is softening on him already—at least, that's what I think his earlier action of bringing Nex into the scene means.

I don't want to be the person who holds onto their hurt and denies themselves something they want and need, but I don't know how to move past the pain. It could be because I've never felt as destroyed as I did when I read his note, and I'm afraid to put myself in a position where it could happen again.

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I'm ripped from my thoughts as the building shakes.

“Is that—“ I'm cut off by a blaring siren—our signal that the angels are attacking.

We're all up and out of our seats in seconds. Nex transforms into his demon form, his wings flapping once before settling.

“Be careful—all of you,” I spit, my eyes jumping to each of my mates. “If you do something stupidlike dying, I'm going to find a way to bring you back and kill you myself.”

From there, no other words are spoken. Wraith, Cassian, Brenden, and Donovan each give me a kiss.

Nex stands at the balcony door, giving me a sharp nod before stepping outside. He flaps his wings and then he's gone.

Cassian follows him as I link fingers with Brenden. I take one last desperate look at Donovan and Wraith before pulling us into the shadows.

This is it.

We step onto the street outside the hotel and into absolute chaos.

No more than a minute or two has passed since the siren rang out, but already buildings are destroyed around us. Angels fly through the sky, raining havoc on the buildings that still stand and some of our people who are also in the air.

There are more on the ground, fighting demons and reapers alike. I'm surprised they're not trying to keep to the sky since most of our allies are unable to fly.

I lose my grip on Brenden, and he's swallowed up into the crowd that sweeps me along. I fight against them, needing to keep eyes on my mates, but it's no use.

I duck when a sword comes flying at my head. I glare at the angel wielding it, but they just smirk and swing again.

Calling on my hellfire, I reach out, grab the sword, and stop its forward movement. It cuts into my skin slightly, a trail of blood dripping down my arm, but I don't even feel it.

My lips turn up into a smirk as the angel's eyes widen. He doesn't have any time to back away as my purple hellfire rushes down the sword and engulfs him in seconds.

Hellfire and angels don't exactly get along well.

I swing around, taking in the sights of the battles being fought around me, but I don't see any of my mates.

I lift myself into the air using my fire, hoping I can see a little better from the sky. I don't even have to dodge the angels barreling around as they quickly realize I'm not surrounded by any ordinary fire.

It only takes two of them dying before they back off and give me plenty of room to search the battlefield. As I get higher, I see the fighting seems to be contained in downtown Leyton. There are fewer angels than I thought there would be.

Does that mean that not all the angels are fighting for Michael?

I really hope that's what it means, and he's not just holding them in reserve in case he loses too many people.

The angels are still avoiding me, so I send hellfire flying toward the two closest ones. They fall to the ground below us, and I wince when they take out a demon. I wait for the demon to get back to their feet, but they never do.

Damn it.

I force myself to look away, seeking out my mates, friends, and family. We were all staying in hotels on the same street so we could stick together, but I don't see any of them below me.

My eyesight seems to focus, and I'm suddenly able to see further away with more clarity than I could before. Apparently, not all of my powers have revealed themselves yet.

It takes me a few more minutes to locate Diana and Celeste, fighting alongside most of the war council. Lucifer and my mom are fighting a few feet away from them.

Two streets over, I find Wraith and the other three horsemen fighting alongside my sister, Nex, Donovan, and Cassian. Brenden joins them moments later, and I head toward them. I don't know how I ended up so off course, but I'm glad I know where they are now.

I'm forced to stop again and again as the angels get braver. They don't get too close, knowing what will happen to them if my hellfire touches them, but they start sending their magic toward me.

For the most part, the hellfire burns up the magic they throw at me, but some sneak past. I almost lose control of my magic when a lightning bolt collides with my body. I

shake as it jolts through me, my limbs feeling like jelly. Luckily, I'm able to rein in my magic and keep myself in the air, but I'd prefer not to be hit by that particular bit of magic again.

My eyes rove over the battle beneath me as I wait for my body to stop jerking. Bodies litter the ground from both sides, and I don't understand how it's happened so fast. I feel like the battle has just begun, and there are already so many people dead.

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My stomach turns at the number of bodies I see, nausea rushing through me.

There's just so much death already, and for what? Because some demigodsgot jealous?

I dodge another slew of magic, grateful my body has finally recovered from the electric shock I got.

I find my mates once more and realize I'm no closer to them than I was just a few minutes ago. This isn't working. There are too many angels in the air and not enough from our side.

It won't be any better trying to run to them on the streets below—not with how crowded they are with both angels and our allies.

Spinning in a circle, I send hellfire through the air. I'm not aiming for anyone, just trying to get them to back off so I can get to my mates.

I ignore the screams, knowing I hit at least a few of them as I dip down and push myself through the air.

I'm finally almost to them when something knocks me off course, my hellfire sputtering out as I begin making a rapid descent toward the ground.

Panic flails through me, making it hard for me to grasp my magic again. Finally, I yank on it and my hellfire flares around me once more. I'm no more than twenty feet above the ground now, hovering over the battle.

Scythes slice through the air, and I realize I know some of the reapers down there fighting. Tears pool in my eyes as I watch three of them felled by a bolt of lightning.

I knew war wasn't going to be easy, but experiencing it is horrendous. Watching people I know falling to the ground, unseeing eyes staring up at me, is more than I can deal with.

I shoot back into the sky, zeroing in on my mates. I need to be at their sides, and I'm not going to let anything stand in my way—especially not the selfish angels who want to destroy the world I grew up in.

Determination rises within me as I move closer and closer to my mates. Hellfire flies through the sky, taking down angel after angel, and I don't even feel bad about it.

They brought this on themselves. We're protecting the people of this world from the hell they want to rain down on them.

Fuck that.

I've almost reached my mates when Nex's head snaps up toward me. His eyes go wide, and I see his mouth move, but he's too far away for me to hear him. Then he's launching himself into the air toward me, and I swing around to find Michael hovering twenty feet from me.

"Fancy meeting you here, Audrey." He smirks, dodging the hellfire I sent toward him. "Tsk tsk. I'm just here for a friendly chat. There's no reason to try to kill me."

"Sure there is. There are a million reasons I should try to kill you, you selfish prick."

Michael doesn't look offended by my words. "I wasn't sure you were going to figure out what I had planned, but I'm so glad you'll be here to see the beauty of my plan.

It's going to be spectacular."

"We will not let you win, Michael."

His smirk finally slips away, his eyes flashing. "And who do you think is going to stop me? You? It's funny that you think you can. No one can stop me, Audrey. You're all too weak."

Then, before I can respond, he sends a bolt of lightning at me, and there's not enough time to dodge it. He's too close.

Fuck.

Chapter Twenty

Nex

Flying away from Audrey was the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

While I know she can take care of herself, I don't like leaving her unprotected.

But she's not really unprotected, is she? Not when she has four other mates who haven't broken her like I have.

She doesn't need me when she has the four of them.

I certainly don't deserve her. Not that it keeps me from wanting her, anyway.

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I swing around at the sudden movement through the air, ready to blast whoever is trying to sneak up on me.

“Whoa there, Nex. It’s just me.”

I relax when I recognize Cassian’s voice. “What the hell, man? I was about to remove your head from your body.”

“That wouldn’t have happened.” He shakes his head as his eyes move over the battle beneath and around us. “This is a damn clusterfuck.”

“You can say that again.”

He sighs before turning back to me. “No one fights alone. I’m with you for the duration.”

Something flutters in my chest at his words.

Does this mean he accepts me? Forgives me for the damage I caused Audrey and Brenden?

I hiss as magic slices across my side, reminding me this is not the time to get lost in my thoughts. I spin around and launch myself at the angel who thought I’d be an easy target. I land a punch to his face before gripping his shoulder and sending lust coursing through him.

I laugh when he tries to kiss me, pulling out the sword Audrey’s mom made for me. I

slice off the angel's head, watching it fall to the ground beneath me.

"We need to find Lucifer. He wants his daughters close during the battle. We're supposed to meet them there," Cassian reminds me, and I give him a sharp nod.

We race through the sky, taking down angel after angel as they barrel toward us. Even having to stop to take out the angels, we make it to Lucifer in mere minutes.

"Wren and the horsemen are a few streets over. They got pushed away when people started crowding in. Go help them keep my girls safe," he yells before launching more hellfire at the angels trying to dive-bomb him and Ana.

Cassian and I push our way through the crowd, fighting when we need to until we reach the horsemen. By the time we make it there, Wraith and Donovan have already arrived.

"Where's Audrey?" Cassian yells as soon as we reach them, trying to be heard over the sounds of the battle.

Who knew battles were so loud?

Wraith shakes his head. "She took Brenden into the shadows with her before we followed them. We haven't seen either of them since then."

Shadows slink around him before darting out and wrapping themselves around an angel, dragging her to the ground. She fights against the shadows as they wrap themselves tighter and tighter around her and finally cover her face. She stops fighting and when the shadows pull away, her head is no longer attached to her body.

My eyes find Wren, surrounded by the other three horsemen as they fight. Her hand moves between them as she shoots fire at the angels, but unlike Audrey, she still

doesn't have access to hellfire. The fire doesn't damage them much, but it does distract them long enough for one of the horsemen to take their head off with another sword made by Ana.

Ana hadn't felt comfortable making more modern weapons as she'd never forged them before. She admitted that she'd given up forging to keep her secret safe, which means we're all out here fighting with swords, daggers, crossbows, flails, knives, and axes.

Hecate was able to infuse each of the weapons with magic to kill the angels, but the only way they're effective is if we pierce their hearts or if we chop off their heads. There are a few of our allies who have powers that will kill the angels without needing a weapon, but those are few and far between. The goddess had also infused the same magic into the reaper's scythes. It's all that most of them are comfortable fighting with.

Pulling myself out of my head, I dart forward to stop an angel intent on taking off Donovan's head with his own sword. Donovan shoots me a quick thanks before dancing away to battle with another angel. I swing my sword toward the angel, but they parry my blow, and I'm really not in the mood for a long, drawn-out production.

I send lust through the crowd, making sure to only affect the angels who stand against us. There's so many of them here, I can't do much more than send a flash of lust through them, but it's enough to distract them.

My sword slices through the angel's neck, and he falls to the ground, his sword clattering loudly as bodies hit the floor all around us.

I won't be able to do that again. I'm a powerful incubus, and I topped up this morning in Audrey's room, but my power still has its limits. I'll be able to target a few angels at a time, but that's about it.

But as soon as the angels fall, another group of them is rushing toward us.

Fates only know how long this battle will last, or how long any of us will be able to last.

Forcing myself to focus, I work my way through each of the angels who step in my path. A few hits make it past my guard, leaving bloodwelling from the wounds, but I ignore them for now. Nothing feels life-threatening.

As more time passes, I can't help worrying about Audrey. Why hasn't she made it to us yet? None of us knew exactly where our group would end up fighting, but we knew we'd be with the rest of the war council. They were all staying on the same street as us, so it shouldn't have been hard for her to find us.

So, where is she?

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“Watch out, Nex,” Wren cries, and I spin around to find an angel about to sink his blade into my back.

I swing my sword around and knock it to the side before taking the angel’s head off, smiling a bit at the look of shock on his face that follows him into death.

They really thought they’d be able to destroy the mortals without resistance, didn’t they? They didn’t count on the denizens of the underworld to come earth-side to protect it.

Sucks to be them, doesn’t it?

My eyes find Brenden as he joins us, and I let out a sigh of relief. Thank the Fates they finally found us.

My attention is torn away as another sword swings toward me, but I’m able to block it. I shoot a blast of lust into him before cleaving off his head and shuffling toward Brenden. It takes me a moment to realize Audrey isn’t with him.

I swing around, taking off the head of the angel trying to sneak up behind Brenden as he rips the still beating heart from another angel’s body.

“Where’s Audrey?”

Brenden shakes his head. “We got swept away from each other. I tried using my speed to find her, but she took to the sky. She was heading this way, so I sped over here.”

Fuck.

While one of my mates made it to us, the other is still unaccounted for.

“Cover me?” I ask, pressing my back to his.

“I’ve got you,” he assures me, and I lift my eyes to the sky.

Angels fly through the city, but there aren’t as many of us who have wings. Maybe Cassian and I should’ve stayed up there to keep it clear, but we didn’t know Audrey would choose to travel that way.

I scan the area before my eyes drift further away. Purple hellfire flashes in the sky, and I follow it to find my fearless mate battling ten or more angels at once.

I curse, ready to burst into the air to help her, but Brenden’s hand on my arm stops me.

“Don’t. She has this. She’s closer than she was before. She’ll come to us,” he reassures me before turning back to the battle.

I want to argue with him, but he’s right. She doesn’t need my help. She doesn’t need anyone’s help.

I barely get my sword up in time to block another blow. My sword locks with the angel’s, and I shove against him. He stumbles back before coming at me again.

This time, I’m ready for him. I send a blast of lust at him before taking his head.

This is almost too easy. Except that each time I take out an angel, two more seem to pop up in their place. I hope it’s because of who I’m fighting with and not just that

their numbers are overwhelming us. There are so many reapers and demons out here fighting who are weaker than the angels we need to defeat. But I can't let my thoughts dwell on that for too long. The dread threatens to weigh me down, begging me to give up.

Fuck that shit.

I have two mates who still haven't forgiven me. I have everything to lose if I die. I plan to live long enough for them to forgive me at the bare minimum. I won't be dying here today.

When no one rushes toward me, I lift my eyes to the sky again. Her red hair is a beacon even against the night sky. She's almost to us, finally.

Movement behind her has my body stiffening. An angel is trying to sneak up behind her.

But it's not just any angel, is it? It's fucking Michael.

"Audrey!" I scream, drawing the attention of everyone around me—her mates, sister, and friends, plus the angels.

The pause in the fight gives me long enough to launch myself into the air, eyes wide with fear. While I know my mate can hold her own against Michael, she doesn't even know he's behind her.

