



# Scotty & Jay's Second Hellish Adventure (Dearly and The Departed)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Scotty and Jay continue their work for the Celestial Council and Lucifer, investigating cases that don't fall under purely good or purely evil standards. It's time for them to return to the Human Realm as a fully bonded, balanced pair when unforeseen events begin to spiral out of control.

The murders of a cherub and a lesser demon in Limbo hint at something sinister, but is the culprit from the Celestial Realm or the underworld? What are the ramifications one way or the other?

Without warning, Jay gets a promotion in the underworld that swings the balance of power to the point where it could break their bond. Will it break their hearts at the same time?

This book of original paranormal fiction is the second book in the spinoff series from the universe of Dearly the Departed. It is approximately 30,000 words in length and ends happily.

**Total Pages (Source):** 18

# Page 1

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## Chapter One

Jay

Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Hello! Sorry for interrupting, but we’re going to be late.”

I glanced at Scotty, the man with the most beautiful face I’d ever seen, which was currently scrunched up with concern. Him? I’d follow him to Hell—which happened to be just over the river and around the corner.

I went to the door and peeped through the hole. “Who the fuck are you?”

Standing on the other side of our condo door was a guy who rivaled me in height and weight. He was a good-looking bastard. If I didn’t have the most beautiful angel in Heaven or Hell, I’d have tried to get the dude to bang me. I’d challenge anyone to ignore him.

A petite creature stepped around the guy, wearing a big grin as they stared at the peephole. “Good day, General Ad Hoc Frick. Could you open the door?”

I did as they asked. The small demon bowed before offering a big smile.

“You may not remember me, but my name is Er’on. We’re here to assist you with your relocation. I’d like to re-introduce you to Brokorol, president of the Hellhounds Motorcycle Club and personal guard for Prince Beelzebub. We’ve come to

accompany you to the Human Realm to ensure you make it out of the underworld without altercation. Beelzebub will brief you at your home in Sacramento.”

The hot guy extended his hand. “Call me Brok, sir.”

“Sir?”

I turned to see Scotty chuckling behind me. “You’ve got him mistaken for someone else.”

Er’on retrieved a piece of paper from inside their vest, unfolding it quickly. They looked at the open door to see the number before their eyes returned to the paper.

“Are we not at the home of the Alba Protectoris and the General Ad Hoc of the Order of Hades?” The petite person seemed quite worried.

“No, no. You’re at the right place. My angel is a smartass that’s all.”

I grabbed Scotty’s hand and pulled him forward. “Don’t forget your manners, dear.”

My angel squeezed my hand to the point I thought he’d break it, so I jerked away. We’d been in Limbo for a month, only making a brief venture topside to attend Keir and Dash’s wedding.

Scotty and I were fully bonded, which meant we were together as much as possible. Any extra time we had when we weren’t searching for an entity that had wronged Lucifer or the Celestial Council in some way, we were in bed and wrapped in each other’s arms.

My beautiful man never got on my nerves, which was a happy surprise. I didn’t get on his either, which was even more of a shocker. I usually got on everyone’s nerves.

Beelzebub had admitted that he'd gotten me fired from my job with the Division of Children and Family Services in Sacramento County. Thankfully, he'd also been able to fast-talk me back into the job, though I would be on probation. I had to get back before Beelz beat the hell out of another foster parent or scared the shit out of another neighbor kid.

"I'm sorry. I don't hear many people call Jay sir. Please, call me Scotty. We're just packing up. Can we get you something to drink?" Scotty was always a considerate host.

"Forget drinks. Come help me with this—wait, how many of you are there? Hellhounds, I mean."

"As many as we need. Brok can create guards in his own likeness, so we always have enough. Each of the princes has a guard who can generate as much help as they need. Now, please allow us to help you with your things. After we get you settled into your home, we'll bring the Prince back to Hades."

I shook my head and chuckled. "The Prince. That shit is still funny. Babe, I made you coffee."

Er'on stepped forward. "Master Brok, would you like some coffee?"

"Uh..."

The hellhound seemed a little nervous, so I looked at his companion. "Help yourselves. We'll be right back."

I took Scotty's arm and led him back to the bedroom, closing the door. "You think they're who they say?" I kept my voice down, though it usually didn't matter with otherworldly creatures because they could hear everything.

“Oddly, yes. They seem to be honest. I realize they’re demons, but I get the impression they are dedicated to Beelzebub. I don’t think they’d do anything to cause him embarrassment, do you?”

I stepped closer to my angel and kissed his plump lips. “I agree. Are you ready to go back to the human plane?”

Scotty looked around our little slice of Limbo and released a heavy sigh. “Yeah, I guess. I mean, we’ve been here for a couple of months. We found my ex, and we know he’s acting on behalf of Nyx. We tracked that damn warlock Nyx recruited to separate Keir and Dash. I think De Vil’s gone topside to find someone to unbind his powers. He’s going to be a future problem, but we’ll be there to keep him from doing any damage, right?”

“I wanna know why Asmodeus is going against his brothers and his father. I wonder if we can get another couple of days here to figure out his motivation,” I said.

We knew Michael had devoured Vagar, the demon son of Apate, Nyx’s daughter, and one of the princes of Hell, Asmodeus. I wanted to know why they’d sent him to possess Keir’s doppelgänger.

“What do you want to do? I mean, are you planning to try to talk to Lucifer?”

Scotty was concerned, and I understood why. He loved me, and I loved him, but...I owed a debt to the devil, and if I was ever going to get out of being Lucifer’s valet, I had to show him I was loyal.

“I think I should try to talk to one of the brothers first. Beelz isn’t here, but maybe Lycus? If he’s loyal to his father, I’m guessing he’d be upset about his brother’s recent activities. We can’t execute a prince of Hell, but they can kill each other.”

That was something I'd learned before I was granted an audience with Lucifer. If Lycus, the personification of wrath, would talk to me, maybe he could handle the situation without killing his brother. Or if that wasn't possible, could he kill his brother and not suffer the ire of his father?

"May I go with you? Do you think Lycus will give an audience to an angel?"

I walked over and rested my forearms on Scotty's broad shoulders. "I dare him not to talk to the two of us. We're the balance, right?"

Scotty kissed me three times before he moved around to nibble on my neck. "We are the balance. Do you think we could— Never mind. It's stupid."

"What?" I wanted to know what he hadn't said.

Bang! Bang!

"There's our escort. Think they'll go with us without complaint?"

I chuckled. "Only one way to find out."

Brok dragged our suitcases out behind him while Er'on looked through the drawers and the bathroom cabinets.

"What's wrong? We cleaned up." Fuck them if they thought we weren't decent people. We knew how to take care of our shit.

"Oh, no, sir. I just wanted to ensure you didn't leave anything important behind. I'll come back and tidy up before the Prince returns. I can clean up your home topside if you'd like."

Scotty walked into the room, having overheard the conversation between Er'on and me. "Oh, Er'on, please don't worry about it. Jay and I are more than capable. I'm sure you have enough to do to take care of Beelzebub."

Er'on bowed. "The prince said we were to do anything you required. It would be an honor to clean for you."

That shit sounded wacky, but if they wanted something to do, I had an idea. "Here's what we really need. We need to go speak with Lycus. There's a problem with one of his brothers, and we need his counsel regarding what to do."

Little Er'on seemed a bit taken aback. "You, uh, you want to meet with one of the princes?"

"Well, it's probably better to go to Lycus about it before we take it up with Lucifer, don't you think? I mean, one of his grandsons is dead because his father and mother were willing to sacrifice him. Up top, we take that shit seriously. How do you think Lucifer would feel about it?"

"Er'on, what's taking so long?" We both turned to Brok standing in the doorway, not happy at all that we weren't ready to go.

"Brok, they want to see Prince Lycus. They say it's important."

Er'on seemed to cower as Brok stared at them. I didn't like what I was seeing. "Wait, you don't hit them, do you? You treat them well, right? They seem to want to do anything asked of them, and if us wanting to meet with Lycus is a problem, then take our shit to my house, and we'll find our own way back."

Er'on stood tall and faced me dead-on. "Brok would never raise a hand to me. I facilitate our support for Prince Beelzebub, and my position is respected. Please don't

take my reactions as a reflection on Brok.”

Scotty stepped forward. “No, of course not. Look, we are trying to keep the peace as much as possible, but we really need to talk to Lycus. We’ll go alone to keep you out of it.”

“No. Of course not. We will accompany you. I just need to...” Brok pulled a phone from the pocket of his jeans and stepped out of the room.

I glanced at Scotty. “You ready to go to Hell again?”

He smirked. “With you? Always.”



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### Chapter Two

#### Scotty

Kharon the Ferryman was at the dock with our ride across the Styx, though we could have flown.

Er'on had poo-pooed the idea. "It could be seen as an act of aggression if you're not invited. Kharon will wait for us at the dock in case Lycus refuses to see us." Sounded good to me.

Brok sat alone at the back of the boat. "He's not very social, is he?" One reason Jay and I got along so well was because we were both social people. We loved to meet people and find out about their lives. Apparently, the hellhound wasn't of the same mind.

Everyone had stories they were dying to tell, and when they met someone who hadn't heard them, they got excited and ended up telling a lot more than they would under ordinary circumstances. It benefited us during our missions on behalf of the Council and Lucifer, so we were used to chatting with strangers.

We didn't only hunt rogue demons or spirits. While searching for Paxton De Vil, we'd run across a cherub who attended the throne of the Creator.

The cherub was slumming in Limbo and had gotten involved with a lesser demon, which was strictly against the rules. We'd been upfront with the cute little being that we were a sanctioned balanced pair, and it begged us not to tell. We made a deal, and

now we had a favor from someone close to the Deity in case we ever needed it.

“Master Brok has a great many things on his mind. We oversaw torture in Hell for Lucifer for since the fall, which wasn’t really a bad job. Unfortunately, Cerberus kept falling asleep at the mouth of Hades, so Bereth came to us with a plan to redirect our talents. He assigned one of us to each prince and sent Cerberus to take our place in Hell since she is the mother of the hellhounds.”

That was a surprise. “She didn’t want them with her?” I mean, sure she was a demon, but did she have no maternal instincts?

Er’on offered a sad smile. “They were born as one litter. Seven male pups. Their sire is unknown, so they learned to rely on each other, and their bond is quite strong. Brokorol is the firstborn, so he is the natural leader. An exemplary one. Asmodeus and Verrine have since dismissed their guards because they didn’t like being followed, even if it was for their own good. Appollin and Orron have been assigned to Lucifer’s guard. The other five hounds are still charged with guarding the princes.”

“Who did Brok call when we were back at the condo?”

He’d left the room to make a call. Seemed like we should know what we were walking into.

“He called Gremon as a courtesy. He is the guard for Prince Lycus. This way, they’re expecting us.” Er’on then bowed and went to sit in the back with Brok.

I sat near the side of the boat, mesmerized by the waves of fire as we glided through the river. It was beautiful in a weird way. When they reached the other side of the river, the dock was empty except for two men.

“Kharon, please wait here with General Ad Hoc and the angel.” Brok then turned to

Er'on. "You stay here too. Let me talk to them first."

Brok jumped onto the dock and raced up the stairs before Kharon had tied the boat properly.

Er'on started to follow him, but I grabbed their arm. "You said he's a great leader. Trust him."

Brok bowed to Prince Lycus and shook hands with the other man. "Who's that?"

Er'on was wringing their hands. "That's Gremon. He's the guard for Lycus. I think Lycus just likes having him around. Lycus could kill all of us with his thoughts if he wanted. He doesn't need anyone looking out for him."

The three demons spoke for a minute before Brokorol hurried back to the boat. "He'd like you to come up, please."

Jay and I walked up the hill with Er'on going ahead of us. When we reached the top, Er'on bowed to Lycus and hugged Gremon. Jay bowed.

I was an angel. I didn't bow to a demon.

Lycus chuckled. "I wouldn't expect you to show respect to me, white lighter. I am Lycus, a prince of Hell. If you are here to ask a favor of me, I'd rethink my approach."

"Very well." I extended my hand to shake his, and surprisingly, he did the same.

"Shall we go have a—I'm sorry. I don't know what you like. There's a café where they have human coffee. There are bars where they have alcohol. Which do you prefer?" Er'on was definitely anxious to be of help.

“How about we just sit somewhere and talk? We won’t need much of your time, and we’re not asking for a favor for ourselves. We’re here as a favor to you...and your father.” I wasn’t taking his high-and-mighty bullshit. If he kept it up, I would walk away.

Lycus turned and started walking toward a park further down the street. There were old men playing checkers and children spinning on a merry-go-round. To the left was an empty picnic table, so we followed Lycus and sat across from him. Brok and Germon stood at either end of the table, observing the others while Er’on paced behind me, clearly unsure what to do with themselves.

“Speak.”

I glanced at Jay. “Tell the man.”

Jay nodded and took my hand before he turned to Lycus. “Archangel Michael killed your nephew. Split him in half and ate him.”

“I have no nephew.” Lycus studied the two of us carefully.

I wouldn’t allow Lycus to harm Jay, so I sat a little taller. “You do. Your brother, Asmodeus, mated with Apate, and she gave him a son. Vagar. He possessed an innocent at the direction of a warlock acting on behalf of Apate’s mother. Nyx.”

Lycus was silent. I was wishing we’d told this to Beelzebub. At least he had a small level of trust for Jay, if not me.

Jay cleared his throat. “You don’t have to believe us. Go talk to Nyx. Ask her if your brother has betrayed your father.” It came out as a dare, and when the ground rumbled, I thought we might be ripped apart.

Lycus stood from the table and stomped away. Gremon ran after him, and Brok reached for Er'on. "Go to the dock and tell the Ferryman to wait. We need to get out of here."

Jay and I hopped up and followed Brok and Er'on to the dock. I agreed that we needed to get out of there, though I wasn't sure what would happen now that we'd blown open Pandora's Box.

We strolled right out the front gate of the underworld, Brok pushing a huge cart he'd commandeered from somewhere. I didn't even blink anymore. The Celestials and the Demoniacs held different values, and as part of the machine, I knew I had to pick my battles.

There was a small pickup truck parked not far from the gate. I turned to stare at Brok. "We won't all fit in there."

For the first time, the hellhound grinned. "Are those wings on your backs fairy wings or do they have a purpose?"

Jay let out a raucous laugh before he unfurled his black wings. "He's got you there, angel. Let's get home."

With that, my guy took to the air, me not far behind. The tattered shirt I was wearing was no match for the cold February air. There was a weather system off the coast, and even though the cold didn't affect me as it did humans, I'd grown fond of the sunshine and mild temperatures in Sacramento.

I caught up to Jay, both of us enabling our cloaking abilities to fly over the rooftops of homes in the neighborhoods of Sacramento without notice. "Do you think Lycus will heed our warning?"

Jay slowed and hovered over a park not far from his house. “I don’t know how much he cares. If Lucifer doesn’t know what his son is up to, maybe they just don’t give a fuck? All I know is that you’re not getting out of my sight. I’m not going to let anything happen to you. We have a lot of future ahead of us, and I’m going to make sure we enjoy it.”

I leaned forward and wrapped my arms around my demon, the two of us breathing in each other’s scent. I trailed soft kisses over his cheeks, finally settling on the two soft lips that made me feel alive. The passion sparked between us just that quick.

Jay ended the kiss and looked into my eyes. “Let’s get home and see if we can do something about this”— he reached for my dick and gave it a gentle squeeze— “before those two arrive with our stuff.”

Without a word, we shot through the sky, coming down on the back deck of Jay’s home. He went to a rock in a flowerpot and opened it, pulling out a key for the back door.

“I’ll get you a copy of this later.” Jay held up the silver key. “Remind me to have the locks changed. I don’t want Beelz coming and going at his convenience.”

I laughed as we went inside. “I doubt a key would keep him out if he really wanted inside.” We both perused the house to see Beelzebub had returned everything to its previous appearance, though he had left the kitchen upgrades he’d added.

Jay grabbed my hand and rushed us to the bedroom, peeling his tattered shirt off and ridding himself of the jeans he was wearing. I followed suit.

We wrestled for dominance as we fell on the bed, him on top of me. “I want you to make love to me.”

Jay stopped and looked into my eyes. “Are you sure? I thought you didn’t like to bottom.”

I wrapped my arms around his neck and kissed him again before clarifying. “I love you. I want to be with you in any way you’d like. Always remember I’m yours.”

The time for talking had ended. Jay had lube in his hands from the nightstand before I knew it. “Is that yours or is it—” I couldn’t finish the sentence, much less let the thought take root.

“It’s mine. I’m pretty sure Beelz is a spit guy.”

That thought made me shudder.

Jay quickly prepped me—tongue, fingers, and then my grand prize...his thick cock.

He had me on my back, my legs over the bend in his elbows as he pounded my prostate to the point that I levitated off the bed, making him laugh as he slipped from my hole.

“Okay, angel. How can I keep you on the bed?” His sexy smirk made me laugh.

I flipped onto my hands and knees, ass waving in the air in an invitation for him to plow me. After a quick kiss to my ass cheeks and a tickle to my hole, Jay did just that.

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### Chapter Three

Jay

Scotty was still in the shower when the doorbell rang, so I threw on a satin bathrobe—one of the three I had in my closet—and put one on the bed for Scotty. I went to the door and checked the peephole. It was Brok and Er'on.

I opened the door with a smile. “Did we interrupt you?” Er'on studied me for a moment before they looked away, their face flushing.

“No. I wouldn't have answered if you were interrupting anything. Let me throw on some clothes. You wanna wait inside. It's chilly out.”

“No need, General. We can get your things inside. Where shall we put them?” Er'on looked eager to please.

“Uh, just put them against that wall. I'll be right back.”

I hurried back to the bedroom, where Scotty stood by the bed in a towel, studying the bathrobe. “Whose was this?” The scowl on his face was cute.

“It's mine. My mother went through a weird gift phase, and I got three silk bathrobes with matching pajamas for Christmas and my birthday one year. As you know, I sleep au naturelle. The pajamas are in the dresser if you'd rather have them.”

I kissed his cheek and went to my closet, grabbing a pair of jeans and a sweater.



“Er’on and Brok are here with our stuff. I’ll go help them if you want to take a nap. I’ll join you when they leave.”

Scotty dropped the towel, and my mind went in an entirely different direction. “I think we need to start looking for Asmodeus before he can do any damage. We should also cover our bases and check in with Jonas. He’ll have sensed anything dangerous entering the Human Realm. It probably wouldn’t hurt to check the portal at Dearly & Son.”

I was about to say, “Okay, after we fuck,” but Scotty went to the closet and grabbed some clothes. He came out in a pair of briefs that would haunt my mind all day. He smirked at me as he pulled on black jeans and a black Henley. He looked good enough to eat.

Skilled fingers quickly braided his long hair behind him, and then Scotty sat on the bed to pull on his boots. “I thought you were going to help Brok and Er’on.”

The fog cleared from my mind as I blinked away the fantasy of slowly relieving him of his clothes and running my tongue over the bulky muscles on his body. I missed the days when we stayed in bed all day during our bonding.

“I’m going. I’m going.” I hustled out of the bedroom to see Brok and Er’on rushing around, opening the boxes to put our things away. That could wait.

“Where’s Beelz? I really need to talk to him.”

“Prince Beelzebub is at a bar with Mistress Lilith. They’re waiting for us to finish here so we can take the prince home.” Er’on didn’t stop moving the whole time they spoke.

“Well, go get him. Bring her too. There’s a problem we all need to discuss. Why

didn't he hang around here to wait for us?"

Er'on giggled. "The prince said he didn't want to be within earshot of the two of you because he was sure you'd be having sex."

Brok chuckled. "He said, 'No way do I wanna hear those two fucking. They give me dirty thoughts.' Then he laughed."

"Does he have a uh...?" I circled my index finger and thumb like a hole and pushed my other index finger through it to simulate sex. It was a crass gesture, but it was effective.

Er'on blushed. "The prince has many concubines."

I laughed. "I bet. Okay. Go get him. We'll be here. Assure him we'll be fully clothed when he arrives."

Brok looked at Er'on. "Please go collect the prince. I'll help the general unload the boxes."

Er'on bowed and hurried out, gently closing the door behind them. I turned to Brok, seeing a concerned expression. "Is there something on your mind, Brok?" Might as well get everything out in the open.

"Asmodeus has lied to the prince about things before, but lying about mating with a child of Nyx is a grave offense. Fathering a child with Apate will be quite upsetting to Lucifer. I'm worried my prince will feel I've let him down by not having the information. If I disappoint Prince Beelzebub, it will be a burden I cannot bear. Gremon phoned while we were on our way here and said Lycus believes you to be a liar. He said Asmodeus has never laid with Apate." Brok hung his head, almost as though he were ashamed of something.

“All demons lie, Brok. Why are you upset about this? I’ll explain it to Beelz. Everything’s gonna be fine.” I wasn’t worried.

He glanced up to stare at me through his lashes. “If Asmodeus didn’t impregnate Apate, then one of the other princes did, and we may be misjudging Asmodeus. Master Lucifer will kill Vagar’s father. If Asmodeus is not the father and Lucifer ends him, I will have failed Prince Beelzebub.”

“This sounds like a bad television show.” Scotty stepped into the room in all his angelic glory. I really was a lucky man.

“If I failed Prince Beelzebub in obtaining the correct information, I must end my existence.” Brok then dropped his head.

“Wait, wait. There’ll be no falling on the sword or suicide pacts. Let’s go find Asmodeus and end this bullshit.” I liked Brok and Er’on, and I was sure if Brok ended his existence, Er’on would do the same. They were good demons—if that was a thing—and because Asmodeus was hiding the fact he was Vagar’s father, they shouldn’t be blamed.

In my gut I knew we were right about Asmodeus, and I’d go even further to say that he was working side by side with Nyx to attempt a coup. How we’d solve that problem was a question for another time. But if we could establish that Asmodeus was indeed Vagar’s father, we could take that information to Lucifer and convince the Ruler of Hell that his own son was plotting against him.

Before I could say anything more to put Brok at ease, there was a quick knock on the front door before it flew open. Beelz stared at us before he laughed. “You’re good to your word. Clothes on. No dicks hanging out. So, you thought you’d summon a prince of Hell? To what means?”

Beelz stepped inside, carrying a walking stick with a diamond on top that would choke a horse. And with him was the Mistress of Hell, Lilith. Brok dropped to his knees in front of them, and Er'on did the same, bending forward and putting their head on the floor. It was a little dramatic for my tastes, but to each his own.

“They do that every time?” Lilith said exactly what I was thinking, and the smirk on her face matched mine.

“One of the many benefits of being me, my dear. So...” Beelz looked at me and raised an eyebrow. I bowed to him and when I stood, the prince picked me up in a bear hug. I was sure my ribs would’ve been broken if I were still human.

“Prince.” Scotty bowed his head a bit, which was more than he’d done when we met Lycus.

“Alba Protectoris. It’s good to see you survived the bonding process. Now, I’m looking forward to going home, so what’s so urgent?” Beelz walked over to the couch and took a seat, uninvited. It wasn’t really a surprise.

Lilith sat in a chair next to the couch. Er'on closed the front door and sat on the floor while Brok stood guard behind Beelz. At least he wasn’t hanging his head in shame.

“Your nephew is dead. An Arch ripped him in half and ate him. He possessed an innocent human at the direction of—”

Beelz held up his hand. “I heard this through the grapevine.”

It was my turn to lift an eyebrow in his direction. “Grapevine?”

“Michael told me. Do we know which of my brothers did the deed?”

I gave a sigh of relief that we weren't the ones delivering the message. "Did you know about Vagar?"

Beelz kicked off his ugly rubber clogs and put his feet up on my coffee table, leaning against the back of the couch with his hands clasped behind his head. "No. I missed out on the good news, as did my father. When I told him about the demon child, he wasn't happy. We aren't supposed to reproduce."

That was interesting. "We, like all of us?" Not that I worried about getting Scotty pregnant. I was usually the one riding his joystick.

"No. Just the princes. The Ruler of Hell is allowed to create more sons and daughters, but we aren't. It creates jealousy among the offspring. My brothers and I can father children, but it's a big no-no as far as Dad's concerned. Who broke the rules?"

"May I speak, prince?" Scotty asked.

I glanced at Brok to see him staring in our direction with concern. I offered a covert wink of reassurance that we wouldn't do anything stupid.

"By all means." Beelz held out his hand in invitation for Scotty to share his thoughts.

Scotty cleared his throat. "Prince, we haven't been able to confirm it, so we'd prefer not to make the accusation at this point. We'd like to try to find the bound witch who cast the spell and have him confirm the father is who we believe him to be."

Beelz nodded. "Smart. Brok, generate a hellhound to go with them. He can report to us daily."

Brok closed his eyes. His body shook violently until it split in half, and there we were with two Broks. It was the weirdest fucking thing I'd ever seen, and I'd seen some

shit in Hades—like Brok’s mother, the three-headed dog.

Lilith stood and stepped over to Scotty. “I’d like to be kept in the loop on this as well, Scott. We’ve declared our loyalty to the Council in this one instance, but if we find out this is a ploy on their part to interfere with how things are handled in the underworld, all bets are off, and things will get quite messy. I’m sure you can imagine how we’d react to being tricked by the Council again.”

It sounded like a threat and that had me enraged in a nanosecond. “If it’s a power play, Scotty had nothing to do with it. You know everything we know, Lilith. Are you still with Quinn? Is Adonis still protecting Keir? It would be terrible if something happened to either of them in all the confusion, wouldn’t it?”

“Jay, it’s okay. Lilith has a right to be worried. Sometimes the Council doesn’t play fair with her kind. I’d be skeptical too.” Scotty then looked at her. “If I find anything suspicious during our search for the witch, you’ll be the second to know. Jophiel will be the first.”

Lilith gave him a smile and turned to Beelz. “I need to get back to work. Trent and Amelie are going to San Francisco for a few days, and I’m minding the store. Call me.” She then went through the house and out the deck door, taking to the sky.

I turned back to Beelz. “How’d you two end up spending time with each other today?”

The prince of Hell chuckled, playing with the large diamond-encrusted pendant on a thick gold chain around his neck. “Given her history with Daddy, we may seem like unlikely confidantes, Lilith and me, but we have the same goal—keep the balance between Heaven and Hell and keep the Human Realm safe from Nyx. Just because Lilith was my father’s mistress, doesn’t make her less of an ally.”

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### Chapter Four

Scotty

“What do we call you?” I was staring at one of the Broks left with us. It was identical to the hellhound who protected and escorted Beelzebub, and I wasn’t sure what to make of it.

“I’m Brokorol. You may call me Brok.” He bowed as the other Brok had done when we met him.

“Oh, this won’t be confusing at all.” I glanced at the duplicate Brok. “Are you Brok, or was he Brok?”

“We are both Brok.”

I threw my hands in the air and laughed. “Okay. Well, Brok , can you track? Are you able to get a scent and then follow it to find the person it belongs to?”

“Yes, sir.”

I waited for him to give further details, but he simply stared at me. Of course my demon lover cracked up. I turned to him, begrudgingly grinning because Jay’s joy filled my soul. “Maybe we got the dumb one?”

Jay nodded, finally calming himself. “Okay. We’ll need something that belonged to Paxton De Vil so Brok here can track the little beast. Let’s go to Dearly arms opened

wide. “It’s fantastic to see you.”

Jay joined me, hugging them. “Seriously, guys, how are you? How’s wedded bliss?”

Keir’s face flushed, which made me laugh a little. “It’s amazing. How about you? Are you two going to get married?”

I glanced at Jay, not exactly sure what to say.

“We’re bonded. That’s more than married. Our existence is tied to each other. If he dies, I die.”

That was something I hadn’t thought about. Back in my day, men couldn’t get married, and I had no family left to even care. Was that something I’d miss? I’d been to Keir and Dash’s wedding. Did I want the same celebration for Jay and me?

“Uh, yeah. We stopped by because we’re searching for Paxton De Vil. They—” I pointed to the Broks— “are trackers, so we have to find De Vil’s scent.”

“Wait. I thought De Vil was gone. Taken to Hell.” I turned to Dash.

“Yeah, uh, Nyx took him away, but we’re not sure he’s still in Hell.”

Jay spoke up. “Yeah, we think he was smuggled out. We were in Limbo, and we couldn’t find him anywhere. He’s escaped, and we need to track him down. He has information we need.”

“Be careful.” Keir stepped closer and touched my shoulder in such a compassionate way that I had to hug him. Keir Dearly was such a great person, it was pure luck that I’d been assigned to him. I’d never met a more generous person in my life or death.



“We will.”

Dash nodded in support. “So, are you back for good? Are you staying topside now?”

“We’re not exactly sure. Did De Vil happen to leave anything behind that the Broks could use?” I pointed to the hellhounds standing in the yard.

Dash chuckled. “The Broks?”

“It’s a long story, but they’re kind of members of Beelzebub’s guard. They regenerate and make more of themselves as needed. They’re not particularly smart, but as you saw, they’re vicious.” I wasn’t lying. They’d have ripped Adonis apart had we not intervened.

“That’s kinda cool. Gimme a second. I’ll be back.” Dash hurried into the funeral home.

Keir stepped forward and touched my arm again. “How bad will this be, Scotty?”

I took a deep breath. I didn’t have all the answers, but I knew one thing for sure. “It’s gonna be bad, Keir. We’ll do what we can, but it’s hard to tell how far it might go. You should try to prepare for the worst.”

Keir’s face fell from his usual smile, and I was sorry I had to say anything. “You know, right, that we’re all going to fight alongside you and Dash. We’ll protect you as much as we can.”

Jay stepped forward and took my hand, kissing the top of it as he stared into my eyes. “We will figure this out, my love. I won’t allow the darkness to overtake your light. I’m confident we’ll come out on top.”

Hearing Jay's words was like a salve to my heart. My Jay was a beautiful gift to me, and I loved him more than I thought it was possible to love anyone. It was a complete surprise that I found someone, and I'd do anything to make him happy.

Dash returned to us with a scarf in his hand. He offered it to Jay. "He lost this in the embalming suite, and I tossed it inside the desk drawer. Will it help?"

A tan scarf was presented to Jay, who carried it over to the Broks. One of them—I assumed the leader—held it to his nose and then passed it around the group.

Jay snapped his fingers, and they all gave him their attention. "Do not make a mess of this. If you find his scent, then let me know and... You know what? Never mind. I'll hunt him down myself."

One of the Broks laughed. "I'm sorry, sir, but we're told to follow orders, and your order was to find this human. We won't stop until we do. I'll leave a guard with you."

Before Jay could tell Brok he didn't need to leave someone behind, they took off in five directions—one of them rushing into the funeral home.

"Shit! I'll go make sure it doesn't tear the place up."

I ran, following the hellhound through the receiving bay. Dupe Brok actually got down on his hands and knees, hurrying around the room and letting his nose be his guide.

He stopped in front of the walk-in and turned to look at me. "What's in there?"

"That's where the portal to Hell is located. I wouldn't—"

Before I could finish the sentence, Brok was inside with a body on the stainless

gurney, Keir's latest guest.

"I'm going through. I'll report to Prince Beelzebub with my findings when I get on the other side. Goodbye." With that, he was gone. I wished him well.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Five

Jay

“Damn! Look at ‘em run!” I couldn’t hold my laugh.

The Broks took off, each going in a different direction, and Scotty followed one of them into the receiving bay.

“Sir, shall I go check on the angel?” the left-behind Brok asked.

“Trust me, Brok, he’ll be okay. Thank you, though.”

I turned to Dash. “So, how’s everything with you?” Yeah, it seemed like an odd thing to say considering the circumstances, but I knew my angel would be just fine. He was one to be reckoned with, and I pitied anyone who tangled with him.

Keir and Adonis were strolling through the flower gardens as though nothing out of the ordinary was happening, Keir continuing to deadhead the bushes every now and then.

It was fucking hysterical to see them chatting like old friends when I knew Adonis would probably love to have Keir as his next meal. I supposed that was how we operated— humans, angels, and demons. My only question was—were we all trying to save humanity, or was it like a game of cards? Whoever had the better hand won.

Scotty came out through the receiving bay, his head shaking. I glanced around to see

he was alone. “Where’s your Brok?”

“He went through the portal. Said he’d report to Beelz. I have a feeling this is all for nothing. What will we do with De Vil when we get him?” Scott was at the end of his rope, and I could tell.

I took his hand and pulled him closer. “I’m going to show him how scary I can be.”

“See, that worries me.”

Dash laughed. “Yeah, no shit.”

Just then, Jonas drove around the side of the funeral home on his motorcycle with Valentino on the back, the two of them happy as pigs in shit. Valentino waved at us.

After Jonas and Valentino dismounted, Jonas took Vale’s hand and led him over to us, the two appearing to be sickeningly in love. Of course Valentino looked quite stylish in a denim jumpsuit with a colorful kerchief around his neck, while Jonas appeared to be every bit the bad boy in torn jeans, a white T-shirt, and a leather jacket.

Vale was, however, flopping his left hand around as if it was a fish off the hook. Suddenly, Scotty grabbed it and looked at the sparkling ring on his ring finger.

“Did you guys get engaged?”

My angel’s expression appeared happy, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. Something was up with him, but I had no idea what it might be.

“We did. Jonas proposed to me earlier today while we were having a picnic at McKinley Park in Sacramento. Are you guys back for good?” Vale then hugged

Scotty.

I didn't know the kid too well, but then I remembered Dash had taken Vale with him when he went to meet Paxton De Vil. Maybe he knew something that would be of help?

"Jonas, when you met Paxton De Vil, did he—"

"Not that guy, again. What's he done this time? I thought Dr. Carl bound his powers." The disgust on Jonas's face was comical.

I glanced at Vale to see if his expression had changed but it hadn't. He continued studying his engagement ring. It was a nice diamond solitaire.

"Did you explain things to Vale? Things of the Heaven and Hell variety? About the wings and all?" I was a bit surprised Vale was still with Jonas if he knew the guy was a guardian angel, though, I had one of my own. But then again, I wasn't a human any longer.

"He already knew most of it. Vale's damn smart, and the shit that happens here at Dearly & Son is hard to ignore. I had to seek permission from the Council to marry a human, but Jophiel was kind enough to speak on our behalf," Jonas answered.

He then took my arm and pulled me away from the group, who were discussing wedding ideas. My Scotty was in the mix, seemingly as excited as Keir and Adonis.

"I'm not sure if this has been shared outside the Celestial Council, but Jophiel told me they've been able to close two more portals to Hell here in the Human Realm. That leaves three to be closed." Jonas's gaze didn't leave my face.

"Uh, no. That's wrong. There are four to be closed, right? Mephistopheles told Dash

that Jo closed three, and now you say two more are closed. That leaves four, doesn't it?" I might not be alive, but I could still do fucking math.

Jonas glanced at the ground for a moment before meeting me eye-to-eye. "The Celestial Council has ordered that this portal remain open. I haven't told Keir and Dash yet, so feel free if you want to spill the beans."

Son of a— What the hell...? "Why?"

"The fight needs to be here so the Key and the Gatekeeper can defeat Nyx on their own turf, hopefully before she has a chance to do any damage elsewhere. That's what I was told, anyway. So, why do you want De Vil? His powers are still bound, aren't they? I think I'd know if they weren't."

That wasn't much of a relief. "Do you know if anyone else can vouch for Asmodeus being the father of a demon, Vagar, whose mother is Apate, one of Nyx's daughters?"

Jonas stared at me as though I'd sprouted another head. "That's gotta be a mistake. Hell's princes aren't allowed to procreate. That's not our rule. That's Lucifer's."

Fuck a duck! "Yeah, that's what I heard. I was sorta hoping it was just a rumor."

"Does Lucifer know about the demon?" Jonas's head nearly spun in a circle as he scanned the yard and the garden area as if looking for Lucifer to show up at any moment.

"Yes, but he doesn't know which prince is the father. Beelzebub told him, not me, and he doesn't know which one it is either." I wasn't sure what else to say.

"Okay, then, should we go find De Vil? I'm beginning to worry there's something more going on."

I did a double take. “You can find him? Why the fuck do I have a bunch of hellhounds running around Sacramento trying to find him if you know where he is?”

“Hey, I’m new to the party. You didn’t ask me about him.” Jonas smirked at me, the jackass.

I stepped over to Scotty as we rejoined the group now discussing wedding venues. “Jonas can find De Vil. We should go after dark.”

Both men nodded, and Jonas walked over to Valentino, kissing the knuckles on his left hand. “Shall we head home? I’ve got to work tonight, so I was hoping we could celebrate before I leave?”

Valentino giggled. “That’s a fabulous idea.”

Jonas threw his leg over the seat of the huge Harley, holding it steady as Vale climbed on behind him, kissing Jonas’s neck before Jonas turned to us. “I’ll be back at sunset.”

He started the bike and turned to his right, handing Valentino a stylish silver helmet that had been hanging off the throttle. “Put this on, kitten. I’ve gotta keep my future safe.” Vale did as he was told, and the two were off.

“You guys want to come inside and have dinner with us? We were going to order Chinese. Please, stay. We can all catch up.” Keir took Dash’s hand and started for the stairs that led to the second floor of Dearly & Son where their apartment was located.

I reached for Scotty’s hand, but it took him a minute to notice. I chose not to think he didn’t want to touch me. “Everything okay?”

My angel stared at me for a few long seconds before he took my hand. “Yeah. Just



want all of this behind us.”

I couldn't have agreed more.

“Where are we going?” I was literally flying in the dark behind Scotty and Jonas. We were somewhere over water, and I wondered if we would ever see dry land again.

We'd flown south after Jonas returned from getting laid. The smile on his face was too big to deny that he'd had one hell of a sexual celebration. I wished to fuck Scotty and I had been able to do the same instead of listening to Dash and Keir talking about their boring domesticity.

I mean, they were great people, the Dearlys, but things were so fucking complicated when it came to our existence. The fact that we were waiting for all Hell to break loose was one thing. The forces of good and evil in a battle for the ages left me wondering if humanity stood a chance.

And another thing—why wasn't my mate speaking to me? We'd been just fine when we'd returned from Limbo. I'd wanted to have sex, and we would have if we hadn't had the visit from Beelz and the hellhounds. Now? I had no idea what was going on.

“We're almost there.” Jonas banked to the left, so I did the same, watching Scotty speed up and bypass Jonas.

I knew Scotty was trying like hell to figure out who fathered the demon that had possessed Keir's doppelgänger. No doubt we needed a damn plan before we just showed up. Who knew what the warlock was up to? Hell, I wasn't even sure how long his powers could stay bound or how hard it was to find someone to unbind them.

“Down there.” Scotty pointed to a small beach shack on the coast of Baja California. The man's scent from the scarf Dash had produced tickled my nose as we approached

the shack.

Jonas nodded, so we landed. I reached out for Scotty, who jerked away and walked forward with Jonas, their wings still out, white feathers shimmering in the rising moonlight.

Excitement skittered over my skin because it was time to scare the fuck out of Paxton De Vil. It was my turn to shine because I was damn determined to get answers from the evil twit. Maybe if Lucifer heard what a great job I'd done at getting to the bottom of this mess, he'd drop that stupid notion of me being his valet. That was the plan, anyway.

"Hey," I called out as they stomped toward the shack. Thankfully, Jonas and Scotty turned around to face me.

"This isn't a time for white lighters to show up at the door. This bastard was controlled by one of my kind, so I think it's better if I confront him...alone. Just give me a chance to talk to him before you two cowboys come in with your white hats."

Scotty's face morphed into a scowl, but I wasn't having it. No way would I let him confront a warlock. We had no idea whether he was still without his powers, and until we knew, I had evil at my disposal. Their powers were curtailed by the Celestial Council. Mine weren't.

Being a man of action, I summoned all the evil inside me and headed toward the shack. I didn't wait for an answer from my companions, vowing to find out what was up Scotty's butt after I handled this De Vil issue. Scotty would talk to me about what was bothering him. He just didn't know it yet.

Finally, the two of them gave me the nod and went around the back of the shack. I retracted my wings and walked up to the door. I banged on it twice, and then kicked it

in. Patience was never my game.

Paxton De Vil was sitting in a beach chair, relaxed as though he knew someone—or something—was coming. “Ah, and you are?”

I stared at the dick. “I’m the General Ad Hoc of the Order of Hades. I’m here because you need to tell me who the father of Vagar is.”

De Vil laughed. I stared into his eyes and did a Darth Vader move, holding my hand up and making a fist that should have clenched his throat. Unfortunately, it did nothing but make him laugh.

“You think you can intimidate me? You clearly don’t know anything about me.”

I chuckled. “So, you found a holy man to unbind your powers?”

Without warning, there was a shot of lightning that I dodged. Oh, he wanted to play? It was fifth-grade-playground on !

I pointed a finger at the asshole, aiming for his head, but it bounced off. That was a surprise.

“You can’t hurt me.” That cocky little bitch.

Now, as much as I loved a good challenge, my mate was outside that back door, probably itching to come inside with Jonas. If De Vil’s powers had been restored, then we would have an entirely new disaster on our hands.

I’d been told when I met Lucifer that if I was ever in a fix I couldn’t handle, I had the full power of Hell at my disposal. I just had to call for it—but I had to be prepared to accept the consequences. I had no idea what that meant, but as I looked at the smarmy

little dickhead smirking at me...

“I call on the full powers of Hell to aid me in my quest.” I oddly sounded like someone out of an old knights-of-the-roundtable movie, but if one was invoking the full power of Hell, it should sound dynamic—or so I thought.

After a moment with nothing happening—and having to listen to De Vil’s ridiculous cackle—I decided to clarify why I needed the powers I’d been assured would be there, should the need arise.

“This warlock is withholding information necessary to maintain the balance of good and evil between the realms.” I braced myself, and when the charge came, I channeled the energy through my hands toward Paxton De Vil. That shut him up.

I lifted him without touching him, and for the first time, I saw that he was scared out of his mind. I could work with his fear.

“You will tell me now. Who is the sire of Vagar? Which prince of Hell?”

I held him there as the front door opened and Beelz stepped through, arms crossed over his chest and wearing another of the ugliest track suits I’d ever seen, along with those stupid rubber clogs, which now had little plastic decorations poked through the holes on top.

“Who is the father of Vagar?” Beelz’s growly voice echoed through the shack to the point that a handful of hellhounds, Er’on, Jonas, and my angel rushed inside, all covering their eyes to shield them from the brightness of the current flowing through me.

The power surge stopped, and De Vil fell unceremoniously to the floor. Beelz pointed to one of the hellhounds, and he confidently strolled over to where De Vil was rolling

around like a fool and picked him up, holding him in what appeared to be a steel grip.

“You will answer the prince of Hell.” It sounded like Brok, but which one, I wasn’t sure.

“It was Lucifer himself. He seduced Apate and then denied Vagar his legacy. He was to be a prince of Hell, but Lucifer said he didn’t intend to impregnate the demon, so he refused to bestow the gifts of Hell on him, and now you”—De Vil glared and pointed at me—“have taken his birthright.” I had no idea what that meant, but De Vil was singing like a bird, which was my goal.

Beelz laughter roared throughout the shack and was soon joined by the others.

“What’s going on?” I glanced at all in attendance for anyone to answer.

Scotty stepped forward. “Tell me you didn’t... Do you mean to tell me you summoned the powers of Hell? What does that mean for our mating bond?”

Finally, he reached for my hand. Whatever had upset him earlier seemed to be forgotten. I was ready to do a happy dance.

Beelz put his hands on his knees, continuing to howl, pointing at me, and then returning to his state of hysteria. Jonas simply shook his head as if he was disappointed in me.

“I believe by calling on the powers of Hell, you just sealed your fate as a prince of Hell. Scotty is currently bonded to one of Lucifer’s sons, and you’re no longer a balanced pair.”

Say what now?

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Six

“...you’re no longer a balanced pair.”

My breath caught in my chest. I had previously been angry at Jay because he’d said we were more bonded than we would be in marriage because I wanted the damn tradition. What he’d just done made our situation much more serious. If we were no longer a balanced pair...I couldn’t fathom what would happen to us.

The flapping of large wings caught my attention. I stepped onto the shack’s porch, seeing two images I wasn’t psyched about—my bosses, Jophiel and Michael. If they’d shown up, then the news wasn’t good.

I walked to where they were standing on the beach, knelt, and bowed my head in front of the two of them to show respect. Beelz, Jay, and Brok came out of the shack behind me, Brok still holding De Vil.

“How can I be of service?” I asked. Has the news of Jay’s actions traveled that fast?

Jay was now a prince of Hell, and we were no longer a balanced pair. What would we be forced to do now? I was deeply in love with Jay, bonded to him, heart and soul. Would that be taken from us? Was it even possible to undo it?

Having dreamed of marriage back in my human days, I’d been upset that he didn’t want the human ritual, and I’d behaved like a stupid jerk. We should have talked it out instead of me acting like a spoiled brat. Maybe we wouldn’t be in the current fix if I hadn’t let petty jealousy override my common sense.

“Get up, Scotty. We have a problem.”

“It’s not a problem if we approach the Council to do the right thing. The balance is only off-kilter because Jay’s now a prince of Hell. If the Council—”

Jophiel held up their hand. “Michael, you know it won’t be that easy. Uriel was upset that Scott was promoted last time. After appealing to the Council on behalf of Jonas and Vale, I have no influence left, I’m afraid.”

“Excuse me. What’s up?” Jay stepped over and pulled me from my knees.

The man gave me an up and down. “You okay?”

“I’m fine.” That was a lie. Nothing about me was fine.

Jay then turned to Michael and held up his fist. Michael touched it and chuckled. “Jay, I guess congratulations are in order, huh? You’re one of the bad boys now.”

Jay studied Michael and Jophiel, smiling a little. “I’m not sure what any of that means. I was told that if I ever needed the power of Hell, I should ask for it, so I did.”

Michael chuckled. “Did you forget the rest of the instructions?”

“What? About the consequences? I’m already going to be Lucifer’s valet. How much worse can it get?”

I turned to my love. “You’re one of the princes now, Jay. You’re more powerful than me, and I’ve reached the highest I’ll ever be in the Celestial Hierarchy. I can’t be a mate to a prince of hell.”

“It worked, so I’ll just give it back. See—no worries. Easy-peasy, mac ‘n cheesy.”

I wanted to puke. “Jay, love, it doesn’t work that way. You can’t return the powers like a shirt that doesn’t fit. You invoked the powers of Hell. You no longer have a choice but to accept them.”

Jay’s face morphed from his usual smirk to shock. “Of course I can.”

Beelzebub stepped forward. “Sorry, little bro, but I’m afraid it doesn’t work that way. If this sticks, the good news is that you won’t have to be Dad’s valet.”

Then, of course, Beelz laughed, and Michael joined him.

I turned to Jophiel. “I love him. What am I going to do without him?”

Jay stepped closer to me. “I love you, Scotty. I’ll figure it out, I swear.”

Beelz turned to Brok, who was still holding De Vil. “Bring him. Come on, Jay. Let’s go see Daddy and find out if there’s any truth to him being the father of Vagar and refusing to welcome him into the family. That’s pretty low. Maybe we can guilt Lucifer into fixing this little FUBAR.”

Jophiel stepped closer to me and held my hand as she addressed Beelzebub. “What will you do with De Vil?”

“I think Gremon might have some good ideas about what to do with the idiot. He’s not your problem anymore, white lighter. Take care of Scotty. I’ll be in touch.”

With that, they all disappeared. My heart went right to Hell with them.

“Don’t panic yet. Beelzebub is cunning. If there’s any way to fix this situation, he’ll think of it. And Jay is quite resourceful, too. Don’t underestimate him. Call me if you need me. I’ll let you know what I find out.” Jophiel, disguised as Josephine, patted



my cheek and left the home Jay and I were supposed to be making together.

I paced from room to room, swamped by memories of the dreams we'd shared. Since we'd only moved in the previous day, I wasn't sure what to do, but I hoped Lucifer would at least allow Jay to return to his place and gather some things.

The princes of Hell had a huge home in Hell and spent most of their time there, so I assumed that was where Jay would need to live. Would I get to say a private goodbye?

Or should I go to Limbo and try to find him? Could I get any of the occupants of the underworld to help me? Lilith, maybe?

The sun was turning Sacramento a lovely lilac color as I took to the sky. I had cloaked myself so I wasn't visible to humans, and I set off for Clegg Cycles, where Lilith lived with Quinn. I waited on the roof of a building across the street for her to appear.

What were my options, really? Could I accept that Jay and I were no more? How strong would the bond remain, or would it completely go away? The pain in my chest told me that wasn't possible. I ached for Jay to be sitting by my side.

I enjoyed the jobs we'd done on behalf of the Celestial Council and Lucifer. They weren't fun, but Jay made them feel that way. Patrolling supernatural beings and spirits was hard, but with Jay, it didn't seem like work.

I was certain I couldn't do the job alone, and I definitely didn't want another mate. In my heart, it was only Jay.

Just as the sun came over the horizon, Lilith stepped outside the motorcycle shop and waved at me. I quickly jumped down and followed her to her fancy car. She unlocked

it, and we sat inside.

“White lighter, what can I do for you?” She backed out of her spot and headed toward the street leading to Trent’s weird little shop.

“I’m surprised you haven’t heard. Jay summoned the powers of Hell. He’s now somehow a member of Lucifer’s family.”

Lilith slammed on the brakes. Thankfully, nobody was behind us.

Lilith’s head swung around. “He did what ?”

“Yeah. We’re no longer a balanced pair. Beelzebub took him to Hell. I’m stuck here.”

Lilith and I weren’t exactly friends, but we had no issues with each other. Friendly acquaintances was more our vibe. We each had a reason for existing, though I wasn’t sure if I cared anymore.

“Honey, I don’t think that can be undone.”

“If I pledge loyalty to Lucifer and give up my place as a protector, can I go to Hell to be with Jay?” The tears came easily as I considered that option.

She pulled into the parking lot behind The Mystical Palm, turned off the car, and swiveled in her seat. “Why did he summon the powers?”

“It was that stupid warlock we talked about when you were at Jay’s place with Beelzebub. His powers were previously bound by a holy man, but someone broke the binding spell, and the warlock was immune to Jay’s powers. Suddenly, Jay remembered Lucifer telling him about calling on the powers of Hell if he got into a situation where he needed help, so he did it.”

“What were you trying to find out?”

I wasn't sure if I should tell her, but I was quickly running out of options. “As we mentioned the other day, we were looking for confirmation of which prince fathered the demon before we went to Lucifer with the news. De Vil told us it was Lucifer himself. He went on to tell us that Lucifer claimed Vagar wasn't intentional so he couldn't be a prince of Hell.”

Lilith rolled her eyes. “Sounds like something Lucifer would say, but I don't think it actually works that way. My children aren't princes of Hell, and Lucifer is their father. I think he decides who gets to be a prince of Hell. I don't think just because he fathered the demon it gets to be a prince. The bigger issue is why would he seduce or allow himself to be seduced by Apate? She's the batshit crazy daughter of Nyx. Lucifer really doesn't have the patience to deal with that much crazy. I think if she opened her mouth and pissed him off, he'd have eliminated her.

“Michael destroyed Vagar and ate his remains so he couldn't be revived. The only person who seems to know who did the deed is the actual father, Apate, and the warlock. I think maybe there's more to this story, angel. Don't lose hope yet.”

That was easy for her to say.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Seven

Jay

“Welcome brother!” Verrine, the epitome of envy, greeted me enthusiastically. Belphegor, the sloth, gave a half-assed wave.

“Hey, guys. I guess you heard.”

“The whole place shook. It was so cool. Nobody’s ever been stupid enough to summon the powers before.” I turned to Beelz, who nodded that Verrine was right.

“Nobody? Ever? ”

It was hard to believe someone hadn’t done it before me. It had seemed like a brilliant idea in the heat of the moment.

“Yeah, well, I’m a risk-taker that way.” I left off the part about being an idiot. That part was implied in Verrine’s comment.

“So, what now? A meet-and-greet with my new daddy and then back to work with my mate?” No way did they miss the hopefulness in my voice.

Lycus came down the stairs and approached us. I was guessing an ass-kicking was part of the initiation into the family. His face was murderous.

Surprisingly, he didn’t stop, merely shoving me out of his way as he walked toward

the long road from Lucifer's mansion back to Hades.

"Hey, Ly! Dude, where you going?" Beelz jogged after his brother, his fancy walking stick in his hand and a pair of black diamond-encrusted sunglasses bouncing on top of his head. At least he wasn't wearing a bucket hat. Someone really needed to explain to him that the Human Realm wasn't modeled after a hip-hop video.

"I'm going to kill something." Lycus then stopped and spun around abruptly. "I should kill him ." I looked behind me to see no one.

"M-Me? What did I do?" I put my hand on my chest, hoping the gesture gave an air of innocence I wasn't sure I could pull off.

"We don't need another prince. I tried to tell him that, but he's being unreasonable. It's because of you. It's all your fault. You'll never be a true prince of Hell."

Suddenly, the fire around the mansion erupted like a volcano. Embers and ash filled the sky—or whatever it was—over our heads. That couldn't be good.

"I don't want to be a prince of Hell. I was perfectly happy being an Ad Hoc General." No lie there.

"There's no such thing as an Ad Hoc General," Belphegor mumbled.

Beelz laughed. "I was under pressure, and it was the first thing that came into my mind. The white lighters gave his mate a fancy title. I figured Jay needed one so they could remain equal."

"This is ridiculous. Who is that? " Lycus shouted at the top of his lungs as he pointed to Paxton De Vil, who Brok was still holding. I glanced around to see Er'on cowering behind Gremon, Lycus's hellhound.

“That’s the one who caused all the problems by refusing to name the prince who created a demon with Nyx’s daughter. Paxton said it was Lucifer.” Short. Sweet. To the point.

Lycus pointed to Gremon. “Take him. We’ll get the truth out of him.”

Brok turned to Beelz, who nodded. “Find out what you can, then dispose of him. Do not return him to Nyx. Also find out who unbound his powers. Nyx isn’t capable. It must be someone on the other side.”

That was something I wanted to know too. How the fuck did the warlock get his powers back? And how could he deflect my powers before I called for the... Yeah, that would be something worth knowing.

After Lycus left with Gremon and De Vil, we went into the mansion. I wasn’t too proud to admit I was scared shitless. I had no idea what Lucifer was going to say or how he’d act. Maybe he was going to end me, which would be a blessing if I had to be without my angel.

“Be-Elz-E-Bub!”

There was no mistaking the angry growl of Lucifer. I was pretty sure he wouldn’t be as cordial as he’d been the last time I had an audience with him.

Beelz turned to me with a huge grin as he clutched his walking stick under his right arm and rubbed his hands together. “This is gonna be fun.”

Likely not for me, but Brok and Er’on preceded us into the unholy chamber where Lucifer was sitting on the huge throne I’d seen last time. Beelz followed behind them with his walking stick clicking on the marble floor as he strutted into the room. I wasn’t quite so confident.

I slowly dragged my feet as I entered the chamber. It was hot as fuck in there, but then again, the whole place was a pyrotechnic display unlike any I'd ever seen at any of the heavy metal concerts I attended in college. It was a good thing Lucifer didn't have to pay a gas or electric bill.

"I see you brought the newest prince of Hell for an audience I didn't request."

Brok and Er'on dropped to their knees and put their foreheads on the floor at Lucifer's bellowing. Beelz took a knee for a moment, so I followed his example.

Maybe Lucifer had had a bad night and hadn't had his coffee yet? I wasn't taking any chances.

I cast my eyes down on the marble, though I heard footsteps. They lined up to my left, but I had no idea who they were. Were the Broks back?

"Hop up, little brother." Beelz stepped back to me and offered a hand.

I stood, touching his arm. This was it. If my time was up, I'd go out of this fucked-up world loving Scotty.

"Sir. I'm not sure what to call you now. I'm here, hoping to figure out where I made my mistake. I took up your invitation to invoke the powers of Hell because I wanted to know the truth about Vagar. He broke the rules by possessing an innocent. My understanding of my current situation was not to allow innocents to be harmed.

"The man, who was violated by that possession, was starting a family, and someone took it upon themselves to mess up his life, taking him away from his pregnant wife." I hated using Kiernan Morton's story to my advantage, but it wasn't a lie.

"You'll give me a bad reputation for caring about humans if that gets outside this

room.” Lucifer’s voice echoed through the cavernous chamber.

Beelz grabbed my hand and dragged me closer to the throne. “Pops, what’s done is done. Let’s move on to more important issues. Jay doesn’t want to be one of us. He has a mate he’d rather not lose.”

Lucifer laughed. “Why would I care?”

I had no response, so I stepped forward and bowed again. “I can’t imagine why you would. I’m sure you have many other things on your mind, but why would that warlock get his powers back after they’d been bound by a holy man? I mean, that makes no sense to me. If you want to dispose of me, I’m ready.”

Lucifer loud laugh scared the fuck out of me. He stepped down from his throne and stood before me, wearing a pair of sneakers I could see had been influenced by Beelz’s usual choice of shoe—not those weird rubber things he was currently prancing around in.

“Those are nice. Are they New Balance or Nike?” Being a demon from Hell hadn’t changed me much. I could still admire fashion.

Lucifer stepped forward and showed me a pitchfork on the shoe’s sole. That was something I hadn’t seen before. “Can I get a pair of those?”

Beelz laughed behind me. “Yeah, Dad, can we all get a pair of those?”

“We’ll see if you deserve them. Tell me what the...? What’s going on?” The horns on his head were a bit intimidating, but he wasn’t aggressive yet, so I decided to take a chance.

“I realize I might have taken a liberty I shouldn’t have by summoning the powers of



Hell, but I love my mate and wanted to keep him from harm. I'm doing my damndest to help preserve the balance. I want humanity to have a fighting chance, so I asked for the powers of Hell to try to solve the mystery surrounding a demon. Obviously, I didn't ask about the consequences of my request, so that's on me."

Lucifer sat down on one of the steps from his throne and turned to me with a menacing grin. "Did I not say there would be consequences?"

Yeah, he had, but I hadn't explored what that meant, so shame on me. "Yes, you mentioned it, and I'm sorry I didn't ask for details. I had no idea what you meant, but now I know about the consequences. It's my fault for being a dumb ass."

I didn't expect the Ruler of Hell to laugh and put a hand on my arm. He was pure evil, and I could feel it through his touch, but I'd already accepted my fate. I would be in Hell for eternity...alone.

"Maybe we can make a deal."

I'd heard that before, though I was eager to get back to my mate.

"So, what do you propose? What do you want from me? May I remind you I'm now a prince of Hell? The deal should be worthy of such a title, shouldn't it?"

It was risky to challenge him, but I had a lot at stake. There had to be some weight to being a prince of Hell, right? I was missing something—someone—who I wanted back, and I would do whatever it took to make it happen.

### Chapter Eight

Scotty

I sat on the garden bench behind Dearly & Son, watching Adonis speed-paint the changing appearance of the flowers as the sun moved across the sky. He didn't turn in my direction or even speak to me, but he positioned himself such that I could see what he was doing.

It had been two weeks since Jay had been taken away, and I was slowly losing my mind. I couldn't fathom how anyone went about mourning the loss of a partner of many years. My sympathies went out to them. Could the one left behind ever get over such bone-deep sorrow?

Jophiel hadn't been clear about what would happen after Jay went to Hell, and I was stuck in a spiral of despair. I wanted to disassociate myself from the Celestial Council, but Jonas kept blocking me from getting on the calendar to speak with them.

There was a touch on my shoulder, so I turned to see Jo standing behind me. "May I join you?"

I nodded, resisting the urge to break their fucking hand. "Why'd you show up now? I could have used you a few weeks ago when my life literally went to Hell."

Jophiel morphed into Josephine and took a seat next to me. The little woman exhaled. "I'm sorry you've been left alone, Scott. Things are complicated—"

I turned to them. “No shit, Jo. I’ve lost my mate. Now what am I supposed to do for the rest of my existence?”

There was a deafening silence I didn’t expect. They usually had the right answers.

“Scotty, things have taken a bad turn, but we’re not losing yet. Please, stick with me.”

Stick with them? I wanted to die, and they wanted me to stick with them? What the hell were they trying to pull?

“Yeah, well, I’m done. Any joy or fulfillment I found in this job is gone. You people are absolutely ruthless. I don’t want to do this anymore. I want to cease to exist, Jo.”

“ No! You can’t do that. You can’t give up, Scott. Things are happening that... I believe there is a traitor on the Celestial Council. Someone is looking out for their own interests, not the collective good of humanity.” Josephine’s expression was distraught. Clearly, they were worried about something big.

“What’s going on?”

“There have always been differences of opinions among the members of the Council. I’ve had run-ins with most of the members over time, but we’ve worked things out and moved on. There is one member who has disliked me since the Creator elevated me because I have disagreed with them on nearly every issue that has brought me before them, and now, I’ve come to believe they are working behind the scenes with the underworld to undermine humanity.”

“Who?”

“I can’t say yet. I need more proof before I come forward—just as you hesitated to point a finger at Asmodeus. It turns out you were right to do so since it appears he

wasn't the father of Vagar. I believe there are more sinister forces at work here, but I need something to back up my theory. I need your help, Scotty."

I sighed. Jo wasn't a being I'd consider a conspiracy theory nut. They also weren't a gossip, so I gave credence to their speculation.

Maybe as my last act as an angel, I could expose the traitor? I'd certainly try my best. I owed Jo for all the things they'd done for me. I just had to figure out how to repay that debt.

I was in the mortuary helping Dash take inventory of embalming supplies, and we were chatting about the garage. Dash had decided to sell it to Quinn with the caveat that he keeps the name, Clegg Cycles.

"Do you think I'm being selfish? My husband is like 'You can't make that a condition of the sale. That's not fair to Quinn.' I said, 'Watch me.'"

I'd sensed a little tension between them since I'd been helping at Dearly & Son. There had to be more to the conflict than selling the garage.

"What's up with you guys? You seem to be at each other's throats these days, and that's not normal. It's not because I came back, is it?"

Dash stopped his counting of disposable paper sheets used to cover the guests and sat on the floor. "You're not our problem, trust me. Something's going on with Keir that he won't talk to me about, and I get really pissed when I ask what's wrong and he just shrugs and walks away."

I wanted to say he was lucky he had his husband because I was never going to have one, but that sounded bitchy to my own ears. "I'm sorry. Maybe he needs a break? After the doppelgänger fiasco, maybe he just needs to rest?"

Dash stared at me for a second before standing and dusting off his hands. “That’s a very good idea. I should have thought of it. Thanks, Scotty.”

Sometimes, solutions to problems with a loved one don’t come as quickly as we’d like—not because we don’t care, but because we have things on our minds that occupy our attention. Maybe if I cleared my mind, I could come up with a solution to my separation from Jay?

Dash walked over to the computer desk and sat down. He began pecking on the keyboard. “Where would Dearly like to go for a few days? Where could I make my husband feel as though we’ve found heaven on earth?”

That’s it!

“Take him to Mexico. I was just there, and it’s stunning. I’m gonna take off. I need a few days away myself.”

Dash grinned at me. “Be safe, man.”

I went through the other portal in the receiving bay of Dearly & Son that led straight to the gate of the Celestial Realm. Gabriel, one of the Archs, was standing guard, so I stepped behind an older woman and waited my turn.

“Welcome to Heaven’s Gate. I’m Gabriel. What’s your name?” Gabriel had a gentle smile on his handsome face, per usual.

He was quite beautiful—and quite unapproachable. It was as though the guy had no sexual on-switch, or so I’d heard. The other Archs fucked around all the time—many with humans, or so I’d heard—but Gabriel never did, or so the rumor went.

“Miriam Clark,” the old woman answered.

“Welcome, Miriam. I found your name. Please, come inside.”

Miriam walked through the gate and was greeted by one of the cherubs assigned as a guide. Gabriel made a notation in his book, and then glanced at me.

“Hello, Alba Protectoris Scott. What brings you upstairs?”

I crossed my fingers behind my back as though that would absolve me of the lie I was about to tell. “I need to talk to Michael. I have a dilemma, and I need his guidance.”

Gabriel’s huge wings drooped. “Maybe I can help you? I know things too. Michael isn’t the only Arch who can provide good counsel.”

“I, uh, I’m sure you do, Gabriel. This is a personal issue that’s more than a little embarrassing.” Not exactly a lie, but not the whole truth.

“I’m not judgmental, Scott. Has someone said otherwise?”

I didn’t want to hurt his feelings, but I needed to get through the gate. “Gabriel, of all the Archs, I don’t believe anyone would say such a thing about you. We would all know that’s untrue. This is a situation I’ve discussed with Michael already, and I’m on a timeline.”

“Oh, of course. Well, next time, please feel free to consult with me. I’m so tired of Uriel saying I’m worthless on the Council because I won’t side with him in his position that it’s time for a change in Hell. The leadership vote is coming, and it’s been said that Uriel’s position is in jeopardy because he isn’t handling this dust-up with the fallen properly. I’m perfectly approachable.”

“Yes, I’ll begin telling people the good news as soon I get inside.”

“Sure. Thank you, Scott.” Gabriel stepped aside, and I hurried through the gate.

I meandered through the crowd, trying to blend in until I ran into one of the cherubs I knew with a penchant for spreading gossip. I mean, where there’s smoke... “Hey Chasan. How’s it going up here? Anything new on the grapevine?”

“I heard something about you just the other day. Is it true your demon got himself elevated to a prince of Hell to get away from you?” The cherub seemed to delight in saying something so vile to me. I could see he was baiting me, so I took a deep breath to calm my nerves.

“It is true that Jay invoked the powers of Hell to interrogate a warlock. It had nothing to do with getting away from me.” There, you brat!

“Is it true you killed Nakir for being in Limbo with a lesser demon? Uriel has been on a rampage since his assistant disappeared. There were insinuations that Nakir was physically involved with the demon, and you killed both.”

That was interesting. When Jay and I left little Nakir, he was heading back up to the Celestial Realm. Had something happened to them?

“When was the last time you saw Nakir?”

Chasan studied me for a moment. “The appearance of the full moon on Earth. I was running an errand for Remiel. He likes these cookies from a shop in Brooklyn. I go get them for him on the eve of the full moon.”

Remiel was one of the Archs who sat on the Council with Uriel. It wasn’t a problem for them to have a cherub run an errand, but it happened three days after we had our talk with Nakir in Limbo, which could support our claim that we didn’t kill him.

“When did Uriel say Nakir was dead? How did he find out?” This was becoming more intriguing by the minute.

“A few cycles later, Uriel announced Nakir was missing and presumed dead. Why?” Chasan was glaring behind me, so I turned to see Uriel coming our way with two Celestial guards.

“That’s him. Arrest him.”

I glanced at Chasan and nudged my head for him to get away, my plan being to stall them enough for the cherub to get to Remiel. He would protect Chasen until we could figure out what was going on.

What I didn’t expect was for the bindings to be put on my wrists.



### Chapter Nine

Jay

“What kind of a deal?” I would gladly make any deal necessary to get me back to Scotty.

Lucifer chuckled. “You’re very full of yourself, aren’t you? Be very careful when you make your choice.”

I bowed my head again. “I apologize. I’m interested in what kind of deal you’d want to make. I already made one deal to be your valet in a hundred years. I can’t imagine what other joy you want to rip from my life.”

“What’s wrong with him?” Lucifer asked Beelz.

“Lost his white lighter. They were a bonded and balanced pair, remember?”

Lucifer stepped closer and touched my chin, bringing my eyes to meet his. “Your mate left you?”

I sighed. “Not willingly. With my becoming a prince of Hell, we’re no longer balanced. I have more powers than him.”

“And that bothers you why? Most would be appreciative to have the opportunity to join my family, but you don’t seem happy about it at all. Tell me, Jay, what were you doing that caused you to call upon the powers of Hell?” Lucifer’s attitude was

challenging, but I wasn't intimidated. I had absolutely nothing to lose.

"I was trying to question a warlock. His powers were bound by a holy man in the Human Realm but have since been returned to him."

Then something occurred to me. "De Vil claims you fathered a demon with Apate. He said you didn't mean to impregnate her and refused to claim Vagar as a son. He said it was why, when I called on the powers, I became a prince. Was I able to take Vagar's place as your son?"

"Ah, I see. Well, your warlock was a liar. I don't accidentally impregnate anyone. Where did he hear this defamatory allegation?"

"You'd have to ask him. He's with Lycus and Cerberus." My gaze met the fiery flames in Lucifer's eyes, not flinching or looking away. Hopefully, he'd get to the bottom of it since I'd failed.

Lucifer pulled a rope on the wall, and in an instant, Aeacus—the valet I was to replace in a hundred years—dropped to the ground. "Yes, Master."

"Summon Lycus and tell him to bring his captive. I want to question the warlock."

The valet stood and took off like a shot. I couldn't see myself doing that in the next century. No way would I be so subservient. I'd be killed every day, but then again, without Scotty, what would it matter?

"Where is your white lighter now?" Lucifer was staring at me.

I swallowed the ball of emotion in my throat so I could speak. "I don't know. Beelz brought me here to meet with you. I have no idea how long we've been here, but I can't feel my mate anymore."

My chest felt empty at the loss of my connection to Scotty. It wouldn't be worth existing if he was gone from me.

Aeacus showed me to a luxurious bedroom down a long, dark hallway. Apparently, there was some hold-up with Lycus and the warlock, so Lucifer instructed his valet to take me to my new bedroom. Was there no way out of becoming a prince of Hell so I could return to Scotty? It didn't seem like it.

"Rest here. I'll collect you when Lycus returns with the warlock. If you need anything, ring the bell." He pointed to a fancy velvet rope next to the bed before he walked out.

Glancing around, I noticed the room was quite beautiful. Was it put together by a demonic interior designer? How much would that job pay? It was a sexy room.

I stepped across thick jewel-tone rugs spread around the black marble floor to the bed and grazed my hand over the navy velvet spread that had gold threads stitched into it to make an elaborate design. The room was cooler than the throne room, which was a relief. I couldn't imagine sleeping in that heat.

There were large black doors on each side of the bed, so I stood and walked to the one on the left, seeing a full closet with fine suits, beautiful shirts, and gorgeous shoes. I took a shirt off the rack, surprised it was exactly my size. It was hand-stitched and the buttons were made from real pearls.

There was a shoe rack in the closet that I would forever lust after, and when I spotted a pair of men's Prada brushed leather oxford lace shoes in black that I'd been wanting since they'd debuted in Milan, I couldn't keep my hands off them. I held them up and admired their beauty.

I hadn't been able to justify the cost when I was a cop, though I had money from my

family. I was a tad jealous that someone had such lovely shoes. Then I remembered I had no one to impress anymore, so I put them down.

Out of frustration, I slammed the door and flopped onto the bed, not caring what was behind the other door. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered.

A banging echoed through the room, making me shoot off the bed in fright. I must have fallen asleep, so I hurried over and opened the thick wooden door to see Aeacus standing in front of it, his expression neutral.

"Hey, bro. What's up?"

Something inside me was itching to rile up the demon to see his reaction for reasons I couldn't understand. Aeacus just got under my skin, but I wasn't sure why. Maybe it was because I was supposed to be in his shoes in a hundred years, and I wasn't looking forward to it.

"His Majesty is ready to see you. Prince Lycus has returned."

"Cool. So, uh, you got a wife and kids?" I closed the door to the fancy room and put my arm around Aeacus's neck to make him uncomfortable. I was surprised to see we were the same height.

"Small talk with me is unnecessary. Wait until it's your turn to hold the Master's appendage while he unnecessarily urinates just to embarrass you. You won't be so happy to be here." The valet had a point, but I had news for him.

"Naw. After this is figured out, and I know for sure I'm not getting my angel back, I'm out of here."

It was no lie. I'd already made up my mind. Without Scotty, there was no reason to

be .

Aeacus chuckled, and I leaned closer and kissed his cheek just to piss him off. “So, girlfriend? Boyfriend?”

“Lesser demons don’t fall in love or take a mate.”

It was then I remembered the issue with the cherub and the lesser demon Scotty and I had investigated a while back for breaking into a condo in the newly developed part of Limbo. They told us they were in love and had nowhere to spend time together that wouldn’t get them in trouble, so they broke into one of the unoccupied units. They had no idea security cameras had been installed, and they got caught.

Scotty protested that we were tasked with dealing with the incident, but because I had been a cop, the powers-that-be had demanded I find them. Thankfully, those same powers hadn’t realized they were in love because it was forbidden for the cherub to be in a relationship with a demon. I didn’t realize the same was true for the demon.

I’d explained to the cherub how they got caught and what kind of trouble they could get in if they did it again, while Scotty had talked to the demon. What was the cherub’s name—Nate? Nari? Whatever.

They’d said they’d be forever in our debt if we didn’t turn them in for breaking the rules, and hell, we were in love too, so we simply reported that they were playing a prank and had been warned against such behavior in the future.

What was the demon’s name? Thor? No—that’s a comic book character.

“Say, do you know a demon named, uh, Tork? I think that’s it, right?” It sounded close to right in my head.

Aeacus stopped. He turned, giving me the eye. “The traitor? You know Tork the traitor?”

“Traitor? I don’t remember that about him. He’s just a demon blowing off some steam with a cherub buddy. What’s wrong with that?”

Aeacus hissed at me, the shithead. “They fell in love with a cherub, which is forbidden. They paid the price, the idiot.”

That didn’t sound good for poor Tork. “What happened to them?”

“It’s believed Tork was killed when they left Limbo to meet with the cherub. The body was found at the Gate of Hell with its head pierced by one of the spikes at the top as a warning to others.”

“When was this?” What was going on? We’d talked to those two little dudes just before the new moon.

Time didn’t progress the same way in the underworld as it did in the Human Realm. I had no idea how long I’d been in Hell already. I also had no idea how time went by in the Celestial Realm, but I guessed it had been less than a month since we’d talked to them.

“Just after the new moon. It’s also rumored that Tork was killed by the cherub at the order of you and your mate as the cherub’s penance for breaking the rules.”

I took in his words, but they made no sense. “Wait, it’s rumored that we forced the cherub to murder Tork? No. I can tell you that’s bullshit. As for his lover, Narik? That cherub wouldn’t harm a fly. Who’d you hear this from?”

Aeacus didn’t answer, so I grabbed him by the throat and held him off his feet. “You

will tell me now .”

My voice vibrated through my body and into my soul. The power surging through me was unlike anything I’d ever experienced. For the first time, I could feel every artery, capillary, and nerve ending in my body. They pulsed simultaneously, and I could see things I’d never seen before. I could sense fear in Aeacus, and I was excited.

“ Tell me the truth! ”

The bellow that came out of me was unlike anything I’d ever said, and I was filled with rage about what was going on with Scotty and me. He was mine! I was his! Who fucked with it?

Catching my reflection in a large mirror on the wall outside my room, my face showed nothing but pure evil. My eyes were black, and my facial structure had changed to show the demon inside me. It was badass and scary.

I dragged a screaming and kicking Aeacus with me down the hall. I was raging inside because I missed my mate, and something was going to pay. If it was the valet, then so be it.

Kicking open the door of Lucifer’s throne room, there was a certain satisfaction that I wasn’t afraid of the consequences. I had not one fucking thing to lose, so I didn’t give a good goddamn about rules, etiquette, or expectations.

I stomped inside. I was tired of these people playing with me. I wanted answers, starting with the demon I clutched in my fist.

I flung Aeacus across the room with strength I didn’t know I had, and he landed on the stairs to the throne. I heard bones cracking as the demon made contact with the marble, and I chuckled at the satisfaction I felt inside.

Lucifer was sitting with a tablet, his right leg tossed over the arm of the large chair. His gaze immediately moved from the device to me. “I see you’ve embraced your place in the family. There’s no going back now.” Lucifer’s cackle made me angrier.

Had the Ruler of Hell chosen not to explain to me how I would change? Was all of this on purpose? Was this turn of events designed to manipulate me into the spot I was in at that moment?



### Chapter Ten

Scotty

“Why am I behind bars?” I would continue to shout until I had no voice left.

What had I done wrong? Why would I be jailed? What the fuck was going on?

A Celestial guard stepped in front of the cell. “Shut up. Nobody is going to help you. You broke the rules.”

Uriel stepped beside him, a smirk on his pinched face. I wished to hell I could choke him. His smile fueled my anger to the point I was raging.

“Hello, Scott Locke. You never belonged in the Celestial Realm in the first place. Jophiel and Michael had an unnecessary sympathy for your plight, but I knew you were unworthy of being here. I knew you were just a street rat. You killed a man and wounded another during your human life. You got away with it then, but you still ended up dead because you were nothing. You’ve just proven it to everyone.

“I was pressured to exalt you to a level you shouldn’t have been because of your past, and you made a mockery of the Celestials’ faith in you by killing the cherub, Nakir. Now, you will pay.”

“Uriel. What’s going on?” It was Gabriel, of all people. His face was filled with anger I couldn’t decipher.

“I’m here to check on Alba Protectoris. He came before the Celestial Council and was deemed more than worthy of elevation. You were the only Arch that fought against it. Now, he’s in jail. Why?”

Suddenly, Uriel began pacing and yelling at Gabriel, bringing more Archs into the jail. When Michael came in and saw me behind bars, he didn’t appear to be happy.

“Why is Scott Locke behind bars?” Michael asked as he stepped forward. He snapped his fingers and motioned for a guard to step closer to him. He jerked the keys from the guard’s grip.

Michael opened the door and extended his hand for me to step out. The cuffs on my wrists fell to the floor with a loud clank, and I stepped outside the bars and was pulled into Michael’s arms. I sobbed for the first time since my life went to Hell.

“You’re okay now, Scotty. We’ll get to the bottom of this together.” Michael took my hand, ignoring Uriel’s loud protestations as we walked away.

Michael led me out of the Justice Center and through the streets until we arrived at a small condo on the garden level of a building reserved for high-ranking Celestials to reside. “It’s not much, but it’s mine. Come inside and let’s talk.”

With a nod of appreciation, I followed Michael inside. I needed help, and hopefully, he had some answers.

We sat at the small table on the back porch of Michael’s residence. After a few minutes of silence, Michael sat forward and patted my arm. “Please tell me what happened.”

“Jay and I were ordered to find a cherub and a lesser demon who had broken into one of those empty condos being built behind Club Limbo. When we found them, they

told us they were in love and were only looking for somewhere to spend time. We didn't want to cause them any more problems, so we reported that they were playing a prank, that we'd spoken to them, and they'd vowed not to do it again.

"I guess we were saps because we didn't destroy them. We took their word that they'd walk away from each other, and we moved on to our next assignment." That was it, in a nutshell.

"Which cherub was it?" Michael clasped his hands on the table.

"It was Nakir. I believe he was Uriel's assistant. We didn't kill him, Michael. Rumors are going around that Nakir was killed by Jay and me, but he was one of the cherubs who attended the Creator. We didn't feel his offense was worth his elimination. I suppose love makes everyone its fool."

Michael chuckled. "Uriel aspires to be at the left hand of the Creator, but it hasn't happened in millennia. The Creator doesn't need the personal touch, so he lends his attendants to those of us on the Council, and we basically give them something to do. I don't take advantage of the program, but those like Uriel believe it sets them above the rest of us to have cherubs at their disposal."

I seriously gave two shits less about any of that. "How can I get back to Jay? I'll renounce my—"

"Don't say it!" Michael reached up and put his hand over my mouth.

"Heed my warning. There are always listeners, Scotty. We might be in the Celestial Realm, but there are still those looking to get ahead. In that way, we are much like the underworld. Your shortcomings are another being's leg up."

"How are we supposed to be better than the dark lighters if there's so much animosity

among our kind. Maybe Uriel is right and I shouldn't even be in the Celestial Realm. I've made mistakes, Michael." Thinking back on what I did by killing Billy and wounding his lover, I probably hadn't deserved the second chance I'd been given.

"Scott, you were driven to do what you did by jealousy. You cared about Billy, and he betrayed you. Human nature pushes humans to seek revenge for being hurt. Your life shows that you were a good person aside from one impulsive act. You were worth a second chance." I truly appreciated Michael's kind words.

"I have a question for you. What happens if one of you guys makes a mistake? I mean, an Arch. You have rules, right? Do you have revenge impulses?"

Michael stared at me for a moment. "I'm sorry. I don't understand."

"You weren't human, right? You were created to be a helper to the Creator. Do you have impulses like humans?"

He seemed to consider what I'd asked. "Yeah, I guess we do. What's your point?"

"Well, what if one of you had a relationship with a cherub and you found out they cheated. If you killed them in anger, would you be punished? Is it wrong for your kind to kill someone for revenge?"

For a minute, I was worried he'd kill me for even asking because his face seemed to contort from wanting to laugh to pure rage. Michael sprang to his feet and thrust his arms high in the air before he began dancing around his small back patio. He was still dressed in his Celestial robe, and I couldn't help but laugh as it flowed around him. He appeared to be filled with happiness.

"What's going on?" The suspense was killing me.

“I may finally get a wish to come true. Stay here and don’t answer the door. Feel free to rest if you’d like. I’ll be back.”

Without another word, the Arch shot into the sky and was gone.

His offer of a place to rest was tempting. I was bone-weary, and closing out the world for a while offered a respite from my troubles, so I went inside and sacked out on his couch. Maybe I’d wake in an hour or so to find it was all a bad dream? I certainly hoped so.

Maybe my sweet demon would be lying by my side in our home. That would be my wish come true.

### Chapter Eleven

Jay

Lycus and the warlock entered the throne room. Lucifer made me remove Aeacus since I'd made the mess. I put him on a bench outside the room and returned inside to wait. The demon would heal, I was sure.

"Father, you sent for us?" Lycus looked no worse for wear, but I couldn't say the same for Paxton De Vil.

Gremon, Lycus's hellhound, had a golden rope tied around the warlock's arms and was holding the end of it like a leash. I laughed.

"Is that a lasso of truth?" Lycus and De Vil stared at me, but Lucifer laughed at my lame joke.

"It's to restrain his powers and render him helpless," