



Rune

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Category: Dark Erotica

Description: Welcome to CarnEvil, where you come for the thrills, and leave if we let you.

I'm a demon. We all are. I've been walking this Earth for centuries, using my psychic abilities to pose as a fortune teller, and feed on the humans that walk through those front gates. Their blood keeps us safe, masks our scent from the Hell Hounds roaming around, waiting to drag us all back to our keeper. Once in a lifetime, we meet our human match, our fated mate, whose blood sings to us unlike any other. And when mine walks in, I lock onto his scent like a bloodhound. He may try to run from me, but our bond will have him crawling back sooner or later. And when he does, I'll be waiting.

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I love putting on my mask. It's my nightly ritual before the carnival opens. I use my fingers, dipping into the black pot of paint to smear it over my face. By the time I'm done, my eye sockets are a solid black, making the normally blue irises look silver. The tip of my nose is also black, along with the outline of my teeth, making my face look like a hollow skull, outlined by my white hair that hangs down into my eyes.

"Opening in five!" I hear the ticket master shout outside my tent.

Something is happening tonight, something big. I can feel it pulse its way through my veins, and Kali slithers around my body with nervous excitement before settling around my neck and collarbones. I trace my fingers over her inky scales, and her tail twitches in anticipation.

"You feel it, too," I tell her before throwing on my clothes. She moves under my skin so that her head is at the base of my throat. She likes to watch the feeding, and I can't blame her. It is brutal and bloody as the humans scream and writhe beneath us.

"Rune," Mara sings as she lets herself into my tent. She's dressed head to toe in tight black leather. She twirls a blade between her fingers as she walks around. For a demon, she looks incredibly angelic with her blonde hair and blue eyes.

"Looking especially tempting tonight, Mara," I tell her as I rinse the black paint from my hands. I walk around the tent, lighting more candles and organizing my divination props, essentially setting the stage for the fortune teller's act.

"Mmm," she says as she plops herself down in the customer's chair and tosses her feet up onto the table. "Nemo said you were jittery."

“Something is coming,” I singsong to her, wagging my eyebrows.

“How fitting that you play the part of a fortune teller when you actually have the gifts of one. Yet here I am, stuck swallowing knives every night. Do you know how painful it was to learn how to do that properly?”

“It’s not like you can use your actual power,” I tell her. “The humans would run screaming if they saw you shapeshift. We’d never get to feed.” I push her feet off the table and mess with her too-perfect hair.

She rolls her eyes and leans her head back on the chair.

“What is it you saw, then?” she asks.

“A man,” I tell her, walking over to the opening of the tent and peeking out. People are beginning to trickle in, and their scent slowly makes its way over to me. All humans smell different, and their smells have evolved over time. When I first walked this Earth some five hundred years ago, they always seemed to smell more of natural things. It was pleasant. These days? They all smell like synthetic perfumes and MSG.

“A man?” she asks, joining me at the door, looking out at the people filing into the carnival.

“A man,” I repeat. “My man.” A giddy feeling takes over, causing Kali to slither excitedly around my skin.

“Oh,” Maradrawls, understanding dawning across her soft features. “You mean your little Fated?”

Her eyes light up at the possibility. Demons don’t mate like humans; we don’t feel the need or the desire to do so. But we do need to feed off them if we don’t want to

return to Hell. Their blood masks our scent, keeping us from being hunted by the hounds and dragged back below, kicking and screaming. Just because we were spawned in Hell, doesn't mean we like it there. It is Hell, after all.

Every so often, our equivalent of a match comes along, and we feel ourselves inexplicably drawn to them, to their blood, and to their soul. So we keep them with us, keep them on tap. In my hundreds of years of staying up top, I've not had one, and the possibility makes me almost dizzy with excitement. I've been told drawing from your Fated is as close to a spiritual experience as us demons would ever be allowed to experience.

"Possibly," I tell her, my eyes going back to scanning the crowd. He isn't here yet, but he will be any minute now. I can feel him inside of me as if he was already a part of me. Another demon, Egan, walks among the humans, breathing fire in their direction as they gasp and laugh, watching him in awe.

"Show-off," she says. "Good luck with your human." She smiles, her sharpened fangs poking out from behind her lips before she disappears into the crowd.

I stand at the opening of my tent, not wanting to turn any of my lights on to draw any attention my way. I want to see him when he arrives. I don't want to miss a moment. Carnival goers begin to wander my way, and as one makes eye contact with me, I smile, showing my sharpened teeth, and chomp in his direction. He quickly averts his gaze and directs his little friend group in the opposite direction.

That's when I smell him. I breathe deeply and close my eyes, relishing in his scent. He smells like tobacco and chocolate. My mouth waters as I lick my tongue over my teeth. I chew my lip as my eyes scan across everyone walking through the ticket booth, the golden-and-red glow of the carnival light illuminating their features.

"There's my man," I whisper to Kali, and I feel her little head peek out from the

collar of my shirt, trying to steal a glance as well.

He is beautiful. My human is dressed head to toe in black: black boots, black denim, and a black T-shirt with rolled sleeves. His arms are covered in tattoos all the way down to his fingertips that light a hand-rolled cigarette in his mouth. That full bottom lip has a ring on either side, and as he draws in on that little stick of cancer, I imagine my dick in its place.

My human is the exact opposite to me in almost every way. He seems to be covered in tattoos where I don't have a single one, except for my snake companion, Kali. He has jet-black hair compared to my stark white. I can't see his eye color from here, but I wonder if they are dark to my light as well.

One of his friends playfully pushes him, and I straighten up, anger instantly flooding my veins. No one touches what is mine, even if he doesn't know it yet. I step out of my tent, making sure the curtain closes behind me before following him into the crowd. He and his friends head directly toward the main tent for the opening show. It will be easy enough to keep eyes on him from there.

My body thrums with the adrenaline of him. My heart begins to beat in time with his, syncing our blood and breaths. From what I've been told, he'll feel drawn to me as well...eventually. But if he doesn't, I have a ritual I can perform to make him stay. The blood tastes so much sweeter when it isn't soured by fear.

He tries, and fails, to casually look over his shoulder, but when he scans the crowd, he can't find me. I smile and run my fingers over Kali, trying to calm her excited slithering. She is moving around my entire torso, tickling my sides as I feel her tongue dart out across my skin.

"Settle," I soothe her.

He turns back around, taking a final drag of his cigarette before stomping into the dirt with his heavy boot. A girl he is standing with takes his arm in hers and leads him into the tent. That gives me pause. I never even thought the universe would give me a straight man. Surely he isn't.

I walk around to the back of the tent and make my way through everyone working in here tonight before I find a place on the side where I can see everyone. My eyes find him easily in the crowd now, like they know exactly where to look. He scans the crowd as well, feeling my gaze on him like a physical touch. The lights go down, and I settle in, getting a plan together of how to approach him after.

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This carnival looks like it's straight out of a horror movie. Everything glows a faint gold and red, casting shadows that seem to move around every corner. It's filled with red-and-white-striped tents, crude dirt paths outlined by candles leading the way. How they stay lit or don't catch the entire place on fire is beyond me.

And the people working here are otherworldly gorgeous, from the man working the ticket booth to the fire breather and acrobats. There's something about them that makes it difficult to look away when they catch your eye, and there's someone watching me—I can feel it. Ever since I stepped foot in this carnival, I've felt eyes on me in the crowd, and I can't find the source, no matter how hard I look through the mass of people.

The lights dim in the ring, and the main event starts. I pull the guitar pick out of my jean pocket and stick it between my teeth. It's been a nervous habit for as long as I can remember. I continue to glance around in the low light, trying to find the source of this feeling.

When I catch the gaze of a man in the wings of the tent, off to my right side, it clicks. It's been him. His face is painted in a rudimentary skull, and his shockingly white hair hangs down into his eyes. He's dressed in dark baggy clothes: an oversized T-shirt and what looks like a skirt paired with boots. His skin is incredibly pale, almost as white as his hair. There isn't a spot of ink on his body that I can see except something that pokes out from his collar. He sits in a chair, his legs spread wide in a cocky gesture.

He lifts his hand and wags his fingers at me, a slow grin spreading across his face. My stomach flips, and my heartbeat picks up. Suddenly I feel light-headed and dizzy.

My body can't decide if I'm terrified or interested. I flip the guitar pick over in my mouth and lean forward, tilting my head with my own grin. I narrow my eyes, asking him a question with a look. He smiles wider and refuses to break eye contact. We've entered some type of war with our gazes, and neither of us wants to lose.

Even with him being so far away, I can tell that his eyes are the palest color blue I've ever seen. They almost shine with a silver glow against the black of his face paint. He pushes his hair out of his face, smearing some of the black paint into it, and leans forward as well, matching my posture. His hands clasp in between his knees, and I can see his nails are painted black.

I've never encountered anyone like this in my life. There's something about him that draws me in, makes me want to walk over to him and see him up close. I wonder somewhere in the back of my mind what he smells like. My eyes snag on how wide his legs are spread, and my mind wanders, thinking about how easy it would be to lift that skirt and see what's underneath. I move up his torso, taking in his thin frame, the little black spot of a tattoo on his neck, and his sharp jawline.

When I finally meet his eyes again, he's looking at me like he knows where my mind went, like he can see every dark fantasy that has somehow wormed its way into my imagination. He blows me a kiss, and I rear back like it hit me with a smack in the face.

Something happens in the ring, causing one of my friends I'm with to nudge my attention reluctantly back to the show. When I look back, the guy is gone, and I feel something in my chest deflate. For the rest of the show, I scan all the nooks and crannies where he could be hiding, but I can't find him. I can't feel his gaze on me anymore, and my heart returns to a normal rhythm. I rub my sternum at the dull ache there as I try to forget the weird encounter.

"What's wrong with you?" my friend Alyssa asks.

“I just need a cigarette,” I tell her. “I’ll be right back.”

“You just had one before we came in! And it’s almost done,” she complains in a whiny voice that sets my nerves on edge.

“That’s the definition of an addiction,” I tell her and pull my arm from her grasp. She pouts and goes back to talking with our friend on the other side of her.

I exit the tent and look around as I pull out my silver cigarette tin. I only have one left; I’ll have to roll more before the night is over. I tap it on the tin before pulling the pick out of my mouth and taking the cigarette between my teeth. Before I can light it, I feel his gaze again. He appears in front of me, lighter in hand, and holds it up in front of my face.

I was right—his eyes are a molten silver, the color in the irises seeming to shift and move in the glow of the firelight. He’s almost the exact same height as me, if not the slightest bit shorter. I lean in to light the tip of my cigarette, our faces getting so close all I can see is the fire reflected in his eyes.

We stare at each other again, not speaking. I lean back and take a drag. His eyes follow the hollowing of my cheeks, and I smirk, blowing the smoke out of my nose and mouth. Beyond the overwhelming scent of the tobacco is him, and it permeates the smoke. He smells rich like incense and sweet like apples.

I wonder if he tastes the same.

The little grin spreads across his lips again, and it takes every ounce of strength in me to not reach out and touch them. I take the cigarette out of my mouth and lick my lips before swiping my thumb across my piercings. His eyes follow the movement, and he leans in toward me ever so slightly. I see his nostrils widen as he breathes me in.

The energy between us is palpable. I can feel it between us, pushing and pulling on our bodies. My eyes drop to his neck and see the head of a snake poking out of his collar. I blink when I think I see it move, but it's still there, resting on his collarbone and disappearing beneath his shirt.

I open my mouth to speak, but the tent opens up, and floods of people begin pouring out. I turn toward the light shining on us and squint, knowing my friends will be out and looking for me at any moment. When I turn back toward him, he's slowly backing away, keeping his gaze on me until he gets far enough away to turn around.

My eyes are glued to him. I watch as he moves through the crowd, over the many dirt paths of candles, and then as he disappears into another tent. It's dark on the outside with just a faint yellow glow coming out when he opens and moves inside.

I begin to make my way over to his tent, like a bloodhound on a scent trail. I can't let it go. I take a deep drag of my cigarette, letting my lungs fill with the comforting burn, numbing the strange feeling of loss that fills my chest and throat.

"Cash!" Alyssa yells, dragging my attention back to the group I arrived with. "Where are you going?" I take another drag and then point with the cigarette in my hand.

"That tent over there. I want to know what it is," I tell them.

"Well, let's all go together, silly!" she says, grabbing my arm again and leading me over. As we get closer, it begins to light up on the outside. It's surrounded by tall pillar candles in antique glass jars. They begin to light on their own, casting his entire tent in an eerie glow of reds, oranges, and yellows.

The sign next to the opening reads "Fortune Teller" in exaggerated red ink on a white background. I look around, and no one else is paying this attraction any attention. We're the only ones that have made it over this way.

I stomp my cigarette out in the grass under my boot and disentangle myself from Alyssa's grip. She says something to the others, but I'm too distracted watching him as he opens the curtain. He's surrounded by a hellish glow, like a sinful halo around his entire body.

"Looking to have your fortunes told?" he asks. It's the first time I've heard his voice, and he isn't even looking at me while he speaks. A hot poker of jealousy flares to life in my stomach. His voice is deep and smooth, and yet there is a playful undertone to it that promises something I'm not sure I want to accept.

"Definitely!" Alyssa cheers, stepping past him. As the rest of my group enters, his eyes swing to mine.

"Coming?" he asks me. There's a challenge in his silver gaze, and I accept.

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It makes both me and Kali ecstatic that he can feel the pull to me. He isn't sure what it is, but he looks for me in the crowd and follows me when I'm out of sight. His friends are an unforeseen obstacle that I'm very willing to overcome. Once I get him separated and get his blood to complete the binding, he won't even care about them anymore. I will be the only thing in his sight.

His friends are in my tent, laughing and chatting as they make their way around the circle, pointing and looking at all the crystals and herbs I have set up for the act. He and I are still standing outside in the cool air, staring at each other in a silent battle. I know he wants to come in—I can feel it. I can see it in his mind. He wants to come inside more than anything. But there's a part of him that's fighting it, a part of him that doesn't want to be the one to give in and lose whatever fight it is we have between us.

That only makes me want to fight harder for him, for us. I want to break that part of him down and mold it into what I need. I want him crying and bleeding at my feet, begging me to take him in as mine. I want him in a puddle, weak and needy for anything I could possibly give to him or take from him. I smile at the thought and see his body respond and react to me.

His brain isn't sure what to make of me yet, but his body is already making decisions for him.

“Cash!” one of his friends yells at him from inside. He drags his eyes off me and through the tent flaps I'm still holding open.

“Cash?” I ask him, the name gliding off my tongue like honey. His skin breaks out in

goose bumps. “Like Johnny?”

“Funny,” he murmurs. “Never heard that one before.” His voice is melted butter, and I want to hear him say my name with it. My cock stirs as he looks up and down my body one last time before walking past me with a little shove of his shoulder. That small touch makes my heart kick up, and I can feel my mouth salivate with anticipation of what he’s going to taste like as I take him for the first time.

I moan and follow him inside, watching as he takes a seat on the side, not wanting to go first. That suits me just fine—it will be better if he goes last. It’ll be easier to keep him with me. The small, loud one sits down first, and her scent overpowers me. She reeks of synthetic chemicals and sugar that make my fucking teeth hurt.

As I put on a show for each of his friends, he watches me out of the corner of his eye. His body is constantly in alignment with my own, and when it’s his turn, his entire body stiffens with anticipation. I can sense every little emotion that flows through his body like a tidal wave. I’ve never been able to read anyone as easily as I can read him. It’s like I’m flipping through the pages of a book.

“Go on, Cash,” the little one says in her high-pitched voice, pushing him out of his chair and into the one across from me.

“Yeah,” I urge him on in a playful voice. “Come on, Cash.” He narrows his eyes at me, then reluctantly gets up, watching me the entire time, and walks the few feet over to my little table. He rests his beautifully tattooed arms on the green velvet cloth and extends his hands out to me, palms up. His smoky scent invades my nostrils, making me almost drool with hunger.

I slowly look over his palms, tracing the lines that move across them with the very tips of my fingers. His hands are calloused and warm. There’s an energy moving between us, and with every little movement, his fingers pulse like they want to reach

out and touch me back.

“Something big is coming into your life, Johnny,” I tell him.

“Cash,” he says, staring into my eyes with a warning. I smile at him and then continue dragging my fingers across his palms. I lean my head on my free hand as I move to the heel of his hand with the other and then across the small lines on his wrists that his tattoos try to cover. I move across his horizontal scars, and I hear his breathing pick up as I continue up his arm.

“Don’t be afraid of it,” I tell him in my smoothest voice. I reach the inside of his elbow and trace the bright green vein and feel the slight raising of his skin there. His skin is dotted with goose bumps. I can feel myself getting hard as his fingers move in circles under my elbow where I’m hovering. I don’t think he even knows he’s doing it, but his touch is like a lightning bolt straight to my dick.

“Afraid of what?” he asks in a whisper. When I look up, his eyebrows are scrunched together, making a small line of worry form between them. I stare at him for a moment, tilting my head to take him in. I lean forward, the table creaking slightly under my weight.

He leans forward as well, unknowingly drawn in by the connection we share. He’s mine, and he’s so blind as to not see it yet. I smile, knowing that he can now see how my teeth are sharper than anyone’s should be. When his eyes drop to them, he swallows thickly, his Adam’s apple bobbing, and I watch sweat break out across his forehead.

“Me!” I say with a wide smile, leaning forward quickly and grabbing his mouth in a kiss. He tastes like the smoothest milk chocolate as his mouth opens to me for a split second before he realizes what’s happening.

He pushes me off him, and I fall back on the floor, laughing so hard I feel tears slip from the corners of my eyes. His friends begin to grab onto him as he stands over me with a hard look. Cash shakes them off and squats down next to me. His eyes are so dark in this light, they look like two black holes. I smile up at him.

“You don’t get to touch me,” he says, taking my throat in his grasp and pushing me into the floor. His knee finds my chest, and he digs into it. He thinks he’s holding me down, making it difficult for me to move and breathe. He has no idea of the strength I possess or how I’m going to turn the tables on him tonight, so I let him soak up this small moment of power.

“But you like it when I touch you,” I whisper, moving my hand up the inside of his thigh. I grip his rock-hard cock, and he jumps off me and falls to his ass like I’ve stung him. I grin and roll my neck. “I can’t wait to see the monster you’re hiding underneath those jeans, Johnny,” I tell him. “It felt very...sizable,” I say with a wink in his direction.

“Cash, come on,” Alyssa says, trying to pick him up off the floor.

“In your fucking dreams, psycho,” Cash swears, spitting in my direction.

“Can you please let me know when you’re going to do that?” I ask him as I stand up and brush myself off. “I’ll open my mouth and move into the line of fire. You’re being wasteful.” He looks at me like I’ve lost my mind. He stands and backs up toward the entrance of the tent with his friends. “And you got my new skirt all dusty,” I pout.

“Fuck your skirt, asshole,” he says before pushing his way out of the tent. I smile as I watch him go, knowing I’m going to break in that bratty little mouth later.

“You shouldn’t touch people without their consent,” the little one huffs in my

direction. I bite in her direction, my teeth clacking together. Her eyes widen, and she rushes out of the tent with the rest of them.

“Oh, this is going to be fun, Johnny,” I say aloud to myself before blowing out all the candles in the tent and following my prey through the festivities.

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I swear that fucking tattoo around his neck was moving as I pushed him to the floor and grabbed his neck. I could almost feel it under the palm of my hand, slithering and struggling under my grip. He had looked completely unfazed at my assault; if anything, he almost looked amused by it. Not many people would react that way to my anger. I've been told I'm one intimidating fucker when I'm angry, but that's what happens when you grow up on the streets without a home or a family.

But him? He didn't give a shit. He loved every second of it. Even now I can feel his fucking hands on my arms and his eyes on my face. Leaving his tent did nothing to cool the anger I felt toward him.

"Cash!" I heard Alyssa shout from behind me. The others we had come with were giving me a wide berth, knowing that my anger wasn't something to fuck with. But Alyssa always thought she was an exception to the rule, the only one who could handle my moods. She always thought she was special, that I cared for her. Tonight was no exception. "Cash!" she shouts again, closer this time as she takes my arm for the third time tonight.

"Alyssa!" I say in a crude imitation of her voice as I rip my arm from her grasp. Her hands drop to her sides like she touched a live flame. Her eyes instantly show hurt and fear as she takes a step back. "Stop fucking touching me like it's your right to do so," I tell her in a low voice as I advance on her.

She's over five feet tall on a good day, and I tower over her. There are already tears threatening to fall over her lashes, but I'm too far gone in the darkness to care. He's pushed me to become the thing I hate being.

“Do not touch me right now.”

“Alright, Cash,” one of the other guys says. “Enough. You’re scaring the shit out of her.”

I back up and leave them, hoping they won’t follow. I need some time alone. I need to figure out what the fuck happened back in that tent. I make my way through the carnival, stopping at a picnic table that’s off to the side. I pull out my supplies with shaking hands and lay them out on the table.

I place the guitar pick between my teeth to distract myself as I get to work. Taking the tobacco out of the tin, I place it on a flattened wrapper and then carefully roll it almost all the way before bringing it to my mouth to lick the seam. I do this over and over again, until the worn silver tin is full again and my brain has stopped humming with anger.

There are people all around me, but they’ve become background noise, like a sound machine playing white noise. All I can see replaying in my mind is how his silver eyes raked over my skin like a fucking caress. Even now, as I pick everything up off the table and shove them back in my pockets, I can feel his fucking eyes on me.

I try to look around my surroundings without coming off as paranoid, but I can’t see him, and it makes my chest feel like it’s caving in. I don’t know what the fuck has come over me. This isn’t normal behavior. A normal person doesn’t see someone and become obsessed like this. But I can’t talk myself out of it. Every time I try, my brain somehow pivots right back to him. I can’t shake his incense-and-apple scent from my brain, and I can feel his eyes on me around every corner.

And I know he’s out there somewhere—he’s in my blood. My outburst has only spurred him on, intrigued him. I’ve laid down a challenge, like a fucking alpha fighting for territory, and he’s answering the call.

“Hi there,” a woman says, sitting down next to me at the picnic table. She has golden-blonde hair and bright teal eyes. She looks like an actual angel sitting next to me. Her voice is musical and light, completely at odds with how she is dressed and the blade she’s twirling in her hands. “Name’s Mara,” she announces, sticking her hand out in my direction to shake.

I hesitate but take it.

“Cash,” I tell her, moving the pick out of my teeth and in between my fingers. I fiddle with it like she fiddles with her knife. She looks me up and down, a calm smile on her face as she takes me in. What is it with the people here and them staring at me like I’m their fucking dessert?

“Can I help you?” I ask her after the silence has stretched on too long. I can feel his eyes on my back, and it’s making me feel on edge. It’s like a hundred spiders making their way up my spine and into my hair. I can feel him creep over me like a dark cloud.

“I’m a friend of Rune’s,” she says with an easy smile, like she can’t feel the tension surrounding us.

“And Rune is?” I ask her, looking around, knowing I’m going to find him lurking somewhere in the shadows like a creep.

“He hasn’t even introduced himself? How rude.” She waves her hand and rolls her eyes. “The little white-haired boy with the skirt,” she says, nodding her head to the left. I follow, and I see him there, leaning against one of the food trucks, his legs crossed at the ankle and that same smirk gracing his mouth.

“Little isn’t a word I would use to describe him,” I blurt before I can stop myself. But it’s true—he isn’t little. I’m easily six two, and he’s a bit taller. And I’d be lying if I

said I didn't feel how ripped he was when I shoved him. It was like pressing against a chest made of rock.

"Mhm," she hums, winking in Rune's direction. Keeping eye contact with him, she leans in and runs her nose along the outside of my neck, inhaling all the way up to my temple. I sit frozen, wondering what the fuck she's doing, before a low growl carries itself over my skin. I swear it shakes the ground at my feet and the bench under me. I look over at Rune, but his gaze is trained on Mara this time.

She just laughs and gives me a kiss on the cheek before standing up and walking away, making a show to the passersby with the knives she seems to keep in every part of her outfit. People stop and stare, and she soaks it up like a sponge, smiling and laughing, throwing them into the air and catching them in her mouth. She lowers one slowly into her throat and waits for people to ooh and ahh before pulling it out and skipping down one of the paths. Their claps echo through the open space until they filter into different spaces.

I look back to where Rune was standing, and he's no longer there. I can't feel him anymore, either. I pull a cigarette out of my tin and walk away from the other carnival goers to smoke. After I finish this, I think to myself, I'll go find the group. I'll have to apologize to Alyssa to get back on everyone's good side.

I groan and crack my neck as I take the last couple of drags before putting it out. I lean my head back on the same truck Rune had been leaning on moments ago. I roll my head to the side, looking off into the forest that surrounds the carnival. It's quiet and incredibly dark past the reach of the lights. It's a new moon tonight, so the sky is lacking that extra bit of light.

Just as I'm about to walk away, something in the brush catches my eye. I push off the truck and squint, trying to see what it is. I stumble back as two glowing eyes catch my attention and blink. My arms flail and catch the brunt of the fall as I careen back

onto my ass. My wrists scream from the jolt, and the red eyes blink one more time before they disappear. My heart is racing as I sit on the damp grass and try to catch my breath.

That didn't feel like Rune, and it certainly didn't feel human. What the fuck is this place? I take a few deep breaths and stand, looking around as I brush the wet blades of grass from my jeans. I walk away to find my friends, glancing back at the forest until it's completely out of sight.

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I'm taking a fucking walk.

The sight of Mara smelling and touching what's mine nearly sent me into a blind rage that would have destroyed the entire camp. I know she did it to force my hand, to make me realize if I didn't make a move, any of the other demons could try. Cash wouldn't smell the same to them as he did to me, but he was still a vulnerable human in a sea of hungry demons. And I wasn't about to let one of them take him from me.

I can still feel him. He's still here, walking around the carnival, looking for his friends. If I want to keep him, I need to make sure he doesn't find them. They need to think he went home on his own so that they don't go looking for him or try to convince him to leave with them instead of staying with me.

He has no choice. He's staying here.

I can't wait to sink my teeth into him and feel the wet heat of his blood pour over my tongue. I've never tasted someone that was born to be mine. He must taste like Eve's apple in Eden, the perfect temptation for the perfect sinner.

"There you are," I say to myself as I see him walking aimlessly around the pathways. He really does look like the perfect prey. He looks lost and confused; his guard isn't up at all. I can feel every fleeting emotion that passes through him.

I step into his path, and he halts, staring at me from a few feet away. He didn't even see or sense me coming.

"Leave me alone," he says, stalking toward me and then pushing me out of the way to

get past. A flush of heat spreads through my entire body at the contact, and I groan and bite my lip. I catch his arm, pulling him around and backing him up against the wall of the mirror maze. I push myself into his body so that we are nose to nose. His arm flexes against my grip, but I just squeeze tighter.

My free hand moves up his hard stomach and across his chest. He breathes in, and I can feel his dick starting to swell against my hip. I blow my hair out of my face and finally grip his jaw, making his eyes lock with mine.

“What’s got you so excited, Johnny?” I ask him. I run my nose up the same path as Mara’s, my mouth watering at the scent there. He smells the strongest at his pulse point, and I take the opportunity of him being frozen to dart my tongue out and lick across that little spot. His sweat coats my tongue, and I suck his skin into my mouth.

His hips involuntarily rise to seek mine, pressing against my own swelling cock. His groan lights my blood on fire, and my mouth salivates as I continue my assault on his throat. I refuse to feed from him until I’m inside of him, but I can’t help but lick and suck at his sensitive skin. I pull the blood to the surface, leaving red bruises up and down his neck. I pull away, my mouth wet with the effort, and appreciate the marks I’ve left on his skin.

Marks that make him mine.

“Stop,” he says, barely able to push me away. His brain may still be against this, but his body knows the drill. I run a hand down his torso and cup him roughly in my palm. His head falls back against the wall, and I watch the delicious jerk of his Adam’s apple. I lean forward and take the soft skin there between my teeth as I rub against him with my hand.

His hands stay pressed against my chest, pushing against me with hardly any strength.

“Please, stop,” he pleads again, his hips rolling against my palm. My thumb moves up and grazes the band of his boxers. He pushes me with a little more force, and I step away, annoyed that he won’t give in. I need to feed, and his protests are getting in the way of that.

“You want this,” I tell him, taking his throat with both hands and pushing my face into his. His hands slide from my chest to my hips, and I lick the seam of his lips, tasting the rich tobacco that lingers. They part just enough for me to take his bottom lip into mine, biting it gently between my teeth. I can’t have him bleed yet. I need to hold off. It will be so much better with my dick sheathed deep inside him.

“I don’t,” he murmurs against my mouth as I play with one of his piercings. Our hips move together, and a deep growl makes its way out of my chest. The stiff, rough fabric of his jeans pushes against the soft linen of my skirt in the best fucking way. I grab one of his hands and plant it directly over my dick.

“Do you feel what you do to me, Johnny?” I ask him, moving my lips harsher against his, forcing him to open up to me. His hand grips my dick, and he groans before opening his mouth fully to mine, swallowing me whole with one kiss.

He flips us, pinning me against the wall, and I let him lead since I like where it’s going at the moment. The hand on my groin stays there, moving in slow, methodical strokes while his other grabs my throat and pins me against the wall.

“I told you to stop,” he says, biting my lip hard enough that the iron taste of it floods into my mouth.

“You don’t seem like you want to,” I tell him, grinning as he continues to rub me. All the blood in my body pours into my dick, making me hard as a rock. Electricity shoots down my spine, causing my hips to buck against his hand. I refuse to come in my fucking skirt the first time we’re together. How fucking embarrassing. So I’m

going to have to take control back of the situation before it gets out of hand.

“I said I wanted you to stop touching me,” he says, smirking as I fight to control my thrusts. “I didn’t say anything about me touching you. I kind of like how pitiful and weak you look underneath me right now.”

I laugh and take a deep breath, getting my dick under control. I use just enough force in my shove to get him off my body, but not to send him flying backward onto his ass.

“Johnny, Johnny, Johnny,” I say as I stalk toward him, tucking my cock into the waist of my skirt. He follows the movement with his eyes, and they flare with heat before he gets himself under control. “You are so fucking adorable. But you aren’t in charge here, I’m afraid.”

Kali decides to make an appearance, slithering up and around my neck to where she can see him and he can see her. His eyes bulge as she moves through my skin and sticks her tongue out at him. At least, that’s what I tell myself she’s doing. I can feel the little tickle of it, and I like to think she’s on my side here.

“What the fuck are you?” he asks, fear lacing his words.

I clasp my hands behind my back and walk around him while he stands frozen with fear. He has a very nice ass that I take a moment to admire as I round on him. He’s making my heart race with his adrenaline, and it’s making me a little dizzy with the need to have his blood. His thoughts are going a mile a minute as he stands there, fixed with indecision. His body is telling him one thing while his brain tells him another.

“It doesn’t really matter what I am,” I tell him. “I want you, and therefore, I’m going to take you, whether you want it or not. But—” I pause as I face him again. “I think

we both know you're lying to yourself when you say you don't want it. I can see and feel the way your body responds to me, Johnny."

Before I can see it coming, he takes off, running past me and into the maze of mirrors. I let my head fall back as a small laugh escapes me. He is fucking perfect for me. He has no idea that the chase is the best part to a demon.

I walk slowly over toward the maze and take the steps one at a time. I can smell his fear, sour and sharp. We're going to have to fix that before I feed. I don't want his inability to be open-minded to ruin my first ever feeding with him.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are," I sing as I step inside the darkened maze.

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I instantly realize I've made a huge fucking mistake. I wasn't paying attention when I ran from him; I just knew I needed to get away. The shit he's capable of making me feel...it's dangerous. And that tattoo around his neck? I swear that fucker moved as he stalked around me. What in the hell is he?

But as I make my way inside this building, I'm blinded by the flashing neon lights that bounce around the mirrors. As I look for a place to run, I'm confronted with a hundred different angles of myself. There's a smoke machine somewhere that floods the floor, making it impossible to see anything below my knees.

This place is a fucking death trap, and I've walked in willingly.

I can't hesitate, so I run in, knowing getting out of here is my only fucking chance to get away from him. All I can do is hope that he gets lost and I can find my friends so that we can leave this place.

My arms are outstretched as I feel my way through the maze, trying not to face-plant into a mirror or trip and fall, but I can't be slow. I know he's going to follow me in here, and even though I want him to struggle to make it through this fucking maze, he works here. Hell, he probably helped set it up.

There's creepy music playing, and I can barely hear it over my panicked breaths, but it does nothing to settle my nerves. It's tinny and sounds like it's coming from a haunted music box. How could anyone ever think this was a fun carnival attraction? It's something straight out of a fucking horror movie.

"Want to play a game of hide-and-seek, Johnny?" His voice surrounds me from all

angles, but I can't tell where it's coming from.

"Fuck," I whisper to myself, continuing to push myself through the maze. I come face-to-face with my reflection at a dead end and feel my throat constrict. His maniacal laughter fills the space.

"Try again!" he sings into the void.

I feel like a wild animal backed into a corner, and it makes me wild with determination to get the fuck out.

"Fuck off, Rune!" I shout into the air, taking off back down the way I came. When I make it back to the fork, I steer left. My eyes are almost fully accustomed to the strange mixture of darkness and glow of the neon. Every time I catch my own reflection, I see my eyes wide and wild, and I look absolutely terrified.

"I'd rather fuck you, sweetness." His voice has taken on a whole new tone, and as I make another turn, I swear I see the white flash of his hair reflected in the mirrors. When I look around though, I don't see him.

I feel him in the maze with me. I can feel him staring at me, watching me fail as I take wrong turn after wrong turn. His anticipation leaks into me like a dripping faucet, slowly filling me up until I'm mad with it. It feels like the maze stretches on forever, constantly changing and morphing, growing beyond the walls that contain it.

"Johnny," he sings, elongating his little nickname for me until I think there won't be an end. The hairs on the back of my neck stand up, and goose bumps break out across every inch of my skin. I can barely catch my breath, and my chest feels heavy and tight.

"My precious boy," he says, his voice an octave lower than his playful tone. It skirts

across my flesh like velvet, planting a seed of doubt in my brain.

Do I really want to escape him?

“Johnny!” I hear him whisper like he’s right behind me. I whip my body around. He’s not there. I run down another aisle, turn left, then right, then right again. I don’t know what’s real anymore. The panic and fear have my vision blurry. I shut my eyes, trying to get my vision to focus, but the whole world tilts on its axis, and I stumble into my own reflection.

I glance to the left, and he’s there.

When my head turns fully, he’s gone.

He’s playing with his fucking food.

I growl and push off the mirror, taking off through the maze again, determined to get the fuck out of this place. I take turn after turn, never hitting a dead end no matter how far I run. I’m out of breath, my chest is on fire, and the mirrors keep stretching and warping around me.

I stop in my tracks and scream.

“Fine!” I shout at all my reflections. “You win!”

It goes silent. The music stops, and all I can hear are my own ragged breaths. There’s sweat dripping down my body, soaking my shirt and making it cling uncomfortably to my skin. I try to control it, listening to the silence for any sign that he’s here, that I didn’t make it all up in my head.

My body is frozen—it can’t decide if it’s safe to move or if it should prepare for a

fight. My feet are planted to the floor with frozen muscles. I take a few deep breaths and try to look at all of my reflections out of the corners of my eyes, looking for any signs of movement or flashes of white. I don't see anything, and my heart rate slows.

I flex my fingers and toes, trying to loosen the tension and work up the nerve to start walking again. I can't stand here forever. I have to get out of here and get to my friends. I need to get home. I need to fucking move.

I turn around and come face-to-face with him. My heart picks back up, trying to force its way out of my throat. He looks at ease, his hands clasped behind his back, a grin on his skull-painted face, and his white hair falling across his eyes in a way that makes me want to reach out and push it out of his face.

He tilts his head, and I take a slow step backward. His eyes fall to my feet, watching me step away from him. When his eyes meet mine again, his grin grows into a wide smile, displaying his sharp white teeth.

“Gotcha.”

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I pounce. He turns to run, but I'm faster. I slam his body against the nearest mirror, and he grunts as his face makes contact with the glass. Blood runs out of his nose and drips down his lips. He struggles and tries to fight me, but he has no idea just how strong I am. I've let him think this entire time it's a fair fight, but it's not.

Humans are so pathetically weak.

I inhale and smell the sweet scent of his need and want underneath all that fear. I know he wants this, whether he admits it to me or not. It doesn't matter. I'm going to be taking what I need from him.

I roll my hips into the soft curve of his ass and groan into his ear. He drops his forehead onto the mirror in front of him and whimpers. I have his hands held behind his back, and his fingertips graze over the head of my dick as I roll into him again. I can feel myself dripping for him.

"You are going to taste so sweet," I tell him, taking his ear between my teeth. He pulls away from me and starts to fight all over again. I roll my eyes and let him get it all out, fighting against my grip until he's tired himself out. "Finished?" I ask him as he pants against the glass, fogging up the reflection of his face.

"What do you want from me?"

I push up against his body again and use my free hand to move around his waist and palm his dick. It grows and hardens under my grip as I move my own against his ass.

"I want this," I tell him, unbuttoning his jeans and pushing them down over his hips.

They fall to the floor, exposing his legs, covered in the same black-and-grey tattoos that cover the rest of his body. His thighs are thick with muscles, and if he wasn't fighting me every step of the way, I would drop to my knees and bite my way across them.

"I am not a fucking bottom," he growls.

I just smile and run my hand up the front of his thigh and over his tight grey boxer briefs, the only thing on him that isn't black. In the reflection of his body, I can see the dark spot where his precum has collected. My hand cups his balls, and he squeezes his eyes shut and bares his teeth.

I move my hand further up, using my fingertips to run along the band from one hip to another. His hips move slightly before he catches himself, begging me to go lower, to go below the fabric and touch him skin on skin. His arousal begins to overpower the scent of his fear, and I know his blood is going to taste like the fucking nectar of the gods once I finally sink my teeth into him.

"Stop," he whispers as I slip my fingers inside his boxers. I finally touch the head of him, where I play with the slit, collecting the ample amount of precum that has collected there. I smear it around his sensitive head, listening to the beautiful way he gasps under my touch. I give him a few firm strokes and relish in how his knees almost give out underneath him.

I release his hands from behind his back, and he plants them on the mirror to help hold himself up as I continue to pull and tug at him, making more precum collect at his tip. While he's distracted, I use my free hand to slip his boxers down over his ass, just far enough to let me slip inside him.

"Rune," he whispers. I love hearing my name on his lips. It makes my dick swell with the need to be inside him. "You can't. Stop."

My fingers dip into his crease, and he squeezes, freezing up with panic all over again. The sweet smell of his sex is gone, and in its place is fear. I groan and realize this is going to have to be done a different way.

“Fuck off, Rune!” he warns me. “I do not want your fucking dick inside of me!” Lies, lies, lies. I can smell them on him.

“I love the fight of topping a top,” I tell him as he begins to struggle all over again. “But let’s make you a bit more pliant, okay? We don’t have all fucking night.” I grip the back of his hair and force his eyes to meet mine in the mirror. His widen as mine turn jet-black, eclipsing the irises until there’s nothing left but darkness.

“Cash,” I say in a smooth voice, letting my energy seep into him. “I need you to stop fighting me now. It’s time.”

I can still see the hint of fear in his eyes, but his body complies with my words, relaxing and stopping the fight. I pull my skirt up, take the hem of it under my chin, and pull my own dick out. I smear my precum around the head and then spit down onto it, knowing it’s not near enough lube, but it’s all I have in the moment.

I spread him wide and push the tip of my dick against him, forcing my way past the tight ring. He is so hot and so fucking tight I have to bite my lip until I taste blood to make sure I don’t blow my load in one swift push. Putting some force behind it, I’m balls-deep within seconds, basking in the feel of his ass pulsing and gripping my shaft.

“You feel so fucking good, baby,” I tell him as I begin to move.

“Fuck you,” he says, fighting past my mind control. My strong man, so brave and willful.

“I think you’ll find it’s the opposite,” I say as I pull myself almost all the way out of him before thrusting back in. His face smashes into the mirror, and he grunts. I dig my fingertips into his hips as I do it again and again, pulling out almost completely before ramming home.

Pleasure overtakes my body. Goose bumps break out across my flesh, and white heat floods down my spine and into my balls. He’s so fucking tight there’s no way I’m going to last much longer. I look up, and he’s watching me but not my face. His eyes are glued to the way my hips are moving against him in a wild rhythm. I tuck my skirt into my shirt to keep it out of the way.

“You like watching yourself get fucked, Johnny?” I ask him, picking up speed. His mouth drops open, and a low moan makes its way out of his chest. “You like the way we look together?” I grip and squeeze his throat as he swears at me again. What a little firecracker my Johnny is.

I grab the back of his scalp again, pulling his head to the side and exposing his neck as I feel the orgasm creep up. My toes try to curl, and electricity shoots through my stomach as I bite the tender flesh of his throat.

His blood pours over my tongue as my cum paints the inside of him. With each pulse of my orgasm, I suck on his neck, drawing more and more from him as I prolong the high. His blood is like nothing I’ve ever tasted, and I know what people mean now when they talk about their Fated mate.

It is spiritual, it is orgasmic, it is fucking sinful.

I pull away from his neck at the same time I slip my cock free from his ass. He falls to the floor, weak from the blood loss and exhausted from pleasure. He didn’t come, but he still enjoyed it, and I’ll make up for it next time. I look down at him, his ass leaking my cum, mixed with the red of his blood. His face is pale, and his eyes are

dull.

“You just need some rest,” I tell him, squatting down to get a better look. “The feeding always takes it out of you. Rest up, buttercup.” I lean over and give him a quick kiss on the forehead before standing to get myself together.

I feel positively giddy with the feed. My head is light, and my body feels refreshed. This is a high I have never experienced with any other feed. I’m so happy I get to keep him.

When I look down to adjust my clothing and see my dick painted red from where I forced myself inside of him, butterflies flutter through my stomach. I have his blood on me now. He’s marked me just as I have marked him.

“I like seeing your blood on my cock, Johnny,” I tell him, meeting his eyes and seeing the defiance begin to creep back in. His anger is red-hot and almost uncontrollable, a challenge I happily rise to. “I think I’ll keep it there as a reminder of our first time together.”

I adjust myself in my boxers and pull my skirt back into place. I smile down at him. His cock is swollen and hard. The feeding has a sexual effect on the humans as well, and I know he’s feeling the need to touch himself. But he won’t while I’m still around. So I twirl and bow in his direction before leaving him alone. He’ll come find me if I don’t find him first.

“See you soon!” I sing.

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My mind is cloudy, and my dick is fucking throbbing. I can barely register the pain in my ass for all the blood rushing to my cock. I sit up and lean back on the mirror, feeling his cum leak out of me as I move. I hesitantly grab my dick with my hand, feeling an almost instant relief at the contact.

“Fuck,” I moan, gripping the base and squeezing up to the head as I run my fingers over the sticky precum that’s collected at my slit. The pain in my neck from where he bit me is thrumming and burning, sending waves of pleasure through my body. There’s a haze over my mind, making the world around me sway.

Did he do something to me? I try to think back to when I stopped fighting, when he had called me by my real name and made me calm. Something in my brain had told me to relax, and so I had. Did he do that? What the fuck kind of monster was he to be able to control my mind?

My body jolts with fear as I remember the way his eyes had gone black, darker than black. They were soulless and haunting, soaking up everything in the room. I was drawn into them, lost and searching for a way out.

But the way he made me feel after that...

When he first pushed into me, practically ripping me open as he forced himself into me, I’d never felt so full as he stretched me open and filled me up. It was the first time I had ever received, and the burn had been brutal, but it turned to white-hot pleasure as he continued, his cock swiping against my prostate with every fucking thrust.

I hadn't wanted it, had I?

I groan and fist myself harder, stroking myself violently to the memories of how he felt inside of me. Watching him in the mirror, seeing the way his body had moved as he rutted against me, was unlike anything I had ever experienced.

Everything about him terrified me, but underneath all of that fear was a desire I couldn't deny. I had wanted him to catch me as I ran from him in the maze. I wanted him to take me, mark me, claim me against the mirrors just like he had done.

And when he had bitten my neck, sucking and feeding off my blood, fireworks exploded through every fiber of my being, ripping me apart and laying me bare for him. It clicked into place, and I knew I wasn't ever getting away from him.

Heat spreads through my body as I use one hand to palm my balls and the other to continue my vicious strokes. I can see him behind my closed eyes, like he is watching me do this, and that makes my pleasure skyrocket.

My muscles tense, and his name falls out of my mouth without my permission. I make a mess of my shirt, my cum standing out on the black fabric. I quickly try to wipe it away, but it just makes a bigger mess.

I try to clean the rest of myself up by stepping out of my jeans and boxers and using the latter to wipe away the evidence of both his and my own pleasure. I grunt and wince in pain when I try to clean up the blood from where he tore me open and decide that that can wait until later. For now, I pull up my jeans and discard the soiled underwear on the floor.

My legs and steps are wobbly, struggling to hold my body weight upright as I wander through the maze again. I can still feel him here, but it doesn't feel like a threat anymore. He's here, and he's watching, but only out of curiosity. Like he's waiting to

see what I'll do next.

There's a tightness in my chest that I can't get rid of, pulling me in different directions as I make my way out of the maze. All I can think about is getting out to get to him. I want him. I need him. I fucking crave him.

"What the fuck have you done to me?" I ask him out loud because I know he's fucking here, and I know he can hear me. I see the exit sign lit above a blacked-out door and hobble over to it. Just pushing open the door takes a lot of energy. He has completely drained me to the point I can barely walk.

As I stumble out of the maze, I fall into the metal railing, causing it to clang and creak and bring every eye within a fifteen-foot radius on me. I pull myself up straight and run my fingers through my hair before making my way down the steps and back into the crowd. No one seems to notice me once I pull myself together.

Except for the performers...they do.

I pass Mara as she throws her knives at someone spinning on a large wooden target, and she pauses and turns, sniffing the air in my direction. When her eyes find me, her mouth forms into a sinister smile, setting my teeth on edge. She winks and turns her attention back toward the spinning human dartboard.

I dig frantically in my pockets for my cigarette tin, nearly dropping it on the ground as I pull one out and light it. The familiar burn down my throat and into my lungs helps settle my mind. Once that one is gone, I pull out another one, taking my time and soaking every bit of comfort the nicotine can give me.

"I spy with my little eye," someone sings from behind me. I turn around and see an older man with a top hat walking toward me. He has a bushy grey beard, and he swings his cane with a flourish and smiles. "A scared little human."

I don't respond, so he leans in and smells me, getting a good whiff in before I take a few steps back and throw my cigarette butt on the ground. He looks from me to it and then back again.

"Litterbug," he tsks. "I'd prefer you not dirty up my carnival. I'll have to have a talk with Rune about you before we move on to the next location." He eyes me up, and it takes me a moment to register what he said.

"What do you know about Rune?" I ask him, taking another step back. I'm ready to bolt at any moment, although if I ran on my wobbly legs now, I'd probably look like Bambi trying to learn how to walk.

"I can smell him all over you, sweet boy," he says with a grin, taking a step closer to me. "Such a shame he got to you first," he pouts. "Something that smells as sweet as you must be heaven on the tongue." He clicks his tongue, and I stumble away back toward the front of the carnival.

My mind is still spinning and trying to put the pieces together for the last couple of hours. It's like trying to fit the wrong pieces into the wrong puzzle. Square peg, round hole. Something is missing, and all I know for sure is that I need to get back to Rune. There's something in me, begging and pleading for me to get back to him.

"All of these tents look the same," I groan as I look around at all the red-and-white-striped tents surrounding me. I suddenly can't remember which one is his or even what his act was, what part he played.

I swing open one tent, opening my mouth to yell his name, when I'm met with two sets of black-as-night eyes with mouths soaked in blood and a naked girl hanging from a beam by her wrists. I cover my mouth, and they hiss in my direction as I fall back on my ass and crab crawl away before I can get back on my feet.

“What the fuck, what the fuck,” I whisper in panic before taking off down another path. I vaguely remember him being at the front of everything, near the main event tent. If I can just make it back to the front, surely I can recognize something and get back to him.

Every carnival performer looks at me with narrowed eyes as I pass them. I don’t remember there being this many of them when I first got here. It almost looks like there are more performers than people. They all sniff me with interest before watching me walk away.

Ahead on the left is the last tent before the gate, and there’s a fortune teller sign out front. My entire body sags with relief. I know he’s in there—I can feel it. I limp over to the tent and throw back the tarp. He’s sitting in the same chair as he was when he read my palms.

“Is my little pet lost?” he asks, smiling up at me like he expected me to come crawling back all along. His face paint is smeared by his sweat, making his face look melted and morphed. A bolt of desire crashes through me, and I stalk toward him with purpose.

I pull his painted face toward me and kiss him, forcing his lips open as I fuck his mouth the way he fucked me earlier, brutally and with abandon. He kisses me back and pulls me to straddle his lap in the chair. I’m already hard again, grinding against him like I need him to survive.

I pull free and grip his jaw, forcing his eyes to meet mine.

“What the fuck have you done to me?”

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“Do you really want to talk about that right now?” I ask him, pushing away his hand and claiming his mouth with mine again. I can smell my scent all over him, and it makes my cock swell. He’s mine.

“What are you?” he asks as my mouth strays lower, grazing across his jaw and down his neck.

“Your demon,” I tell him, finding the bite mark from where I fed from him earlier. I suck the tender skin into my mouth, and he moans, grinding his hips against my own.

“What do you mean?” he asks breathlessly as his hands rake and tug at my hair. The way he touches me sets my black blood on fire and causes my gums to ache with the need for him.

“God, Johnny,” I groan, standing up and taking him with me. He wraps his legs around my waist, and I carry him to the back, where I sleep. “Just shut up,” I tell him as I throw him down onto the bed. I crawl over him, and he flips us to straddle my waist.

“Just fucking tell me,” he growls as he leans down over me before taking my lip between his teeth and biting. He kisses the sting and then moves down my throat.

“I’m a demon,” I tell him, out of breath from the way his hands are moving across my body. “I need to feed on humans.” I swallow a groan as his hands push my shirt up and his mouth latches onto my nipple. “It disguises my scent to the hellhounds, keeping me from going back to Hell.”

“Where’s your tattoo?” he suddenly asks, his mouth leaving my skin.

“Giving us privacy,” I tell him, pushing his mouth back to my heated flesh. “Continue.”

“Hmm,” he murmurs, leaving a trail of hot openmouthed kisses down my sternum and over my stomach. He takes the soft flesh beneath my belly button in between his teeth before dipping even lower. “So, why me?” he asks, pausing his fingers at the waistband of my skirt. “Why call yourself my demon?”

“Because!” I groan, grabbing ahold of his hair and forcing him to look at me. “You were made for me, making me as much yours as you are mine. Now, if you don’t fucking stop yammering on and put that sweet mouth on my cock, I will use my goddamn mind control and make you do it.”

He smiles and kisses his way across the vee of my hips before tugging at my skirt. I lift my hips, and he pulls it completely off me. He wastes no time and immediately wraps his lips around my head. I hiss through my teeth and tug tighter on his black hair, pushing him further down. His cheeks hollow as he moves back up my shaft before he descends, taking me completely in his throat. It constricts as he gags, and it only makes me push deeper.

“Fuck, baby,” I moan as he comes up for air, drool coating his lips. He wipes his chin and then licks me from base to tip, his tongue circling the underside of my head and making my abs jump. My head falls back, and I pull my own hair. “You’re going to make me come already.”

“Is that what you used in the maze?” he asks, continuing to lick me up and down, his hand rolling my balls in his palm at the same time. Heat spreads through my spine until I can’t fucking think straight.

“Yes,” I tell him, squeezing my eyes shut and trying not to come yet. “You were being annoying, kind of like now.” He laughs, and it vibrates through me.

His hands move under my knees, and he pushes them to my chest, leaving me completely open for him. He sucks one of my balls into his hot mouth before kissing his way down, his tongue pressing and circling around my hole. My hips move of their own will, trying to get him closer and deeper inside of me.

“Yes,” I breathe through gritted teeth. I move to stroke myself as his tongue breaks through, pushing and licking inside of me. He smacks my hand away from my dick before standing up and away from me. I watch him as he unbuttons his jeans and shoves them off his hips. He pulls his shirt off as well, and he’s absolutely covered in ink. Every inch of skin is blackened with ink.

“I didn’t notice that before,” I tell him, eyeing the piercing under the tip of his cock. It’s silver and glints in the low light of the candles. I wag my eyebrows at him, and he just rolls his eyes.

“My turn,” he states before squaring himself between my legs. He spits on himself and then on me, working his finger inside. “I’ll do you the nicety of getting you ready first.”

“You really don’t have to, babe,” I tell him, reaching down and urging him on by pulling his hips with my fingertips. “I like the pain.”

With one hand, he pushes one of my knees back to my chest, opening me up for him. His finger leaves my ass and is replaced by the head of his dick. He pushes it in slowly, making my hips move and roll, trying to get him to push into me further. I want every single inch of him inside of me.

He spits again down onto where we are joined together and works it around my tight

hole with his finger. Pushing the rest of the way inside me, I can feel the chill of the metal piercing the entire way. Once he's inside of me, he leans over me, and I wrap my legs around his waist.

"Fuck me, Cash," I tell him, grabbing his jaw and pulling him to me. Our kiss is violent. It's a war neither one of us wants to lose...or win. He begins to move inside of me as he assaults my mouth with his tongue. The burn is the most exquisite pain.

"God, you're so fucking tight for me, Rune," he says as he grabs my cock and pumps it in time with each thrust. "Do you like the way I feel inside of you? Do you like being claimed just as you claimed me?" His whole body lunges forward with each thrust, pushing me down into the mattress.

"Yes," I tell him, kissing my way across his collarbone until I find the red and bruised spot from earlier. I suck it into my mouth again, licking and teasing the sensitive skin.

"Go ahead," he tells me, his rhythm becoming more erratic as he chases his orgasm. "Bite me, please," he begs. Warmth spreads through my body, flushing my skin with a sheen of sweat as he pounds into me. I can feel my own orgasm building.

I bite down, my teeth slicing into his skin with ease. He cries out as his hips stutter, and I moan as his blood flows over my tongue again, ripping my own orgasm from my body. I explode between us, coating his stomach and my chest with cum. I feel him empty his hot seed inside me, marking me as his.

I pull my teeth free of his skin and lick the bite, cleaning the mess I made. He breathes heavily as he stills, catching his breath and coming back down to Earth. He kisses me and pulls out slowly, letting his cum drip down onto the sheets below us.

Before I can move to clean up, he wanders down to my chest and stomach, licking my cum off my skin and cleaning me up. He sits back and uses his fingers to scoop it

off his own skin before sucking each finger clean.

“I would take the lord’s name in vain right now if it wouldn’t summon him,” I tell him, watching as he moans around his fingers. It’s enough to get a demon going again, fuck.

He smiles down at me before situating himself between my legs once more. His lips surround my sensitive head and suck it hard into his mouth. I see stars and buck my hips off the bed. I push his face away from me, but he just pushes on, going lower and licking up his own cum that has spilled from me.

“We taste so good together,” he says, kissing me to show me just how good we taste. The salty and musky combination of both of our releases mixes with his blood and makes me dizzy.

“God, I’ve been missing out,” I tell him as he collapses down on my chest. “I’ve never had a Fated,” I confess to him. “You’re my first.”

“Tell me more about that,” he says.

“Let’s at least get cleaned up first,” I tell him, not particularly wanting to lie on soiled sheets as I explain the inner workings of a demon to him. My face paint is also getting incredibly dry and itchy at this point.

“And then you explain this shit to me,” he says again.

“Yes, Johnny,” I tell him, kissing his pouty lips. “Then I explain everything.”

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Whatever it is that Rune has done to me, I don't want to fight it anymore. He's the best sex I've ever had, and I have no desire to give that up. He walks back into the room, his usual careless swagger still there, but his face paint is gone. It shocks me to see his bare face. I had never thought about what he might look like without it, but it isn't disappointing.

Rune has ghostly white eyebrows to match his hair, and without the black around his eyes, they look a bit more blue. His cheekbones and jaw are sharp, giving a natural hollow look to his cheeks. His lips are pale pink and full as he chews on them with those sharpened teeth.

I take the last drag from my cigarette before snuffing it out in the little bowl Rune gave me for an ashtray.

"How is no one else absolutely terrified of your freaky demon teeth?" I ask him from where I'm lying propped up on the few pillows he has. It's one giant tent but sectioned off by jewel-toned drapes and seventies-style beaded curtains. There's a washroom, as Rune calls it, but it isn't hooked up to any type of plumbing, so everything has to be brought in with buckets and heated with fire if you want it hot. It's like stepping back into the fucking sixteenth century.

"I can control what people see," he says, waving his hand in front of his face, making his teeth disappear before they pop back out. He crawls onto the bed next to me and lies on his back, his head in his hands. His white hair is wet from washing the paint out of it, making it almost translucent.

His abs jump and flex as he gets comfortable. His inky snake moves around the skin

of his torso, like she's trying to get comfortable as well. It's bizarre to watch.

"Her name is Kali," he tells me when he finds me looking. I glance up at him and then back to her as she settles in place across his stomach, her tail flicking every so often across his ribs.

"So, you just travel the country as a touring carnival, collecting humans to feed off of so that you don't get dragged back to Hell. You're a demon—isn't Hell your home?"

"Hell may be my home, but it isn't homey," he answers. "And we don't collect humans. We feed off of them and then let them go. They don't even remember it." He waves his hand in dismissal. "We only keep the ones that are ours," he says as he rolls over on top of me, running his nose up my throat as he inhales.

"And how do you know who is yours? How do you know who is a Fated?"

"You smell different," he murmurs, his breath hot against my skin. "And you certainly taste different." He licks from the base of my shoulder to my jaw, biting at my ear before his hands begin to wander across my chest.

"My turn," he says, trailing his fingertip down my arm. "What is this?" he asks as he grabs my wrist and pulls it in front of his face. His thumb traces the scars there that the tattoos fail to hide completely.

"Past trauma," I tell him, pulling my wrist free of his grasp as he flops over on his back. "I saw some other...demons, I guess? Are you all demons?"

He nods.

"On my way back here, when I was trying to find you after the maze. I couldn't get my head on straight, and I couldn't remember where your tent was or even what you

were here. So I stumbled into the first tent I saw, and there were two demons with black eyes like yours and blood covering their mouths. They were feeding on a girl that was strung up like a cow at slaughter. Is that what's going to happen to me? Is that what you do?"

He shrugs noncommittedly.

"Have I done it before? Yes. I'm thousands of years old, and I'm a demon. I'm not some romanticized version. I've killed people, and will probably kill many in the future. I've tortured, and will torture." He pauses and tickles Kali, who moves under his touch. "Your taste is like nothing I've ever experienced," he says, meeting my eyes. "Who's to say I won't tie you up and keep you as my enslaved pet if you ever decide you want to leave me?"

My stomach begins to churn with anxiety at the thought of being tied up like an animal, carted around from one city to the next, never being allowed to walk around freely again. All because he's claiming I'm some sort of mate for him.

"But for now?" He shakes his head. "I know you want to stay with me. You're drawn to me just as much as I'm drawn to you. So it won't be an issue."

"Does anyone else have a Fated human?" I ask him, swiftly changing the subject because I'm afraid if I think about that for too long, I'll try to run. And I don't think that's the best course of action. I also want to stay right now. I don't want to give up the great sex or the orgasmic blood-sucking thing he does.

Christ, that shit is good.

"Nemo does," he answers. "He's the ringleader, the one that was leading the main show when you first got here. He has a woman he keeps tucked away in his tent. I think they've been together for about fifty years or so now."

“Rune.” I sit up, my stomach in knots all over again. “Does feeding off of me make me live forever? Have I just signed on for thousands of years of this?”

“Stop being so dramatic, Johnny,” he says with a smile. “It can if you want it to.” He wags his eyebrows at me before he pulls me back onto the bed. I land on top of him, Kali scurrying off of his stomach and hiding somewhere on his back. “I didn’t think the universe would send me such a worrywart. Shut the fuck up and make out with me,” he pouts. “My dick is hard again.”

He grabs my hand and rubs it against his dick, which is, in fact, already hard again. He leans up and takes one of my lip rings in between his teeth, making me groan and roll into him. His lips are so soft, and he tastes too fucking good. I can’t say no to him.

“What about my friends?” I ask between kisses.

“Taken care of,” he says as he sucks the tender flesh of my throat into his mouth.

“As in dead?” I ask him. I should be more worried, but we aren’t even that close. I keep them out of necessity to not become a full-fledged hermit. And with the way his dick keeps rubbing against mine, I’d probably let him kill them if he just lets me come again.

“As in they won’t remember you,” he says nonchalantly, flipping us over so that he’s on top, and then his mouth is back on mine, hot and all-consuming. I can barely breathe when he’s on top of me, sucking my damn soul out of my body through my lips.

He reaches between us, freeing both of our dicks and gripping them together as he continues to abuse my mouth. He rubs over our heads, collecting the precum and using it to lubricate our cocks as they move together. They slip and move against

each other as he pumps them in his fist.

“I’m going to come,” I tell him, the sight of us together like that pushing me to a quick release.

“Come, baby,” he tells me, stroking his hand harder and faster. “I’m right behind you.” His eyes go black as he watches me fall over the edge.

“Fuck,” I growl, throwing my head back onto the pillow as I empty my load onto my stomach. He follows soon after, mixing my release with his on my abs. He runs his finger through the sticky liquid and brings it to his mouth. I watch him through heavy-lidded eyes, exhausted from the night.

“You were right,” he hums, the black in his eyes slowly fading back to his normal silver. “We do taste fucking delicious.”

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The Next City...

I use my finger to fill in the space around his eyes with black paint. He looks more demon than any of us like this with his dark brown eyes. I move on to paint his nose and then the outline of his teeth over his white cheeks. We slick back his hair out of his face, accentuating his cheekbones even more.

“I can’t wait to come all over this pretty face later,” I tell him as I finish. He rolls his eyes and pushes me away to get a look at himself in the mirror. He’s been with me for over a week now, and every night I have to perform, he lets me paint his face as another way for me to stake my claim on him.

Then, after everyone leaves, we ignore everyone else and fuck like rabbits as I feed from him. We’ve discovered my little Fated likes me to bite him near his groin, drinking from him as I stroke him to climax. The noises he makes as I pull and pull from the wound could probably wake the dead.

“Opening in five!” the ticket master shouts from outside our tent.

“Come on, you two!” Mara sings from the front of the tent. “Stop fucking and come join the show!” Kali skims along my skin, settling in her usual spot on my collarbones as I pull my shirt over my head. Her tongue pokes out a few times, making me twitch and smile.

“That tickles,” I tell her, stroking her head.

Cash walks up behind me and wraps his arms around my waist.

“Let’s go before Mara decides to drag me out by my ear again,” he says, a look of real fear in his eyes. A few nights ago, he had screamed like a little girl as she ripped him out of bed by his ear, still naked as the day he was born, to join whatever party she was throwing that night.

“Come join the revelry!” she shouts again.

“Coming!” he shouts back, kissing my neck before and pulling out a cigarette as he moves through the curtain to join her. Once he’s gone, I’m struck sick, bending over and vomiting into the water basin in front of me. It’s all blood, seeing as the only thing I’ve eaten today is Cash.

I watch as it swirls and morphs with the water, forming the shape of what looks like a dog. My stomach turns again, and I fight against the urge to empty the rest of the contents into the bowl. Dread sweeps through my body, causing me to break out in a cold sweat.

If this means what I think it does, we’ve been found, and Hell is coming for us.

“Rune!” Mara’s shrill voice pierces through to my skull.

“Fucking coming!” I shout back, wiping my mouth and fixing the bit of paint around my mouth before following them out into the oncoming crowd.