"Behind you!" I scream, but she can't hear me. I'm too far away.

Thank the Fates.

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She seems to realize what I'm trying to tell her and spins around to face Michael.

I grin when she shoots hellfire at him, but he easily dodges it.

Why can't this fucker just die already? If we kill him, we should be able to subdue the others easily. At least, that's what we're hoping for.

Michael is their leader, and Lucifer seems to think they'll stand down if he dies. I'm not as sure as he is, but I really want the angel dead.

I flap my wings harder, trying to get to her as quickly as I can.

Right now, she and Michael seem to be talking, but I doubt that's going to last for long. Especially not when I see the smirk fall from his face as it contorts into a sneer.

I push myself harder as I see him lift his hand, a lightning bolt forming and flying toward Audrey.

She's too close to him to avoid it, and I'm too far away to save her.

I let out a roar that bounces off the building and draws Michael's attention, but I only have eyes for Audrey as I force myself to fly harder and faster than I ever have.

Already, my wings are tiring, but I don't give a fuck. All I care about is making it to Audrey in time.

Somehow, it seems to happen both in the blink of an eye and antagonizing slowly,

but I finally reach her. I stick my hand into her hellfire, ignoring the pain of it burning my flesh as I push her out of the way. I have just long enough to spin around and watch the lightning flying right before me.

I close my eyes, knowing this is it for me, but at least I saved my mate.

At least she's safe.

I have all the faith in the world that she'll be able to save the world from Michael's reign of terror. My only wish is that I could've gotten her and Brenden to forgive me.

I hope my death isn't too hard on them. They've suffered enough, and I never want to be the cause of their pain ever again.

My body goes rigid as the bolt hits me, electricity racing through me and I lose control of my body. My wings stop flapping and I tumble through the air as I feel my heart pounding in my chest. It's beating harder than it ever has before.

Pain courses through me as my eyes fall shut, darkness pressing in around me.

I love you both so much. I try to send my thoughts to my mates. It's not something that we're usually able to do, but I'm about to die, and I'm willing to try anything to reach them. I'm sorry I hurt you. I'm even more sorry that this is going to cause you more pain. You were the best part of my life—even when you were rightfully angry at me and pushing me away. Be happy, my loves.

The darkness consumes me, and I feel nothing.

Chapter Twenty-one

Audrey

One moment, I'm sure I'm about to die, and the next, I'm being shoved aside.

All I can do is watch as the lightning bolt meant for me strikes Nex right in the chest. Then he's plummeting toward the ground, and I completely forget about Michael.

I dive after him, trying to catch him before he hits the ground, but he's falling so fast. I don't think I can reach him in time.

Even if I do, will he even still be alive?

I don't know, but I do know that if he hits the ground, he will be dead.

Pushing myself harder, a sob escapes me as I latch onto his wrist. His weight jerks me down a few more feet before I can right myself. I was barely able to stop him before he hit the ground. We're hovering just thirty feet above the heads of my other mates, the horsemen, and my sister.

"Nooooo," a man's voice screams seconds before a familiar screech reaches my ears. My head jerks up just in time to see a sword cut into my sister's neck. Her head goes flying, bouncing off the wall she was backed against.

I realize she's dead at the same moment I realize I'm holding Nex's dead body in my grasp.

All I can do is blink, disbelief and denial hitting me at once.

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This can't be real.

This can't be happening.

Nex's wrist slips out of my grasp as a keening wail bounces off the surrounding buildings. I lift my hands to my ears, unable to stand the pain radiating from that sound.

Only, it's me. I'm the one making the sound, and there's no blocking it out.

I squeeze my eyes shut, unable to cut off the sounds falling from my lips. I can't hear anything over it as wave after wave of pain courses through me, made only sharper when I realize the taut mate bond I share with Nex is gone.

Pain radiates from my core—every part of my body aches and throbs until all I know is agony.

I don't know how I manage to hold on to my magic and keep myself afloat as I lose myself to the unending torment.

As I scream for my twin and my mate, I can't seem to get my brain to move beyond the fact that they're dead. We're in the middle of a battle—a war to save the world I grew up in—and all I can do is lament my losses.

My hellfire swirls around me, keeping me safe from anyone who dares to move toward me.

A pulsing pressure builds in my stomach, slowly expanding inside me as it wipes away the pain—if only for a moment.

My body jerks and twists, and I completely lose sight of everything until all I can focus on is the building pressure. I should be worried or scared, or hell, even being destroyed would be better than the blank slate I currently am. I float in the emptiness, focusing on the pressure that builds and builds until it feels like it's going to explode from me.

And then it does.

A guttural scream spills from my lips as power blasts from my body. It replaces the keening sound I'd apparently still been making, continuing even when I wish it would stop. My throat aches and throbs as ripples of power hit the buildings around me, causing them to sway under its weight.

Clearly, it's my powers, but I have no idea what it is or what it's doing. I feel it sweep over the city from one end to the other before rushing back toward me.

It batters into me as it returns, leaving my body feeling beaten as I glance around me to see what my powers have wrought on the city.

I gasp when my eyes lock with Nex's.

I shake my head, not understanding what I'm seeing. He was dead. I felt it.

Lifting a hand to my chest, my eyes fill with tears. The mate bond is gone, so how the hell is he standing in front of me? It doesn't make any sense.

He died.

Shuffling sounds bounce off the buildings as the fallen slowly rise to their feet. The people fighting on our side cry out as they realize they're alive. They're completely healed—resurrected from the dead. I hear cries of miracles as I take in what else my magic has done.

The angels we've killed also rise to their feet, but none of them are healed. No, these are things from horror movies—no better than zombies. They're either headless or standing there with empty chest cavities. They don't move or make a sound as they stand there—as if they're awaiting a command.

Whispers of “necromancer” reach my ears, but I don't understand what they're saying. My brain can't comprehend why they're whispering it in a hushed tone, full of awe.

A hiss and the crackling of fire draw my attention to where my sister died. Unlike Nex, she's still lying in the street dead. Tears stream down my face as I move through the air toward her.

Cries fill the air once again as fire shoots into the air and forces me back as my sister's body goes up in flames.

“No! Wren! Who's doing this? Stop!” I push forward, the pink flames dancing with my purple hellfire.

It's hellfire. My sister's hellfire?

There's a flash of bright pink light that forces my eyes shut. When the light against my closed eyelids fades, I blink my eyes open and meet my sister's.

“What the fuck?” we say together before I dive through the air, wrapping my arms around her as I hug her close.

Tears stream down my cheek as I cling to her, afraid that she'll disappear.

“Audrey! Let me through you fuck faces.” I turn my head just in time to see Brenden shove between Octavius and Riggs.

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His snarl quickly falls away as his eyes land on me. “Fucking hell.”

He throws himself at us, wrapping himself around me and my sister. I let my eyes fall shut as I bury my head in Wren’s neck.

“You were dead,” I tell her, and she nods.

“I was.”

Pulling back, I laugh. “If you were dead, then how aren’t you now?”

Gael clears his throat. “I think I can answer that.”

“As can I if you’ll let me through, assholes.” Wraith’s voice has me snapping toward Gael, who steps back to reveal my mates.

I break away from my sister and Brenden, rushing into his arms and clinging to him. Cassian and Donovan are there too, tugging me from Wraith so they can hug me too.

When I pull back, I find Nex standing there. I shake my head, the pain of our broken bond still radiating through me. “How?”

“You,” Wraith says as he presses against my back. “You’re a necromancer, Audrey.”

I shake my head, never taking my eyes off Nex. “Necromancers haven’t existed for...I don’t know how long, but it’s been a long time.”

“You’re right, and if it’s something that only three-quarter-blooded gods can be, that makes sense,” Wraith presses.

“And Wren?” I ask, knowing she’s no necromancer. Nor did my magic raise her from the dead like it did for the others.

Gael’s the one who answers. “She’s a phoenix.”

That’s what finally has me tearing my eyes away from Nex. “So, I raise the dead, and she comes back from the dead?”

“So it seems.” Wraith chuckles. “We’ll deal with all of this later. Everything might have died down over here, but that’s not going to last for long. I can already hear the fight moving toward us. The angels who were here when you went supernova snuck away while we were distracted—likely going to tell Michael of the new developments.”

It’s only then that the sounds of the battle reach my ears once more. I was just so focused on what was going on around me I lost track of everything else.

“What do I do?” I ask Wraith, frowning as I turn toward the undead angels.

“You command them. They’re your army, after all.”

Can it really be that easy?

“Kill the angels fighting for Michael,” I tell them, my voice reverberating with power as it echoes off the building—even though I barely spoke above a whisper. The power resonates in the voice that’s mine but not, commanding them to my will.

As one, the zombie angels step forward, heading toward the sounds of the battle.

I watch them go, shaking my head. Not only did I raise them from the dead, but I can control them? That's insane.

My eyes catch on to Nex, and I realize how stupid I've been. I knew the entire time that he was trying to push me and Brenden away. I knew he thought he was protecting us.

Did he hurt us in the worst possible way? He sure the fuck did, but he's also been trying to make it up to us—not that I've given him much of a chance to do so.

I almost lost him today. Something inside me broke when I realized he was dead. That Wren was dead.

I can't continue to hold on to the hurt or cling to my pain. It's not just punishing Nex, but me and Brenden as well.

I throw myself at Nex, and he hugs me close as my tears fall once more.

"I'm so fucking sorry," I murmur into his neck.

"No. You have nothing to be sorry for." His voice is firm, and this is probably something we'll never agree on.

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Pulling back, I swipe at my tears. “Our bond is gone, and I don’t like it. Once this is finished, I expect you to fix it—for you to bond with me again. Only for real this time.”

He beams at me as he brushes the hair back from my face. “Nothing would make me happier. Except to bond you and Brenden both.”

“Done.” My vampire mate appears beside me, yanking Nex toward him for a kiss before pressing his lips to mine. “Now, we have angels to destroy.”

Wren’s soft touch pulls my attention away from my mates and to my twin. Tear streaks mar her face, probably matching mine, but the look on her face is determined.

“We need to find Michael.”

“We do. He was the one who ki-ki-killed Nex.” I suck in a breath, fighting against the tears threatening to fall once more. “He’s likely still in the sky. I’ll have to go after him without you.”

Wren grins. “I don’t think you will.”

Before I can ask her what she’s talking about, pink flaming wings sprout from her back. I stare at her in awe—and a fair amount of jealousy—as she flaps them and hovers inches from the ground.

“Be careful with those things,” Riggs grouches, stepping away. “Remember, they’re made from hellfire, and we’re not all immune to it.”

My sister flushes as she lands back on the ground, pulling the wings in flat against her back.

“I want wings,” I blurt, and Wren just grins at me.

“But you don’t need wings to fly, do you?”

I guess she’s right.

“So Michael?” she asks, nodding toward the sky above us.

I grin as I nod. “Let’s do this.”

Before I can call on my hellfire, I’m yanked into Wraith’s arms. “Be careful. We can’t all follow you up there. Cassian and Nex will join you, keep you both safe.”

I’m not sure we need either of my mates joining us, but I can see how much Wraith is freaking out right now. Which is understandable, considering the fact that Nex died pushing me out of the way of a lightning bolt meant for me.

“We’ll be careful, but we need to end this now.” I step back, nodding to him before turning to my mates with a smile. “No one else better die. I have no idea how to use these resurrection powers of mine.”

Then, without waiting for a response, I lift into the air as my purple hellfire surrounds me. With a flick of her fiery wings, Wren joins me. Cassian and Nex are only moments behind us as we soar higher in the air, seeking Michael.

“Umm...Ree?”

I turn to Wren, confused by the excitement in her words. “What’s up?”

“I don’t think you only raised the angels near us.” She points down at the city where masses of zombie angels are fighting against Michael’s angels. Our people are standing back, staring in confusion.

“It wasn’t just the ones who fell today, either,” Cassian says, pointing to what must be a cemetery. There are holes in the earth that look like they were dug from underneath.

My eyes catch on decomposing bodies rambling down the street toward the battle, and I shudder. “Why does it have to be zombies?”

Wren throws her head back as she laughs. “Still afraid of zombies?”

“No.” I shake my head. “They’re just gross. Why couldn’t I be the phoenix?”

“Ladies, as nice as it is that neither of you is crying any longer, we’ve been spotted.”

I lift my head to where Nex is pointing, finding Michael bearing down on us.

“At least he made it easy for us.” I reach for Wren’s hand, squeezing it tightly before releasing it. “Cassian. Nex. The two of you need to stay back. Join the fight if you can, but there’s going to be hellfire flying around everywhere—assuming that’s what you’re bringing to the fight, Wren.”

She lifts her hand, a ball of pink hellfire resting there. “Sure is.”

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“But we need to keep you safe,” Cassian argues, but I shake my head.

“This is something Wren and I have to do. It’s what we were born to do. If you want to keep us safe, keep the other angels off us.”

I shoot off toward Michael, hoping they listen to me as Wren trails behind me.

It’s time we end this.

Chapter Twenty-two

Audrey

We don’t slow down as we rush toward Michael, nor does he. Lifting my hand, I shoot hellfire at him. Wren follows suit, but he manages to dodge both of our attacks.

“You both might have gained new powers, but so did I. It’s why we had to wait until tonight and why it had to be in Leyton. The witches made sure I couldn’t fail.” Michael taunts us as he shoots lightning bolts toward us.

We easily dodge them, each sending another stream of hellfire at him.

“Why don’t you just give up? You’ve already lost it, you just don’t know it.”

I growl, dodging another lightning bolt. “And why don’t you shut the fuck up and fight us like a man instead of taunting us?”

Michael's smile is cruel as he inclines his head. "If that's what you want."

My eyes go wide when a wall of lightning rushes at me and Wren. I release my hold on my magic, allowing gravity to drop me quickly so I can dodge it. A sigh of relief leaves me when I see Wren still hovering at my side.

"Do we even know what all he's capable of?"

I shake my head at her question. I never thought to ask what powers he had. Not that it matters if he gained new powers.

"We can do this, Wren."

She nods, her face calm and serene as her attention turns back to Michael. "Let's do this."

We launch ourselves toward him, and soon, magic is flying all around us. Lightning and hellfire rush through the sky as we dip and dodge each other's attacks. Michael might have been confident that he would be able to beat us, but right now, it seems like we're evenly matched.

Yes, there are two of us, but Wren and I are parts of the same soul. When we work together, we are one. I just wish we were stronger than we are.

When Michael summons a sword into his hand, I curse. I didn't have my mom make a weapon for me, knowing my hellfire should be all I needed. Except Michael's sword is crackling with lightning. I might not have been hit by his lightning, but I was hit by someone else's. From everything I can tell, his is much stronger than the one I was hit by.

Wren pulls a sword out of thin air, and I blink at her. "What the hell?"

“I have no idea. I just knew it was there.” She shrugs, clearly just as confused as I am.

“Great. Now I’m the only one without a weapon.”

Cassian buzzes by us, chasing an angel. His sword drives into their chest, and when he jerks it free, the angel falls to the ground below. “Don’t forget you’re a reaper. You always have your scythe.”

Oh. Right. Duh.

If I wasn’t in the middle of trying to kill someone, I’d facepalm myself.

How did I forget about my scythe?

With just a thought, it appears in my hand. My hellfire runs along it as it lights up pink and turquoise.

Then we’re rushing back into the fight, swinging our weapons to meet Michael’s attack. He’s much better with his sword than we are with our weapons, and we’re barely able to hold our own. I’m really not liking our chances right now.

There has to be a way to turn this around, but I can’t think of anything.

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My scythe warms in my hand, startling me into almost dropping it. I frown, dipping down to avoid a blow from Michael as I stare at it. It feels like it's trying to tell me something which doesn't make sense. It's just a weapon. It's not sentient...

Or is it?

I close my eyes, reaching out with my mind. There's something buzzing along the edge of my consciousness. I reach out, sinking into it, and a picture pops into my head of me, pulling Michael's soul from his body with the aid of my scythe.

Fuck. How had I forgotten that?

Something bumps into me, and I lose my hold on my magic. I drop down a few feet before pulling it around me once again. I really need to pay attention to what's going on around me.

Glancing up, I realize it was Wren knocking me out of the way so Michael didn't hit me with his sword. I shake my head and rise into the air, bypassing Wren and Michael until I can hover above them.

I take a deep breath and extend the hand holding the scythe toward Michael. "Take."

Michael's body goes taut, his eyes finding me as wisps of his soul extend from his chest toward my scythe.

"You fucking bitch," he hisses, and I'm not quite sure how I can hear him, considering the distance. He shoves my sister away before flapping his wings and

coming for me with his sword.

I should be scared, but I'm not. I feel completely at peace as I pull on his soul, tugging harder and harder. It makes him falter for a moment before he continues his path toward me, albeit more sluggishly.

I focus on the tendrils of his soul, trusting my sister to keep me safe. She might not know exactly what I'm doing, but she knows Michael is coming for me.

"You can't have my soul, you witch." He swings his sword back as he nears me, but I don't even flinch. I just keep tugging and pulling at his soul.

I don't move even when he's within reach, his sword swinging toward my neck. I tighten my hand on my scythe and jerk on his soul just as my sister's sword slices through his neck.

His wings flap once, twice as he hovers in the air. His head falls to the ground seconds before his body follows. I smile as Michael's soul is sucked into my scythe.

Wren's sword disappears at the same time my scythe does, and we throw ourselves at one another.

"We did it," I murmur, barely believing it's over.

"We did. We ended his reign of terror."

When we pull back, I realize everyone is still fighting around us, both in the air and on the ground. That'll never do.

I link my hands with my sisters, feeling a rush of power flowing between us. "Enough. The fight is over. Michael is dead."

My voice sounds as if it's been amplified, somehow reaching every ear on the battlefield. Their eyes swing up to me and Wren as we hover above the city.

"Put down your weapons and surrender. Do not make us destroy you. There has been enough death here today." Wren takes over for me.

I see hesitation in their faces as I call to those I rose from the dead. "Your job is complete. You may return to your rest."

It's like their strings have been cut as bodies fall to the ground. As the last one collapses, the first sword hits the ground and the angel wielding it follows suit. She kneels, her head dipping as she stares at the ground.

After that, it happens in waves. Angels fall to the ground, their weapons hitting at the same time as their knees.

It's hard to believe it's over as our allies rush forward to secure the remaining angels. I'm surprised to find there's only about a quarter of them left.

So many of them died today, and for what?

All for a madman's need for power and vengeance against those whom he thinks his father loved more than him? He was no better than the mortals he hated.

"Are you okay, little mate?" Cassian asks as he and Nex hover in front of us. They're not close enough to be hit by any errant sparks of flames, making me relax.

"I'm fine. What about the two of you?"

Nex waves off my concern. "Nothing that won't heal shortly."

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“We need to check on the others,” Wren says suddenly. “Mom and Dad. The horsemen. Your mates and friends.”

I nod. “You’re right. Let’s go find them.”

It doesn’t take us long, as they’re all gathered near where they were fighting earlier. There are many injured, but it doesn’t seem like anyone from our side is dead. Probably because I raised them from their deaths.

“Girls!” Mom yells as soon as her eyes land on us. “Thank the Fates you’re okay.”

We land in front of her, and I release my hold on my hellfire. Wren tucks away her wings, and if I didn’t know better, I’d swear they were never there. We wrap ourselves around Mom, the three of us clinging to one another until someone clears their throat behind us.

When we break apart, tears streak our faces, but I don’t give a fuck. Let everyone see the tears of joy I’m crying.

Lucifer is standing there, his eyes moving between the three of us. “I hear I have a necromancer and a phoenix for daughters? Both of you displayed an immense amount of power today. You’ll need to be trained.”

I roll my eyes. “Seriously? We just killed Michael, and the angels surrendered. I’d like to go home and take a bath. Rest with my mates for like a month before I worry about anything like training.”

“Unfortunately for us, that’s probably not going to happen,” he tells us with a sigh. “There’s so much that needs to be done to clean up the city so the mortals can return. You might have brought those on our side back from the dead, but there are many who need to be healed.”

I scoff. “Can’t someone else do that?”

“Most of it is going to land on me and the other gods, but we’ll need all hands on deck. Beyond Leyton, there’s so much we need to figure out.”

Lucifer continues to ramble on about the list of things that need to be done, but I tune him out as the rest of my mates join us. Turning my back on my family, I throw myself at the five of them. I’m passed from mate to mate as we exchange kisses and quiet words not meant for anyone else’s ears.

I’m sure my dad is going to be frustrated that I’m ignoring him, but I can’t find it in myself to care.

“Cassian?”

My mate goes taut beneath me, setting me on my feet as he turns toward the voice. There are three women standing before us, each of them beautiful and strangely familiar to me.

“Mom? Aunts?” Cassian’s knees hit the floor as he stares up at the women as they move toward us. “Are you really here?”

Holy shit. It’s the Fates, but how? I thought they were sleeping.

Chapter Twenty-three

Cassian

I can barely believe my eyes as I stare up at my mom and aunts.

Are they truly here?

And if they are, how?

“My sweet boy.” Mom smiles softly, her hand cupping my cheek.

My eyes fall shut as my tears spill over. I can feel her hand on my cheek. It’s been so long since I felt her touch or heard her voice.

“I missed you so much,” I murmur, surging to my feet and wrapping my arms around her.

She still feels small in my arms, but it’s been that way since I grew up. I’m over a foot taller than her and my aunts. They all hover right around five feet tall and petite in stature—although that’s easy to forget with the power they exude.

“How are you here?”

Mom pulls back, patting my chest, and I reluctantly release her. “The end of the battle woke us.”

I stare at her, trying to comprehend why the end of the battle would wake them. I might have inherited some of my mom’s abilities, but understanding the ominous choice of words isn’t one of them. She and my aunts are known for talking around a topic, never really giving an answer, and I’ve never been able to read between the lines with them.

“Umm...okay?”

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My aunts laugh as they move up to hug me. Then, as one, their eyes turn to Audrey.

“Hello, daughter,” they say in unison, and a shiver runs down my spine.

I hate it when they do that. It’s creepy as hell.

“Umm...hello...Fates?” Audrey’s eyes are wide as she glances toward me, but I don’t know what to tell her. I have no idea why they’re looking at her like that.

Taking pity on her, I step over and wrap my arm around her shoulders. “Audrey, this is my mom, Claudia, and my aunts, Laurel and Athelina. Mom. Aunties. This is my mate, Audrey.”

“We’ve met,” Mom says with a smile.

I’d almost forgotten that they had come to Audrey once before.

“How did you manage that?” I ask, hurt panging in my chest. I tried for so long to reach them in their sleep, but I never could. If they could reach out, then why was it to my mate and not me?

“Oh, sweet boy.” Aunt Laurel offers me a soft smile. “When we were forced to sleep, we weren’t at full power. We could feel you reaching out to us and hated that we couldn’t respond. We had to reserve what little power we had left for when your mate sought us out.”

I bite my cheek so I won’t demand they explain in more detail. I’m a grown-ass man,

and I shouldn't whine about being unable to reach them when they'd been placed in a magically induced sleep.

My mate doesn't seem to have the same problem. "But why? Why me? Why was it so important that you ignore your own blood to speak to me?"

"Because we knew this moment was coming. It hurt us to hurt Cassian, but if you failed to defeat Michael, then none of the gods would be able to wake." Aunt Athelina looks between me and Audrey. "We would've loved to speak to you, Cassian. We heard every word you spoke to us, and it gave us hope. It's what kept us going when we could've lost ourselves to the abyss as some of the other gods have."

Lucifer clears his throat, coming to stand on the other side of Audrey. "Athelina, Claudia, and Laurel, it's good to see the three of you awake and among us once more. I'm sorry to interrupt this moment, but what's this about the other gods?"

Mom shoots me one last smile. "We'll continue our conversation shortly, my boy. As for the gods, some of them may be forever lost to us. They haven't fared as well in their sleep."

"Are we even going to be able to wake them?" Lucifer asks, frowning.

Aunt Laurel nods. "The future isn't written in stone, but there is a chance of bringing back all the gods."

"But it's not guaranteed." He doesn't phrase it as a question. Why would he?

He's spent just as much if not more, time with the three of them as I have. Nothing with them is ever guaranteed.

The strings of fate are forever changing. A single decision made by one can cause

ripples throughout the destiny of many.

It's a pain in the ass, if you ask me.

"As with everything," Mom agrees. "There are many factors that could change the outcome."

Lucifer nods. "We'll be reconvening in the war council room shortly. Fates, I would appreciate it if you would join us."

Mom inclines her head. "We will be there."

I can feel the others crowding in behind us, Wraith moving to take Lucifer's empty spot beside Audrey when he walks away.

"Are you going to introduce us to the rest of your...friends?" Aunt Athelina asks with a smirk.

"This is Wraith, also known as Death—one of the four horsemen—and Donovan, who's a hellhound. They're my chosen mates," I tell them with a roll of my eyes. They're always so fucking nosy. "This is Brenden. He's a vampire and a teacher at the academy. And this is Nex—"

Mom hums. "The mate who was the deciding factor of whether my baby boy got his happy ending."

Nex blanches, taking a step back. "I wasn't... I didn't..."

"I know." Mom waves him off. "Remember, we see all."

Now, it's my turn to flinch. "Don't let her lie to you. They don't see

everything—unless that was a lie.”

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The three of them laugh, but it's Aunt Laurel who answers. "No, it wasn't a lie. We don't see the more intimate moments, or even most of the events of people's lives. What we do see are the points in each person's life that could change the path they walk. Because Nex's destiny is so intertwined with Audrey, and therefore you, we might have peeked more often than we would have for the average person."

"But we also know why you made the decisions you did, as your sister's death was a major turning point in your life," Aunt Athelina continues. "It's what started you on the path to become one of Audrey's mates."

Nex shakes his head. "That's almost too much to believe. That wasso long ago."

"And yet, it still affects you now." Mom lifts her eyebrows, daring him to argue with her. It's a look I know well. When he says nothing, she turns to Audrey. "As we told you when we spoke, you and Wren both have a destiny to be fulfilled. Your part is now done, but your sister's story has just begun. With that being said, you still have a decision to make. We told you that you would have three mates or five, and that was true—to a point.

"With only three mates, there was a higher chance of failure for you today. I know it was a hard decision to mate with Nex in the way you did, but doing so is a large portion of why you succeeded. With that being said, as of now, you only have four mates, and if that's all you desire, then that's how it should be. With Nex's death and subsequent resurrection, any mate bonds he held broke upon his death. It is up to you whether you choose to bond with him again."

Audrey's eyes seek out Nex, a smile forming when she finds him. "Losing Nex was

one of the hardest things I've had to deal with—especially paired with losing my sister at the same time. I think I had to lose them both in order to become what I was meant to be, but I never plan on it happening again. Losing him, even for just a few moments, was too much to bear.”

My mom and aunts hum, nodding in perfect synchronization—another thing that freaks me out on the regular.

“You are correct, necromancer,” Aunt Athelina tells her. “Their deaths are what unlocked the powers hidden inside of you. As Wren’s death is what unlocked hers. There was once a time when three-quarter blood gods were abundant. A time when necromancers, phoenixes, and many others roamed the earth freely. Until some gods grew greedy, not wanting their offspring to be nearly as powerful as they are.”

Mom nods, taking over for my aunt. “With yours and Wren’s birth, a new age began. Most will not remember that time in our history, but we can never forget it. While you may be the only two three-quarter gods, it will not remain so. There are many types of supernaturals that have been lost to us that will reappear in the coming years. Your children, no matter who you have them with, will share your three-quarter blood status, as will their children and their children after them. I’m sure you get the idea. But there will be others.”

I’m not sure the last time I heard my mom or aunts give such a straight-to-the-point response to anything. It makes me stand up straighter, knowing this is important. I don’t know why yet, but when the Fates speak without riddles, you have to pay attention because it’s going to affect your life.

“Umm...hi?” Wren joins us, the three horsemen behind her—surprising no one, I’m sure. “You mentioned my story is just beginning?”

Aunt Laurel gives her a soft smile. “Hello, Wren Nathaniel. We’re happy to make

your acquaintance. I'm sure it's not what you want to hear, but today was the beginning of your destiny. There is much left in this world for you to do. We cannot give you the specifics—as we were unable to give them to Audrey—but when the opportunity comes, you'll know.”

Wren wrinkles her nose. “Well, that's not at all cryptic.”

“Welcome to dealing with the Fates,” I tell her with a laugh. “Try growing up with them.”

“Oh, hush, you.” Mom swats at my arm. “You love us.”

I nod. “Of course I do. That doesn't mean it wasn't frustrating as hell dealing with the roundabout answers when I would ask a question.”

Mom hums. “I can see your point. It's hard for us. We can never give away too much, as it can change fate—she is a fickle master. Plus, we wanted you to grow up like everyone else. We didn't want you to rely on us because of the knowledge we carry. You needed to be independent so that you were able to fulfill your destiny.”

As always, I understand what she's saying. It doesn't change the frustration that came with growing up surrounded by those who knew the answers but refused to share them with me. That also doesn't make me love them any less. They're my family, and as much as I complain, I wouldn't change anything about my childhood.

I was loved and cared for. I was taught right from wrong. I was taught to be independent but to care for others.

They're the reason I'm the man I am today.

“So...” Audrey glances around. “Does anyone know how the hell I'm supposed to get

the zombies back in their graves? Or what to do about the dead angels?”

I chuckle at the look on her face, but I have no clue. It’s not as if I’ve ever been around a necromancer before.

Luckily, Wraith is here to save the day as usual. “For the bodies that rose from their graves, you just need to command them to return to their graves. As part of the cleanup, someone will have to recover their graves, but that’s something Lucifer and the other gods should take care of. Same with the angels’ bodies. Without your magic animating them, they’re nothing more than a corpse.”

Audrey gazes off, her eyes stopping on each of the dead bodies. “It’s so wasteful—all this death. I don’t like it.”

“None of us do,” Donovan says with a sigh. “It was needless and unnecessary, but most wars lead to just that, unfortunately.”

“I hope we never have to deal with another war,” she declares, and I watch my aunts and mom exchange a glance.

While I can’t be sure what it means, it leads me to believe this isn’t the last battle we’ll see in our lifetimes.

Honestly, it’s not a surprise, considering we’re all immortal—mostly, anyway.

“War is an inevitability,” Octavius says with a wry smile. “No matter how much we wish it wasn’t. There will always be a war or a battle to be fought by someone. All we can do is try our best to prevent any major ones like this.”

And if anyone knows about war, it’s War himself.

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Desolation settles over the group, ruining what should be a celebration, and that just won't do.

“Enough of the heavy talk,” I declare. “We’ve had enough of that to last us multiple lifetimes. We need to make our way back to the underworld, but I’d really like to see Audrey put the bodies back to rest. I love how powerful my mate is.”

Audrey smiles, ducking her head as she flushes, but she doesn't deny my words.

When it's time, Nex and I join Audrey in the sky to watch the corpses ramble back to their graves. It really is hot how powerful she is.

Too bad we have a meeting to attend or I might have tried to convince her to sneak off so I can show how hard it gets me.

Alas, we must deal with our responsibilities first.

Chapter Twenty-four

Audrey

By the time we make it back to the underworld, I'm exhausted. I would love nothing more than to go home with my mates and pass out for a few days.

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be in the plans for the day.

As we step into the war council room, I'm surprised to see that the table seems to

have grown and three additional chairs sit around it.

The mood in the room is somber, and while I hate it, I understand it. We won the battle and the war, but at what cost?

“Audrey, you made it finally. Good. Will you come sit beside me?” Lucifer gestures to the chair on his right, the one on his left already filled by Wren.

“Umm...sure.” I look around the table, realizing everyone has moved around the table.

Mom sits beside Wren with Octavius, Riggs, and Gael beside her. The five seats beside the one my dad asked me to sit in are empty—for my mates, I assume.

Hypnos, Thanatos, and Hecate sit at the far end with the Fates. Charon and Celeste still sit beside each other on the other side of the empty chairs, with Meg and Cerberus beside them. Diana, Melody, and Warren are across from them, with Nyx and Erebus sitting among them.

When I had my girls’ night with my besties, they swore nothing was going on with them and the others on the war council. Yet, the new seating leads me to believe that there is something going on. Or at least that they want something to be going on.

But that’s an issue for another day.

I trudge to my seat, Nex grabbing the chair at my side as the rest of my mates fill in the other spots.

Lucifer sighs, running a hand through his hair. “Thank you all for agreeing to this meeting. I know we’re all exhausted, but we need to start planning our next steps. Sadly, taking out Michael and the rogue angels doesn’t fix everything. We need to

wake the gods. Originally, I thought they'd chosen to sleep, but as we know, Michael confessed that it was the rebel demigods who put them to sleep with stolen power. I just don't know how we'll wake them."

"It needs to be me," Wren says, shocking the hell out of me as her eyes sweep toward the end of the table where the Fates sit. "This is my quest to undertake."

Lucifer shakes his head. "I don't think—"

"We'll go with her," Gael says, cutting off my dad. "If this is something my mate needs to do, then the three of us will join her."

"Your mate?" Lucifer's brows shoot up as he considers the horsemen. "Since when?"

"They're not—" Wren breaks off, shaking her head. "It doesn't matter. I need to do this, Dad."

Lucifer's face immediately softens with her use of the word dad. "This would be quite the undertaking. We don't know how to wake them or what condition they'll be in when they do wake. I trust Gael, Riggs, and Octavius to keep you safe, but I need you to understand exactly what you're taking on by signing up to wake the gods."

"It doesn't matter," Wren tells him point blank. "The Fates told me I'd know when my destiny was calling, and this is it. This is what I'm meant to do. I understand everything you're saying, but if I don't do this, we might never be able to wake them. At least not all of them. I don't know the details. I just know that if we're going to succeed, it has to be me."

His eyes move to the Fates at the opposite end of the table, narrowing slightly. I expect him to argue, but he surprises me when he lets out a sigh. "Fine. It's not like I can stop fate. My horsemen—minus Wraith, of course—will travel with you. I expect

regular check-ins, though. I just found you and your sister, and I'm not ready to lose either of you."

Wren grins, grabbing his hand and giving it a squeeze. "And you won't. Thank you for supporting me."

"Not that it really matters, but you have my support too," Mom tells her, causing Wren's smile to grow.

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It wobbles slightly when her eyes land on me. I don't want her to go, but I know there's noway I can stop her. I hate that she has to go on this journey without me, but I know my place is here in the underworld with my mates.

"I don't like it," I admit. "But I understand. You have to do what you have to do. With that being said, if anything happens to her, I'm coming for the three of you."

Gael holds up his hands in surrender. "Come now, little sister. If anything happens to Wren, you won't have to worry about coming for us. We'll come to you, Lucifer, and Ana for our punishment."

"Not that we'll need to be punished because nothing is going to happen to Wren," Octavius adds.

"It better not," I grumble, crossing my arms over my chest.

Okay, so maybe I'm not dealing with the idea of her being away from me for an indeterminate amount of time as well as I thought I was.

I mean, who can blame me? After Michael killed me, I was separated from her for six months, and she ended up dead. It makes sense for me to want to keep her close.

Wren mouths a quick thank you to me, and I shrug. What the hell else am I going to do?

If this is her destiny, then there's nothing I can do to prevent it. I could try, but I would fail.

Plus, I think she needs this. I think she needs to find herself again. She might not admit it out loud, but I know her confidence was rocked when she found out just how much she'd been duped by Michael. She made him her whole world, and he destroyed it.

I like Riggs, Gael, and Octavius. They could be good for her. They could make her happy if she just let them. But that's not for me to say.

Hopefully, they'll be able to work out their shit while they're on their journey.

Hell, maybe that'll be part of her journey. I just wish we knew how to tell who our mates are without them being the ones to tell us.

Hmmm...maybe the Fates can answer that for me. After all, they seem to be the only ones who know anything about the three-quarter blood gods.

I'm still confused about how no one else remembers them. From the way I understand it, the gods have been around forever, just with different names.

I add it to my list of questions to speak to Cassian's mom and aunts about. I don't know if they'll be able to give me the answers I seek, but if I don't at least ask, I'll never know.

"Okay, well, that's one less thing to worry about." Lucifer glances down, and I see there are notes scrawled across a sheet of paper.

It almost feels too mundane for him to be using.

My mouth drops open when he squints at the page before pulling out a pair of glasses and putting them on.

The devil shouldn't have meeting notes and reading glasses. It ruins the entire persona.

Then again, so does him being so squishy with me and Wren.

I'm really going to have to stop thinking of him and the other gods—hell, most of the supernaturals—as they are in the stories I grew up with living earth-side. They've been proven wrong repeatedly already.

“Next up, we have crews working on putting Leyton back in order. We're hopeful that we'll be able to restore it enough so they won't know anything happened. As soon as that's finished, we'll put in a call to let them know it's safe to return.”

Wren snorts. “How exactly do you plan on convincing them that a nuclear site is suddenly safe?”

“Malfunctioning equipment,” Gael says with a grin. “It happens fairly regularly, even without us intervening.”

Huh. I guess that makes sense.

“Next, let's discuss the demigods. Based on the number of them fighting yesterday, not all the angels agreed with Michael. Who the hell knows what chaos is going on in Olympus? Someone is going to have to head there to put things right. They'll need to watch over the angels who surrendered today to make sure they don't try to stir up any more trouble, but also the angels that didn't fight—at least until we're successful in waking the rest of the gods.”

Nyx taps her hand on the table. “Erebus and I can do that. It's been a long time since we've visited Olympus. It'll be nice to see our children when they awaken as well.”

“That’s much appreciated.” Lucifer glances down at the paper again. “There are only a few other things.”

“Wait.” Erebus raises his hand, continuing to speak once Lucifer gives him a nod. “Watching over the angels is going to be a big job. We’dlike to recruit Diana, Melody, and Warren for the task, as well as some of the harpies.”

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Lucifer's eyebrows shoot up as he glances between the two gods and my bestie. "You want to take three of my reapers with you?"

"We do. Honestly, probably a few more than them." Nyx pauses, seeming to think something over. "Even with the amount of angels killed today, there are too many for us to watch between the two of us. Maybe we can do some kind of schedule where a group of reapers can come to Olympus for a set period of time to work alongside the harpies as guards?"

"You really think that's necessary?" he asks, and she nods. "The upside is a lot of reapers just graduated today, so I have more than enough of them to be able to assist with that. As far as Diana, Melody, and Warren, I'll leave that decision to them."

Diana's wide eyes meet mine, and I can tell she's freaking out.

Oh, yeah. There's definitely something going on there.

Warren's the first to speak up. "I'll only go if both Melody and Diana want to go, but I don't hate the idea."

"Same. We're a unit, so if anyone doesn't want to go, we won't," Melody adds, and I can see the panic growing in my bestie's eyes.

"You don't have to go if you don't want to, Diana," I tell her. "If you want to remain here, it'll make me happy knowing that one of my best friends is safe and sound. Well, both of them—unless someone wants to send Celeste somewhere too."

Celeste laughs, shaking her head. “If they do, the answer is no. This was more than enough adventure for me.”

That sends the table into a round of laughter, and it’s nice to just let go—even if it’s only for a moment.

“We’ll go,” Diana finally says, but she still looks worried.

I’ll need to make sure I take the time to talk with her before she goes.

Damn it.

My bestie and my twin are about to head to Olympus, which I don’t even know where it is. But something tells me it’s not close by. I really don’t like it.

Lucifer continues the meeting, although it doesn’t seem to be anything important. Which is good because I can feel myself dozing off.

I rest my head against Nex’s shoulder and the next thing I know, he’s shaking me awake.

“Time to wake up, gorgeous. The meeting’s over.”

I blink away the sleep, glancing around to see the room is empty except for me and my mates. “Shit. I didn’t mean to fall asleep.”

“It’s all good,” Wraith assures me. “Your dad even laughed a little, but he made sure everyone left as quietly as possible so as not to disturb you.”

See? Like I said, he’s squishy for me and Wren.

“Let’s go home, firecracker.” Brenden pulls me to my feet and tosses his arm over my shoulder.

I grab Nex’s hand and step into the shadows. I bring us straight into the bathroom and start stripping down.

“I need a shower, and so do you. Let’s make this quick so we can get some sleep.”

By the time all my mates join us in bed, it’s clear they all have the same idea. As soon as the last of my mates climbs into bed, I pass the fuck out.

Chapter Twenty-five

Audrey

When I wake up the next day, I have no idea how much time has passed. At least not until I glance at the clock.

Holy shit.

I’ve been in bed for almost twenty-four hours, which is probably why my bladder feels like it’s going to explode and why my stomach feels like it’s trying to eat itself.

Throwing back the covers, I jump out of bed and hustle to the bathroom but note that none of my mates are still in bed.

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I use the bathroom and wash my hands before heading for the closet. I went to bed naked last night, too tired to worry about putting on clothes. I'm sure none of my mates would complain if I came downstairs with no clothes on, but that just seems like a bad idea—especially considering how my family likes to just stop by.

While we've been preparing for the battle against Michael, Mom and Wren have been staying with Lucifer. With Wren getting ready to go to Olympus to wake the gods, I guess we don't have to worry about finding her a new place just yet. And I have no idea what Mom plans to do now. Will she also want to return to Olympus?

I bite the inside of my cheek as tears threaten.

Shit. I hadn't really considered that before. She might want to be there when her dad wakes, and I can't even blame her for that.

Sure, part of me feels like everyone is abandoning me, with Wren and Diana going to Olympus, but I know that's not true. They just have lives of their own.

I need to make sure to ask about Olympus. Maybe I can just pop in for visits from time to time or something.

That reminds me, I have questions for Cassian's mom and aunts, too. Hopefully, he can put me in contact with them.

Grabbing one of Wraith's button-down shirts, I pull it on without a bra and roll up the sleeves. I grab a pair of panties and throw on some leggings before gathering my hair into a messy bun.

I really don't feel like putting in more effort than that, so I head downstairs. Figuring they'll be in the living room, I head down the stairs.

Their voices trail up the stairs, telling me I'm on the right track as I hurry down. I pause on the last step, a smile painting my lips as I watch the five of them move around the kitchen. They seem to be cooking together, which is kind of adorable.

"Firecracker!" Brenden sets down whatever he's doing and hurries over to pull me into his arms and kiss me.

He carries me to the kitchen, setting me on the counter out of the way before going back to his task. Wraith, Cassian, and Donovan all take a moment to stop what they're doing to come over and press a kiss to my lips.

Nex, meanwhile, keeps at his task until I clear my throat. His head jerks up, and I curl my finger at him.

He looks nervous as he sets down the bowl he was stirring, moving around the rest of my mates to come to a stop a few feet from me. "Good morning, gorgeous."

"I'm not sure we can call this morning," I say, gesturing to the clock that reads two o'clock. "Now, all my other mates gave me a kiss, but you didn't. Why not?"

"I...umm..." He looks perplexed. "I didn't know if that was allowed."

I roll my eyes. "Get your ass over here and give me a kiss."

A smile lights up his face as he cages me in his arms, and I lean backward until my back hits the wall. Then he's kissing me, and he's all I can think about. The kiss is deep and sensual, and now all I want is to get him into my bed. My legs loop around his hips as I grind my core against his erection.

He lets out a long, drawn-out groan as he pulls back. “As much as I’d love to continue this, we need to eat.”

“Fine, but we’re going to continue this after we’re done. We have a bond we need to complete,” I tell him as I unwind myself from around him.

“Oh, I want in on that,” Brenden calls.

Nex flushes, ducking his head as he moves to pick his bowl back up.

“Do you hear that, gentlemen? You’ll have to keep yourself occupied while Brenden and I bond with Nex again.”

There’s a little bit of grumbling, but they’re all smiling as they agree. All they want is for me to be happy.

We end up having a feast of pancakes, waffles, French toast, omelets, bacon, sausage, ham, and hash browns. I eat twice as much as I usually would before I call it quits.

My eyes meet Nex’s across the table, and I grin. Brenden has me in his arms in seconds before he’s racing up the stairs. Laughter follows us, and so does Nex.

I feel nervous, which seems odd since I’ve already bonded with Nex once. Maybe it’s because our relationship still feels so new after he spent so long fighting it. Or maybe it’s just because I feel like I scheduled sex.

Brenden tosses me onto the bed, and I let out a startled laugh. He’s on me in seconds, tugging at my clothes until I’m naked beneath him.

Then it’s my turn to help him pull off his clothes so that by the time Nex joins us, we’re both naked and ready.

Nex licks his lips, already ripping his shirt over his head and tossing it to the side. He stalks toward the bed, losing his clothing along the way. When he makes it onto the bed, he's naked.

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“I’m going to ask one last time because I need you to be sure. Is this what you both want?”

I roll my eyes. “If it wasn’t, you wouldn’t be standing here.”

Nex nods but doesn’t immediately join us. “I still have a lot to make up for.”

“You don’t—“

“I do,” he says, cutting me off. “You might not think so, but I do. Until I can forgive myself, I will continue using small acts to make amends. I know it isn’t much, but it does make me feel better.”

When I open my mouth to argue with him, Brenden slaps his hand over my mouth. “If that’s what you need to do in order to move on from the past, then we’ll accept that. Plus, who in their right mind is going to turn down a hot breakfast and coffee every morning?”

I bite Brenden’s palm, but he doesn’t even flinch. I lick it instead, and he finally lets it fall away. “But you will be joining us for breakfast from now on. No more making food and running.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Nex smirks as he climbs onto the bed, kneeling at the foot.

I run my eyes over his broad shoulders before straying down his torso to where his cock rests between his thick, muscled thighs. I never would’ve guessed that my professor was this built the day I met him. He hides a lot beneath his professor’s

clothes, but I'm grateful for it. If all those thirsty students knew exactly what he was packing under his clothes, they'd be trying harder to get into his pants.

But he's mine and Brenden's, not theirs.

"Come and bond with us, Nex. I don't like the hole in my chest from when the bond broke. I need you to make it go away."

"It'll be my pleasure," he assures me before his eyes find Brenden. "Do you have any preferences about how this goes?"

Brenden shakes his head. "All I care about is showing both of you how much I love you while we bond with you."

Nex nods slowly, his eyes moving between the two of us. "I'd like to bond with the two of you separately if you wouldn't mind."

"That's fine with me. Do you want me to leave so you and Brenden can have time together?" I ask, already climbing off the bed.

"Oh, no, gorgeous. That's not what I meant. I want both of you here, but I want to fuck both of you so we can bond one at a time. Not that our first bonding wasn't great, but I'd rather feel one bond at a time."

I lower myself back onto the bed with a nod. Brenden settles against the headboard, stroking his cock as Nex crawls up the bed to hover over me.

A rush of Nex's power courses over me, and I throw my head back with a moan. My pussy throbs, begging to be filled as my nipples pebble with need.

Brenden groans along with me, and I want to turn to see if he's just as turned on as I

am, but I can't force myself to look away from Nex.

"I love you, gorgeous. Even when I was pushing you away, I loved you more than I've ever loved anyone."

Before I can respond, his lips slam into mine. He lowers himself slowly, allowing me to adjust to the weight of his body slowly. I wrap my legs around his hips as his cock slides between my wet folds. Tilting my hips, I move along his length and work both of us up as he devours me with his kiss.

When we break apart, we're both panting. "Please, Nex. I need you."

"So impatient," he says with a smirk, but he reaches between us and notches his cock at my entrance. "Are you ready, my love?"

"So ready."

Then he's pushing inside me, spearing me on his length. None of my mates are small, but none of the others are as big as Donovan. But Nex is pretty damn close, and he splits me open so good.

My back arches off the bed, my hands plucking at my nipples as moans spill from my mouth.

All I want is for him to punch into me, fill me up, and then fuck me hard and fast. But Nex seems like he wants to take it slow as he works himself inside of me, an inch at a time.

By the time he's fully seated, I'm begging him to move.

"Please, Nex. Fuck me. Fuck me hard."

He just chuckles, pulling out slowly before pushing back in just as slowly.

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“No. No. No.” There’s a bit of a whine to my voice that I hate, but I’m so desperate for him. “We can do it slowly later. Right now, I want to be your mate. I want you to bond with me. I need you to fuck me and make me yours. Please, Nex. Please. Please.”

Brenden chuckles. “You might want to give her what she wants. If you don’t, she’s liable to take over for you. She’s really not known for her patience. Plus, it feels so good when you give in to her demands.”

“Yes. Listen to Brenden. He’s smart.”

Nex lowers his head to kiss me once more. “One day, I’m going to spend an entire day making love to you—fucking you so slowly that it’s going to drive you crazy.”

“Okay. One day—just not today.”

He continues to fuck into me slow and deep with that damn smirk on his face, and I’m done. Pushing against his chest and using my legs for leverage, I roll us until he’s on his back. I climb onto his cock before he even knows what’s happening. I sink down onto him until I’ve taken all of him.

Brenden is laughing hysterically. “I fucking told you.”

“Did you just...” Nex blinks up at me, and I just grin.

“I sure the fuck did. Now, hold on and enjoy the ride.” Placing my hands on his chest, I ride him—setting the pace where I want it. I grind down on him with a moan, his

hands clutching my hips.

“One day, I want to fuck you in your demon form,” I tell him. All I can imagine is riding his cock like I am right now, holding onto his horns instead of steadying myself on his chest.

That would be hot as hell.

Nex chuckles. “We can definitely arrange that, but that form has some surprises that I’m not sure you’re ready for. We’ll talk about that later. Right now, I want you to come on my cock—drench me in your juices.”

One of his hands moves forward, his thumb unerringly finding my clit, and it sends me straight over the edge. My hips stutter as I clench around him, my body undulating as pleasure washes over me. He fucks up into me, working me through my orgasm.

I can tell when he’s getting ready to flip us, and I shake my head. “Only if you’re going to fuck me right.”

“Brat,” he murmurs, lifting me off his cock and sitting up. He puts me on my hands and knees, facing Brenden. I wave Brenden over, closing my lips around his cock as Nex takes me at my word and fucks into me from behind.

Everything hits differently in this position, and I fucking love it.

Nex’s hands are tight on my hips while Brenden holds my hair back to watch as his cock slides between my lips. Brenden doesn’t even have to move as Nex fucks into me, forcing me down on my mate’s cock. But that doesn’t stop Brenden from fucking my face.

I love feeling like I'm being used by the two of them, even though I know they'll make sure I come.

"Such a dirty little cock slut," Brenden rumbles.

My moan is muffled around his cock while Nex curses.

"She likes that a lot," he says, awe painting his words. "Do you like being our dirty little cock slut, gorgeous?"

He curses again when my pussy pulses around him. "You feel so fucking good on my cock, gorgeous. I want you to come for me so I can fill you up with my cum. I want you dripping with it when we're done bonding."

Heat courses through me. I want that. I want him to fill me with so much cum that it spills down my leg when we're done.

I thrust my hips back, meeting his thrusts as Brenden fucks my throat. Another wave of Nex's power rushes over me as his fingers find my clit.

I'm so close—not that I can tell them that with Brenden's cock shoved so far into my mouth.

All it takes is a few thrums of his finger against me, and I fall apart. I scream around Brenden's cock as he shivers. A second later, hot jerks of cum hit my tongue. I swallow it down greedily, even as my body shakes.

My magic rises in the air, twining with Nex's as he grunts. "Gonna come, baby. Gonna fill you up so fucking good."

One thrust turns into two and then three before he spills inside of me, grinding against

my ass as our magic mingles and our matebond reforms.

As soon as I feel it in my chest, I come again, surprising Nex. He thrusts in and out of me in shallow thrusts, drawing out my orgasm before he comes again.

“Holy shit,” he pants. “I wasn’t expecting that last round of orgasms.”

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He leans over my back as we both catch our breath. When I turn my head, he's waiting for me and kisses me deeply.

When we break apart, Brenden is kneeling before us. "I changed my mind."

I feel Nex stiffen behind me, and I press my back into his chest, hoping to soothe him. Based on the look on Brenden's face, he didn't change his mind about bonding, but I'm sure that's where Nex's mind went.

"Not about bonding with you." Brenden is quick to assure him. "About not having any specifications."

"Oh, thank fuck. Don't scare me like that." Nex sits up, pulling me with him so I remain on his cock as he kneels with his weight on his feet. "What's up?"

"I want you to fuck me while I eat your cum from Audrey's pussy."

Nex's cock jumps inside me, causing me to clench down on him once more.

I think we both like the sound of that.

Nex chuckles as he lifts me off him, slapping my ass after he sets me on my knees. "Go get comfortable. I'm going to need to prep Brenden at least a little."

I scurry up the bed, lying back and smiling up at Brenden as he settles between my legs with his ass in the air. His tongue licks along my slit, humming in pleasure.

“Fuck, the two of you taste magnificent together. This might have to become a regular thing—me eating Nex’s cum out of your pussy.”

He dives in, burying his face in said pussy as I thread my fingers through his hair. I love having his very talented tongue buried inside me.

I tilt my head to the side when I see Nex stroking himself and collecting the pre-cum at the end of his dick. “What are you doing?”

“My cum is a lubricant,” he tells me with a grin. “It works much better than anything else. It’ll cut the prep time in half.”

While I can’t see exactly what he’s doing as he brings his hand to Brenden’s ass, I can imagine. Brenden groans into my pussy as Nex’s hand moves. I’m transfixed on the movements, even as I grind my cunt against Brenden’s face.

It seems like no time at all has passed when Nex lines his cock up with Brenden’s ass. As good as it feels to have Brenden’s tongue between my legs, I can’t help wishing I could watch Nex fuck him.

Another long, loud groan spills from Brenden as Nex pushes into him. The vibrations send shivers down my spine, drawing me closer and closer to an orgasm.

Unlike with me, Nex doesn’t bother going slowly with Brenden. He fucks into him hard and fast, shoving my vampire mate’s face further into me.

Brenden’s nose brushes against my clit repeatedly as he eats me out, and my orgasm seems to come out of nowhere and build forever when it slams into me.

I scream, bucking my hips against his face, pushing his head against me as I move and grind before falling back onto the bed.

Brenden gives me a wicked grin before his fangs slip into my thigh, and I come again. The pleasure is drawn out by each mouthful of blood he pulls from me until he finally seals the wound with his tongue.

“I’m close,” he pants, glancing over his shoulder at Nex, who grins at him.

A rush of Nex’s power hits me square in the face and sends me spiraling into another orgasm as he pulls Brenden up in his arms so they’re pressed together back to chest.

Brenden’s cock kicks, cum hitting his abs as he twists around to sink his teeth into Nex’s shoulder.

Nex jerks, a groan falling from his lips as more magic pours over Brenden. I feel it when their bond clicks into place.

I grin at them like an idiot as they kiss, so happy to feel Nex’s bond in my chest and knowing that Brenden is just as happy.

Our love story might not have been conventional, but it led us here to this moment that I’ll forever be grateful for.

Chapter Twenty-six

Audrey

It’s a few days later when we get a summons from Lucifer—like a literal summons.

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Source Creation Date: July 11, 2025, 3:50 am

We're sitting at the table enjoying our breakfast when a flash of hellfire lights up before me. I jerk my head back, but it's gone almost as fast.

A piece of paper drifts toward my plate of food, and I snatch it out of the air.

"What the hell is that?" Brenden asks, and I'd like to know that myself.

"Whatever it is, it's from Lucifer." Wraith shakes his head. "He's always had a flair for dramatics."

It sounds like him. With a quick shake of my head, I turn the paper over.

Audrey,

I'd like it if you and your mates could join me at my home at your earliest convenience.

Love,

Lucifer

P.S. I thought about signing it with Dad, but I didn't think you'd approve. But know the thought was there.

I scoff, shaking my head again. "Doesn't he know how to send texts?"

"He does, but he also likes showing off. And, as I said, he has a flair for dramatics."

Wraith chuckles. “What does he want?”

“He wants us to come over at our earliest convenience. It doesn’t say why he wants to see us, though.”

Donovan sighs. “I was hoping for a few more days off before we got sent back to work. Eat up, everyone. We don’t want to keep the big boss waiting.”

I frown as they all dig in. “It says at our convenience. I’m not going to give myself indigestion just because he wants to talk to us.”

“And that’s your prerogative, little mate. You’re probably the only one who can get away with keeping him waiting.” Cassian pauses to eat his last strip of bacon. “As for the rest of us, he’d be happy to punish us for the slight. I’d rather be ready to go as soon as you are than to chance his wrath.”

Now, I roll my eyes. “You guys are ridiculous. He’s squishy as hell when it comes to me and Wren.”

“Correct.” Nex winks when I meet his gaze, sending a buzz of happiness through me. “For the two of you—not for the rest of us.”

I want to argue that they’re my mates, so he’ll make an exception for them too, but I don’t actually know if that’s true or not.

I go back to eating, ignoring my mates as they rush through their food before hurrying upstairs to get dressed. By the time they all make it back downstairs, I’m finally finished eating.

“I’ll rinse off the dishes and get the dishwasher loaded.” Nex grabs my plate, kissing me lightly before he moves to grab the rest.

“I laid out clothes for you,” Wraith tells me as he straightens his cuffs. “Obviously, I’m not telling you what you should wear, but it would please me to see you wear it.”

That immediately puts my hackles up, worrying over how he might be trying to dress me, but I don’t voice those concerns. “We’ll see.”

Because their anxiety is starting to get to me, I shadow walk to the bedroom. Sure enough, there’s an outfit laid out on the bed—undergarments and all. I pick up the short plaid skirt and shake my head.

I knew he had a schoolgirl kink.

He’s paired it with a cropped tank and a long cardigan, and I kind of love it. Deciding it won’t hurt anything to wear what he wants me to, I pull on the outfit before pulling on my heeled combat boots. I throw on some lip balm and mascara before running my hands through my hair.

Good enough.

I shadow walk myself back to my mates, grinning at the appreciative looks they shoot my way.

“Are we sure we have to go now?” Brenden asks, slowly stalking me around the couch. “Because our mate looks good enough to eat.”

Wraith chuckles. “That was my intention, but we really do need to go see what Lucifer wants.”

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Brenden sticks out his bottom lip as he reaches me. “That’s unfortunate.”

“You’ll be fine,” I tell him, lifting onto my toes. He meets me halfway, crashing his lips into mine.

I meant for it to be a quick kiss, but my mate is having none of that as he thoroughly kisses me. Warmth and desire rush through me, and I’m seriously considering dragging my mates back to our room before going to see Lucifer.

At least until Donovan tugs me out of Brenden’s arms. “Later.”

Now, I’m the one pouting. I also know it’s probably best not to keep the god of the underworld waiting for longer than we need to.

Sometimes, I just get a little swept up in how they’re making me feel and forget about everything else. Who can blame me with five hot-as-sin mates?

“Right. Let’s do this.” I grab Brenden’s hand, then Nex’s, before stepping into the shadows. Lucifer didn’t tell us where to meet him, but I head for the war council room. It seems like a safe bet, and if he’s not there, then I’ll shoot him a text to ask where he wants us.

I step out of the shadows, immediately releasing my hold on my mates so I can throw myself at my mom and sister. “I didn’t know the two of you would be here.”

“Well, this is a conversation that involves all of you.”

I offer Lucifer a smile before scanning the room. The horsemen, who claim to be my twin's mates, are already seated at the table. I choose to sit between my mom and Wren as my mates grab seats of their own.

"So, what's up, Dad?" Wren asks, grinning at Lucifer.

She's so happy to have a dad. I wish I was as excited as she is.

It's nice knowing where the other half of my DNA comes from, but I've already lived nearly thirty years without a father figure. It feels weird to have someone stepping in to fill that void now.

It's just something we're going to have to work toward.

"Now that we've dealt with the Michael situation, I want to talk about the future. Particularly yours and Audrey's futures." Lucifer pauses, glancing at my mom before nodding. "Wren, I know you're leaving in a few days to go to Olympus, so this doesn't pertain to you just yet, but it will eventually. As my other children are gods with their own domains, I've never had heirs. Now, with the two of you, I do."

"Heirs to what?" I ask, although I'm pretty sure I already know the answer.

Lucifer smirks. "Yes, it's exactly what you're thinking. Heirs to the underworld. I have no intention of leaving permanently. This is my home, but sometimes I like to vacation earth-side. Plus, with Olympus open to use again, I might want to visit once the gods begin to awaken. In the past, I've left the horsemen in charge, but three of the four are on their way to Olympus with Wren. None of us know how long it'll take them to wake the other gods.

"Audrey, I'd like you to consider coming to work for me. I can train you not just on how the underworld runs, but I should be able to help with your powers. Now that we

know what you and Wren are, we can figure out what other powers you might have. Although I'll admit my knowledge of necromancers and phoenixes is limited, we can also do research to see what we can find."

Ignoring what he's asking of me for now, I ask one of the questions that's been burning at me. "But why don't you know much about them? Haven't you been around since the beginning of time? I thought that's how it worked. The gods were born and have been the same godsover the years with just the names used changing."

"You noticed that, did you?" Lucifer chuckles. "That is mostly the case, but we weren't the first gods. Before us, there were others. I believe mortal history calls them the Titans. They ruled over the mortals and supernaturals before us. The godhoods were passed to us by the Titans, who were tired and ready to return to wherever they came from. They were our parents but not. I've never understood quite how we were made, but unlike those who came after the original six, we came to be as adults. We never experienced a childhood. My guess is that the three-quarter gods were prevalent in their time, but I don't know what happened to them. They did not exist when we came to be."

"But the Fates were there." I shake my head, trying to wrap my head around it. "So they didn't come into existence when you did?"

Lucifer shrugs. "They're the only ones who can answer that. They already existed when I was brought to life. Whether they were there for moments or eons before me, I don't know."

"I've never asked Mom how old she is," Cassian muses. "Maybe it's time I do."

"She might not tell you. Sometimes women do not like to discuss their age." Lucifer grins. "Not that it's just women. If she's existed longer than I have, she might not even recall. I don't remember my exact age, but we're getting off track. I promise

we'll approach Athelina, Claudia, and Laurel with your questions, regardless of what your answer to me is. But I need to know if you're interested in becoming my heir—both of you. Wren, if you'd rather think about it and give me an answer once you return from your quest, I'll understand."

I glance at my mates, finding all of them already watching me. We haven't really discussed the future in much detail. There just hasn't been time.

"This is something I'll have to discuss with my mates," I finally tell Lucifer. "This isn't just my life but theirs as well. I can't, in good conscience, make that kind of decision without speaking with them."

Something flashes across Lucifer's face that resembles pride before he nods. "Of course. If you'd like, you six can stay here and discuss your futures. I have other tasks to complete, but I'd love it if you'd stay and have lunch with us."

"Of course." I shoot him a warm smile.

"As for me," Wren says, not looking at anyone besides our father. "I think I'd like to see what being your heir is all about once I return."

Lucifer beams at her. "I'd love nothing more. As long as you feel the same upon your return, I'll begin your training then. For now, why don't we give Audrey and her mates the room?"

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Mom squeezes my hand as she stands. “I’m proud of you.”

“For what?” I ask with a frown.

“For not making a rash decision without consulting the people you love.” She kisses the top of my head before exiting. Wren and Lucifer are right behind her, the horsemen trailing them out.

As soon as the door shuts, I glance at my mates. “So?”

“So, what, little mate?” Cassian chuckles. “Do you want us to weigh in on what your father wants you to do?”

I shrug. “You can if you want, but I think we need to have a conversation about our future. Obviously, we’ll be together, but we haven’t talked about what that looks like. Clearly, Wraith has to continue to run Scythe Academy and Cassian will continue to judge souls, but what about everyone else? Nex, the way Lucifer made it sound, you aren’t required to be in the horsemen’s service any longer. Is teaching at the academy what you really want to do?”

“It is.” Nex glances at Wraith. “As long as Wraith will allow me to be a professor there, that’s what I want to do.”

Brenden nods. “Me too. I know you enjoyed reaping souls, but I’ve never had the desire to. I never thought I’d want to teach others, but here we are.”

“So that leaves Donovan and me.” I turn to my remaining mate. I don’t actually know

what he does at the academy. I just know he's always there because that's where Wraith is. "Donovan, what do you do at the academy?"

If I'm not mistaken, my hellhound flushes. "Nothing, actually. I usually just hang out with Wraith and help him wherever he needs me. But maybe it's time I take on a role?"

Donovan doesn't sound sure as he looks at Wraith, but our lover gives him a soft smile as he nods.

"You never seemed to mind just being my errand boy, so I never brought it up, but my intention was always to have you run security on campus." Wraith shrugs. "We don't have a great need for security, but sometimes souls find their way to Bristix that need to be returned to where they belong. They can cause a lot of havoc in a short period of time, so I employ a few reapers as guards."

I wrinkle my nose, realizing I've never seen one. "Really? Where the hell were they? Because I certainly never saw one."

"Nor should you have. They're not there to deal with the students, but the things that might wish to harm the students. Donovan, if you want the job, it's always been yours."

Donovan's eyes light up as he nods. "I just figured if you had a job for me, you'd tell me to do it. If that's the role you want me in, then I'm happy to take it."

"So that just leaves you, gorgeous." Nex's eyes find mine. "What do you want to do?"

"I have no fucking clue. Brenden's right, I do enjoy reaping souls, but it also takes a toll on me. I don't even know what being Lucifer's heir means. Maybe I should've

asked more questions.”

“That I can help with, at least slightly,” Wraith says. “A lot of what Lucifer does is oversee everything in the underworld. He visits each of the islands and the underworld gods who reside on them at least once a month, if not more frequently. He makes sure everything is running smoothly—that none of his citizens are in desperate need of anything. When he’s gone, we mainly just make sure that no wars break out between the demons. We make sure everything is running well in Ephonia.”

I consider him for a moment. “That doesn’t sound too difficult. But what if I tell him yes and it turns out I hate the job? Then what?”

“Then you go back to reaping or you find something else you want to do,” Wraith assures me. “Lucifer isn’t going to make you be his heir if you don’t like it.”

“That we know of,” I say, ignoring the looks my mates send me.

I know I’m being ridiculous. Aren’t I the one who said he was squishy when it came to me and Wren? I know he wouldn’t force me into a role I hated. It’s why he called us here today—not to force me to become his heir but to ask me if I’m interested.

Fear is what’s holding me back.

Not fear of Lucifer but of what being his heir might lead to. It’ll require me to spend more time with him.

That thought shouldn’t scare me, but for some reason, it does. Maybe it’s because I’m afraid of being a failure in his eyes. Or maybe allowing him to get too close.

It doesn’t really matter why I’m scared. It just matters that I am.

So, what am I going to do?

My mates remain silent as I work it over in my head. I feel like I should at least give it a try. I know Lucifer will be disappointed if I tell him no.

He'll try to hide it, but it'll hurt him. And what will it hurt to try?

Nothing.

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Decision made, I pull out my phone and shoot off a quick text.

AUDREY

Where are you?

LUCIFER

Do you need me?

I can come to the war council room if you're still there.

AUDREY

We are.

Not two seconds later, Lucifer steps out of the shadows.

“You wanted to speak to me?”

I nod. “I do. I’m willing to train with you to become your heir on one condition.”

He’s trying to hide his smile and failing. “Anything.”

“If I don’t like it, you let me try something else.”

“Done.” Lucifer makes a face like I’ve offended him. “I would never force you to do

a job you hate.”

“I didn’t think you would, but it needed to be said.”

He nods slowly. “We should begin your training as soon as possible, but you’ve been through a lot. Why don’t we begin after we see Wren and your mother off in a few days?”

My stomach drops. “Mom is going to Olympus?”

“Damn it.” Lucifer runs a hand down his face. “I thought she’d already told you.”

I shake my head. “She hadn’t, but I’m not that surprised. I’m just...sad.”

He nods. “That’s understandable. So many people you love are leaving to go somewhere you’ve never even been. Ana is going because she wants to see her father as soon as he wakes. She’s also going to help with the angels while she’s up there. With that being said, you and your mates can visit whenever you want. It can even be part of your training. I need to visit Olympus from time to time, anyway.”

“I’d like that, and it makes me feel better knowing I can visit them whenever I want. So, yes. I will be your heir.”

“Excellent. You can find your mom and sister if you want. I’d start in the garden. It’s their favorite place by far. I know Seph will be happy to know someone is enjoying it.” Lucifer’s smile is soft and a little sad.

I know he said he and Persephone chose to go their separate ways, but did he mean it? Does he still love her? Or is he just missing his friend?

I don’t feel comfortable asking him that, so I let it go.

Lucifer leaves, allowing us the time to find my family. I need to spend as much time with them as I can leading up to their departure. I can visit Olympus whenever I want, but who knows where Wren will be. Obviously in Olympus, but that doesn't mean I'll have easy access to her.

I'm going to miss my friends and family when they go to Olympus, but I know I can't be the one to hold them back just because I'll miss them.

Chapter Twenty-seven

Brenden

Audrey is in bed, hiding away from the world, and I hate it.

Tomorrow, her mom, sister, and best friend are heading to Olympus. She says she's fine with it, but that doesn't mean she's handling it well.

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Glancing around the room, I see each of her mates looking just as worried as the last. We've all tried comforting her and distracting her, but it hasn't helped.

"We need to distract her," I declare, smirking as an idea comes to me.

Donovan rolls his eyes. "We've all tried that already, genius."

"I'm well aware. I'm not stupid, you know." I bite the snarl threatening to leave me, reminding myself that he's just as frustrated as I am about not being able to help Audrey. "But what we haven't done is try to distract her with sex."

"Speak for yourself," Cassian says with a sigh.

I wave him off. "Okay. I'm sure we all tried to have sex with her, but that's not what I'm thinking. I know one thing that Audrey can never resist."

Wraith considers me for a moment. "And what's that, Brenden?"

"When we fuck each other."

Silence follows my words, but I can see them thinking over my words. Before Nex, this suggestion would've left me out of the fucking, but now, I don't have to worry about that.

"You want us to go up there and fuck each other to distract her?" Nex asks, fighting a smile.

I nod. “Yes. She’ll be so turned on, she’ll want to join us.”

Donovan scoffs. “This sounds like a terrible idea.”

“Now, pet, don’t dismiss Brenden’s suggestion like that.” Wraith pauses before continuing, “I think he might be right. Even if she doesn’t end up wanting to join us, it’ll still distract her.”

“I’m down,” Cassian says with a grin.

It takes a few more minutes for everyone to agree, but then we’re tromping up the stairs to our shared bedroom.

As soon as the door opens, Audrey sticks her head out from under the covers. “Go away. I told you all to leave me alone to my misery.”

“No can do, firecracker. We have plans, and since you’re in our bed, you’re just going to have to deal with it.”

Audrey glares at me as I pull off my shirt, then drop my pants. Her eyes trail down my naked form, confusion replacing her annoyance.

“What are you doing?” Her eyes bounce around the room, watching as each of her mates disrobe.

“We’re fucking.” I shoot her a look that says, “Duh,” as Nex comes up behind me. His cock presses against my ass, his hand wrapping around my length and stroking me.

“I’m not in the mood,” she says, but she doesn’t sound convinced.

I shrug. “That’s fine. The five of us are going to fuck. You’re welcome to keep having yourpity party under the blankets. This is just the only bed big enough for all of us.”

Audrey blinks at me, her attention moving to Wraith as he joins her on the bed. Cassian grabs the bottle of lube from the bedside table before dragging Donovan onto the bed in front of Wraith.

“You’re all going to fuck each other?” She still looks so confused. “But you’re not all together.”

Nex chuckles, walking us toward the bed without stopping his strokes along my cock. “I’m going to fuck Brenden, and the three of them are going to do whatever together.”

“And you want to do that here? With each other?”

I bite back a smile as I nod. “Firecracker, I don’t have to be attracted to them to find them fucking each other hot. All of your mates are gorgeous. It’s never a chore to watch them fuck.”

Nex helps me onto the bed before climbing up himself. My cock is pointed straight at Audrey as Nex turns my head to kiss me. I groan into his mouth, so ready to be fucked.

Yes, this is about pulling Audrey out of her funk, but it’s also about allowing my other mateto fuck me—and I’m never going to turn that down.

Nex and I have been working on our relationship beyond Audrey, which has been good for us. I feel like an ass for telling him Audrey was more important than he was. That I’d always choose her over him, it was neither true nor fair.

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I know my words cut him deep, even when he accepted it as truth—and somehow, he still wanted me.

From here on out, we're going to make time for the two of us so we can make sure our relationship is strong. It's broken not just from his words and actions but my words as well. It's going to take time to repair, but we're both willing to put in the work. We both agree that our relationship is just as important as our relationships are with Audrey.

Cassian, Wraith, and Donovan make it look so easy. I think that's because they were together for so long before—even if it ended up falling apart. All I can do is hope that one day, Nex and I will be there too.

“I don't...” Audrey shakes her head, her eyes unfocused as she glances between us and her other three mates. “Umm...”

I follow her line of sight to find Wraith prepping Cassian's ass while he preps Donovan. That looks like it's going to be fun. It really is too bad that we're not all attracted to one another. Imagine the train we could run then.

“It's fine, gorgeous.” Nex kisses my neck as he presses his cock against my ass. I know he's spreading his pre-cum over it so he can use it as lube, but part of me wants to tell him not to worry about prep—which I know is a bad idea because, besides when we bonded the second time, it's been well over a year since I've had a cock in my ass.

I'm just impatient—a trait I share with Audrey.

Speaking of my mate, my eyes find hers once more as Nex presses a single finger into my ass. Her eyes clash with mine as he works it in and out of me before adding a second one. When he brushes them against my prostate, I can't bite back my groan.

Audrey's mouth falls open, her breath comes in pants as she turns to watch the others. She makes no move to join either group, but it's clear her mind is no longer on tomorrow.

Mission accomplished.

Nex's fingers leave me, but before I can complain, he's pressing his cock into me. I fall forward, my chin against my chest, panting as he fucks into me.

Once he's fully seated, I look up to find Audrey has thrown back the sheets. One hand is between her legs while the other pinches her nipples.

"Fuck, that's hot," I tell her, and she brings her eyes back to me.

"No, the five of you are hot."

I snort. "Agree to disagree. Come over here, firecracker, and let me bury my face in your cunt."

She doesn't hesitate as she shuffles down the bed so I can do just that.

I love going down on my girl. Her pussy is heaven for my tongue, fingers, and cock. I wish I could keep one of them buried inside her at all times, but that could get awkward.

Lapping at her slit, I grind my nose against her clit before burying my tongue inside her.

Nex pounds into me from behind, and my cock begs for friction.

As much as I love getting Audrey off with my tongue, I need my cock inside her more.

I ignore her whine as she tries to bring my mouth back to her cunt, twisting my head to meet Nex's eyes. "I need to fuck her."

"More like I'm going to fuck you into her." He smirks, slowing his movements so we can shuffle further up the bed.

Once I'm hovering over her, I run my cock through her folds and bite my lip. She cries out when the head of my dick hits her clit, and I repeat the movement.

"Enough playing, Brenden." Nex slaps my ass, and I jump at the momentary pain that sizzles into pleasure. "Get your dick inside her so I can fuck you both."

And who am I to argue with that?

I notch my cock at her entrance, pushing into her slowly. We moan together, and Nex gives us a moment before he pulls back and begins to fuck me in earnest once more. I have very little control over my movements with how he's plowing into me and the small amount of room I can get between me and Audrey, but I do the best I can to fuck myself between them.

My eyes roll into the back of my head as I adjust myself so I'm hitting Audrey in just the right spot while Nex's cock rams into my prostate with each stroke.

I'm in fucking heaven.

"Not fair." Donovan's voice just manages to reach me in the fog of pleasure I find

myself in. “I want to fuck Audrey, too.”

“Yes, please. I want both of you. Please.”

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I'm a little concerned. Donovan's monster cock isn't usually involved when there is more than one cock at play. He's so fucking big.

I glance back at Nex, who nods before focusing his attention on Audrey. "We can make that happen, gorgeous, but where do you want them? Do you want one in your ass and one in your cunt? Or both in your pussy?"

Audrey clamps down on my cock, and I bite the inside of my cheek to keep myself from coming. "She wants the last one."

"Good. Fuck, I wish we were recording this to watch later. Audrey, it's going to be hard to get you prepped like we usually would since we're all buried cock deep. How do you feel about me using my powers to get you off a few times so you're pliant?"

She nods, her tits bouncing from how quickly she moves her head. "I just want them both inside me."

Nex doesn't bother to check in with her again as a wave of his power flows through the room and into Audrey. She immediately comes, and I have to grab the base of my cock to prevent myself from following her right over the edge.

He sends another wave at our mate, and she comes a second time. And then a third.

"Fuck, Nex," I curse. "If we keep this up, I'm going to come before we're both inside her."

Nex chuckles but takes pity on me. "Donovan's turn then. Go see your hellhound."

He pulls me up so Audrey can scramble out from under me. She scuttles across the bed, and Donovan pulls her into his lap and splits her open on his cock.

I'm in awe of my girl for being able to take him so easily.

Nex shuffles us over to the others as Audrey rides Donovan. She comes with a scream when Nex sends another wave of magic her way.

"You're up, Bren," he tells me, and I'm still questioning if I'll be able to fit into her pussy while Donovan's inside of her.

I also know there's only one way to find out.

Donovan helps Audrey kneel, but Nex stops me when I go to slide my cock between her legs. He hands me a bottle.

"What the fuck is this?"

Nex flushes, though he doesn't lose his smirk. "I bottled some of my cum for situations just like this."

While thoughtful, I don't like the idea of him masturbating without me or Audrey at least there to watch.

"Thank you, but for future collections, I expect you to allow me or Audrey to help."

Nex chuckles as I open the bottle and pour it onto my cock. It tingles as I spread it over my length, letting out a moan.

"Fuck, that feels good." I shake my head as I release myself and hand the bottle back to Nex. He slips out of me as I lower myself so I can slip my cock between Audrey's

legs.

I notch my cock at her entrance that's already filled by Donovan. I hesitate for a moment, afraid of hurting my mate.

"Please, Brenden," she begs, and I can't tell her no.

It takes a bit of work, but finally, I'm sliding into her cunt. Nex's cum really is a miracle, allowing me to slide right inside.

"So fucking full. Holy shit. Fuck me. Move. Move. Fuck me with your cocks."

Before I can think about doing what she's begging me to, Nex is pushing into my ass.

It's all a little uncoordinated as Donovan and I find our rhythm, but it feels fucking amazing.

We've already rendered Audrey speechless. All that's falling from her lips are moans and whines as we fuck her. It doesn't even take long for her pussy to start pulsing around us.

I close my eyes, losing myself to the sensations rushing through me. When Audrey comes, I'm hit with a massive wave of Nex's magic. My cock jerks, cum spurting from me and filling up my mate at the same time as Donovan's.

Based on the grunts and curses that follow, he hit all of us with it. Audrey comes a second time, milking both of our cocks. I like the way our combined cum settles around our cocks. It's a warm and comfortable sensation that I kind of love.

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I don't expect to come again, but when Nex rams into one last time, I can feel his cum hitting my walls, and it sends me spiraling.

"Fucking hell," Donovan groans. "How do you have more cum in you, and why does it feel so fucking good?"

Audrey moans, and I pop my eyes open to find Donovan's thumb rubbing her clit.

When she comes again, it's too much, and I have to slip out of her.

We all collapse onto the bed, breathing hard—most of us spilling cum onto the bed.

Audrey sighs. "Thank you for not giving up and for finding a way to distract me. I will say, I think this might be my preferred distraction."

We laugh together before making our way into the shower. Thank fuck Wraith designed a big enough shower for all of us to fit.

Donovan sets Audrey in the shower, but when he goes to move away, she stops him and pulls him down for a kiss.

"I love you, Donovan."

His grin lights up his face. "I love you, too, pretty girl."

As each of her mates goes to step into the shower, Audrey stops them and gives them a kiss before telling them she loves them.

I'm the last one to reach the shower, and I pull her to me. "I love you more than life itself, firecracker."

"I love you so much, Brenden. So fucking much."

When I lower my head to kiss her, I try to push all of my love into it. I want her to know just how much I love her. How desperate I am for her. How I'd do anything for her.

She sighs when we break apart. Wraith pulls her to him so he can begin washing her, and I pull the door shut behind me.

I never knew if I'd be lucky enough to have a mate or not, but I never expected to have two. I also didn't know one of those mates would have four other mates.

Pouring soap in my hand, I soap up my body. I'm so ready for a nap.

I can't believe this will be our lives forever.

I don't know what I did to deserve this life, but one thing is for sure—I'm never giving it up.

Chapter Twenty-eight

Audrey

I stare at the gates in front of me, doing everything I can to keep my emotions under wraps.

I'm not ready to say goodbye to my mom, Wren, and Diana, but I don't really have a choice in the matter.

We're standing at the massive gates to hell, which apparently open into a cave deep in the mountains earth-side, but they're not why we're here. No, it's the second set of gates that sit beside the others.

They're much smaller than the first set of gates, only big enough for maybe two people to fit through at a time.

When Lucifer opened them, a bright white light nearly blinded me. My eyes have grown more accustomed now, so I no longer feel like it's searing my brain through my eyes, but it's still a lot more light than I'm used to.

These gates lead to Olympus, where numerous people I care about are about to go. I've read a few things about Olympus, but I still don't know what they'll find on the other side.

I think that's part of the reason I'm so hesitant to let them leave me. They're headed somewhere where there are millions of angels—all of whom might hate them. What if they come after my family and friends, and I'm not there to stop them?

"Breathe, Audrey. Breathe."

I glance up at the sound of Mom's voice and suck in a deep breath. I don't even know when I stopped breathing.

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Tears fill my eyes, and I can't fight them anymore as they stream down my face. I throw myself into my mom's waiting arms, sobbing into her chest.

"It's going to be okay, Audrey. We're all going to be fine. You don't need to worry." Mom repeats this over and over as she strokes my hair, but it doesn't stop my tears. If anything, it makes them fall harder.

"Don't go," I beg her. "Stay here with me."

Mom sighs. "Honey, this is something I need to do. I might not have enjoyed most of my time in Olympus, but it's my home. I need to see what it's become, and I need to be there when my dad wakes up. Just think, soon you'll be able to meet your grandfather."

"Fuck him," I mutter, not meaning for my mom to hear that, but she just laughs.

"He's going to love you, honey." She pulls back and holds my face in her hands. "You don't need me here, anyway. You have five mates that make you so fucking happy. When you miss us, lean on them. They'll be your strength when you doubt yourself."

I wrinkle my nose. "I'd rather be with you and Wren."

Mom's brows shoot up. "You'd rather be with me and your sister than with your mates?"

"No," I sullenly admit. At least she's finally distracted me enough that my tears have

stopped. “It just feels like I’m choosing between you, and I don’t like that.”

“Oh, honey. You’re not choosing them over us. Your place is here with them. Wren and I will be back. I don’t plan to stay in Olympus forever. Plus, isn’t your father bringing you in just a few days?”

I nod. “Yes, but that’s not now. I won’t see either of you for days.”

“And you’ll be just fine. I love you so much, Audrey, but it’s been a long time since you’ve needed me or Wren. You’re so strong. You just have to remember that. Now give me a hug so your sister can say goodbye.”

What choice do I have but to do as she says? I wrap my arms around her, squeezing her to me as my eyes fall shut.

I know this isn’t goodbye forever, but I’ve just never been one for goodbyes.

When Mom pulls back, I force myself to let her go. “I love you, Mom.”

“And I love you, Audrey.”

Mom steps away, only to be replaced with Wren. Her eyes are just as red as mine.

I take a deep breath, reminding myself that I need to be strong for Wren. Pulling her into my arms, I hold her as she starts to cry. I assure her the best that I can with my words.

“I’m going to miss you so much, Ree. It feels like I just got you back, and now I have to leave you.”

I pull back to smile at her. “That’s because it’s your turn to save the day. Not that you

didn't help by beheading Michael, but it's time for you to focus on your own story. You put up with so much from Michael over the years. I know you have a quest to complete, but use this time to figure out what you want—who you want to be. I think you'll come back stronger for it, and I can't wait to meet the woman you're going to become."

She laughs. "I don't know about all that, but you're right. Michael's betrayal broke me, and I need to find a way to put my pieces back together."

Throwing my arm over her shoulder, I turn her until we're facing Riggs, Gael, and Octavius. "I think the three of them would really like to help you with that."

"But what if I'm not ready?" she asks, ducking her head—but not before I can see the interest in her eyes and the blush on her cheeks. "How can I trust myself with another man after Michael?"

"You did nothing wrong, Wren. It was Michael who was a deceitful bastard. He used his words and actions to beat you down over the years. You're stronger than you think you are. They'll wait for you for the rest of eternity if that's what you need, little sister." I lean my head against hers. "They're good men. They won't rush you into anything you're not ready for. Let them help you when they can and just take the time to get to know them."

Wren takes a deep breath before exhaling. "I can do that. I love you so much, Ree. I'm going to miss you." She throws her arms around me and hugs me close.

I return the hug, squeezing my eyes shut to keep the tears from falling. "I'm going to miss you more, and I will always love you."

We break apart, and she hurries away as she brushes away her tears.

“Fuck. This is hard.”

“It sure is.” Diana laughs when I jump.

I turn my head to find her and Celeste walking toward me.

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“I just watched how hard it was for you to say goodbye to your sister and mom,” Diana says quietly. “So we’re not going to do that. I love you both, but I’ll see you in a few days.”

Diana and Celeste wrap me into a group hug, and I can’t help smiling. I love how well my friends know me.

“Do you think you can convince your dad to bring me with you when you go to Olympus?” Celeste asks as we watch Diana join Melody and Warren.

I shrug. “I have no idea, but I’m willing to ask.”

I can feel my mates crowding around us as Nyx, Erebus, and a slew of reapers and harpies appear out of nowhere.

Mom and Wren try to step through the gate first, but Octavius is having none of it. He steps in front of them, saying something I can’t hear before he and Gael step into the gate. Riggs keeps them there for a moment before leading them in.

Nyx and Erebus surround Diana, Melody, and Warren before leading them through the gate. As the harpies and reapers start into the gate, I consider walking away, but I can’t bring myself to.

It’s not until the last person steps through and Lucifer shuts the gates that my body gives up on me. Donovan catches me easily as I collapse.

“Let me and Nex walk you back to your place,” Brenden tells Celeste, who’s giving

me a worried look.

I wave her off, watching as two of my mates lead her toward her apartment.

I'm so tired. All I can think about is taking a nap while my mates hold me.

For today, I'll allow myself to be weak, but tomorrow is the beginning of the rest of my life.

Tomorrow, I will learn what being the heir to hell means.

Excuse me. I meant the heir to the underworld.

I can't fucking wait.

Epilogue

Donovan

Two years later

I stalk into our house, already stripping off the security uniform I've been wearing all day. I hate having to wear it, but when I told Wraith I wanted a job at the academy, he gave me one—I just didn't know that being the head of security would mean I would need to wear a uniform.

Rather than complain, I put it on every day. Then, when I get home, I take it off as quickly as possible. I've heard Wraith or one of the others complain about tripping over them, but they usually just pick them up and put them into the dirty clothes.

Voices filter through the house, coming from what we've dubbed the family room,

which encompasses the kitchen, dining room, and living room.

Not caring that I'm wearing nothing more than my boxer briefs, I step down the hallway and into the family room. I smile when I see Audrey sitting at the table with Athelina, Claudia, and Laurel. They've become regulars around here, which has pleased Cassian greatly. And unlike Lucifer, who just pops in whenever he wants, the three of them always call before they stop in for a visit.

You'd think that after the last time Lucifer popped in while we were running a train with all of Audrey's mates, he would stop. Especially after complaining that he'd need to bleach both his eyes and brain, but he still keeps doing it. He likes to say it's our fault because we shouldn't be having sex all over the house, but it's not like he has room to talk.

Unlike him, we've learned our lesson about popping into his house randomly. Not only do we call or text, but we also only shadow walk to his front door and knock from there. I didn't think Audrey was going to recover after we saw something we weren't meant to.

These days, Lucifer is way too busy to pop in too often, so that's a plus.

"For Lucifer's sake. Put some damn pants on, Donovan." Audrey lays her head in her hands as she shakes her head.

"Oh, it's quite alright," Athelina says with a smirk. "I have no problems with him walking around just like that."

I grin at her before my eyes land back on my mate, who looks like she's ready to murder her aunt-in-law. Grimacing, I head for the stairs. "Sorry, pretty girl. I'll just get changed really quickly."

“And grab your clothes you left lying everywhere, please.”

At her words, I veer back the way I came and grab my discarded clothes—even setting my boots neatly by the door before hurrying up the stairs. I jump in the shower for a quick rinse, surprised I haven’t seen anyone else. While I’m rarely the last one home, I’m never the first.

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Ten minutes later, I make my way back down the stairs and to my mate. “Where’s everyone else?”

She pulls me down for a kiss. “Wraith and Cassian are out doing something. I don’t know what exactly. When the Fates arrived, they told them to get out, so they did. Brenden and Nex are in Ephonia for date night.”

“Oh, right. I forgot that was tonight.” I kiss the top of her head before starting toward the kitchen. I freeze mid-step, my head tilting to the side before I spin around to face Audrey again. “You smell different.”

Audrey makes a face. “Are you trying to tell me I stink?”

Athelina nudges Claudia, leaning in to whisper, “I told you he’d fuck it up.”

“Fuck what up?” I demand, eyeing the three of them. They’re up to something, and I don’t like it.

The three of them zip their lips, smug grins on their face, and I narrow my eyes.

I hate when they do this.

Shaking my head, I turn back to my mate. “No, you don’t stink, but your scent is different from usual.”

It’s something I can’t quite put my finger on as I move back to her, ducking my head down and burying it in her neck.

“Yeah, something is definitely different,” I tell her.

“And what the hell does that mean?”

I shrug, glancing at the three troublemakers. “I don’t know, but they obviously do.”

“Are Mom and the aunties keeping things from us again?” Cassian asks as he steps into the family room with Wraith, Nex, and Brenden right behind him.

Audrey jumps out of her chair. “What are the two of you doing back? You’re supposed to be enjoying your date night.”

“These two came looking for us and said we had to come back home.” Nex hooks his finger toward Wraith and Cassian.

“Don’t look at me.” Cassian holds his hands up in surrender. “Mom said we all needed to be here, so we went to get them. Now, are you going to tell us what the hell is going on?”

“Absolutely not,” Claudia says, that damn smug smile on her face. I think she likes keeping shit from her son just to get him worked up. “But don’t worry. Donovan almost has it worked out.”

I do? Since when?

I scoff, hating the fact that I have no idea what she’s talking about.

That doesn’t stop me from leaning in to sniff Audrey again. She swats me away before I realize what’s bothering me about her scent. There are additional notes to it that weren’t there this morning, which doesn’t make sense.

Unless...

I drop to my knees, holding my head to Audrey's stomach.

"What the fuck are you—"

"Shh. I'm listening."

Wraith snickers, "To what? Are you checking to see if she's getting hungry by listening for the beginnings of growls?"

I shoot him a glare over my shoulder, frowning when Cassian freezes and reaches out to grab Wraith's hand.

"Shut up, Wraith."

Our lover looks like he wants to argue, but a shake of Cassian's head has him snapping his mouth shut.

I press my ear to Audrey's stomach again, closing my eyes. It takes a few minutes before I find what I'm looking for.

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“Holy shit.” I stare up at my mate in awe.

She’s confused as she meets my eyes. “What? Am I dying or something?”

“Most definitely not.” I clamber to my feet, dipping her back before kissing her.

“What the hell is going on?” Brenden asks, sounding both annoyed and worried.

I settle Audrey back on her feet before reaching up to cup her face. “You’re pregnant.”

“I’m what?!” she practically screams. “Did you just say pregnant? But how?”

“Well, Audrey, I didn’t think we needed to have the birds and bees conversation, but I’m happy to explain it to you,” Cassian’s mom says with a grin.

“We’re going to be grandmas!!!” The Fates yell together, and I shake my head.

Audrey is still blinking up at me. “I’m going to have a baby?”

“Two, actually,” Cassian corrects as he and the others crowd around our mate. “I don’t know where that came from.”

Athelina chuckles. “It seems you might have gotten a few more powers from your mom than you thought. It’s not uncommon for them to reveal themselves when it involves someone you love.”

Audrey takes a deep breath. “I’m pregnant and having twins. Of course I am. One baby wouldn’t be enough chaos for me, so why not have two?”

“It could be worse,” Nex says, trying to hide his laughter. “It could be three or four. Hellhounds are often born in multiples.”

“You didn’t tell me that!” Audrey whacks my chest, her eyes wide. “How many are we talking about?”

I wrinkle my nose, eyes flashing to Nex and promising him retribution when he’s least expecting it. “I was a single baby, but I’m the oddball out. I think the biggest litter I’ve seen is eight.”

All color leaves Audrey’s face before her eyes roll back into her head. She becomes dead weight in my arms, and I wince.

My mate just passed out. Fabulous.

She’s never going to let me stick my cock inside her again.

Cassian swoops in, pulling her away from me and into his arms. “It’s better if we’re not all surrounding her. She’s fine—it was just a shock. I can’t blame her for it since she just found out she was pregnant and one of her mates could put up to eight babies into her belly at once.”

“I never thought to tell her. It’s not like we were trying to get her pregnant.”

“Okay, yeah. We don’t want to hear about that.” Claudia laughs as she and her sisters push to their feet. “We’ll get out of your hair. We just wanted to be here when you found out.”

Cassian brings Audrey to the couch, sitting down with her in his lap. It takes all my willpower to not hurry over there and crowd her like I want to. My instincts are going haywire. My mate is pregnant.

“We’re going to have babies,” I say softly, a smile lighting up my face. “We’re going to be dads.”

“These poor children,” Audrey says drily.

The three of us rush over to the couch but make sure not to crowd her.

Wraith reaches over to run his hand down her face. “How are you? You’re not usually prone to passing out.”

“It was just a lot all at once.” Her eyes narrow when they land on me. “You’re fucking lucky I really like that monster cock of yours, or I wouldn’t be letting you put it near me after these babies are born. Eight fucking babies at once? How did the mother survive?”

I shrug. “She’s a dragon shifter. I think they’re used to having multiples at once.”

Thank goodness she’s not banning me from her bed. I’d never survive.

Audrey scoffs, shaking her head. Her hands drop to her stomach, a smile forming on her lips. “We’re having twins.”

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“We are,” Brenden confirms, kissing the top of her head. “Are you okay with that?”

She immediately nods. “I just haven’t given much thought to us having kids since I’m still training with my dad and Wren. I’ve always wanted kids, though. All of you are okay with this, right?”

“Hell yes!”

“Yes.”

“Absolutely.”

“I’m so fucking happy.”

“I’m happy if you’re happy.” Brenden’s the one who says the last one, and that has my mate frowning up at him.

“You don’t want kids?”

Brenden shrugs. “I like the idea of having them, but I died. I’m not sure I can have kids, but even if I could... Would you really want to raise a kid with my DNA?”

Audrey’s on her feet and in his face in seconds. “And what the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“Firecracker, I love you and the fact that you don’t give a shit that I’m a sociopath, but it doesn’t change the facts. Any child that shares my blood has an increased risk

of having antisocial personality disorder as well.”

Audrey smiles up at him as she takes his face in her hands. “So what if they do? That doesn’t mean they can’t live a full life? You did, kind of. I don’t care whose babies these are, I’ll be happy no matter who the father is.”

“Yeah, Bren. We don’t care if they share some of your less...socially acceptable traits.” Cassian tosses him a grin. “We’ll all love the babies no matter who the father is or who they turn out to be.”

Brenden finally cracks a smile. “Yeah, okay. I mean, I just can’t wait until you get huge. Fucking a pregnant woman has never been on my list of kinks I wanted to try, but now?”

We all burst out into laughter, and the mood lightens.

They’re right though. It doesn’t matter who the babies’ biological father is. They belong to all of us, and we’ll love them no matter what.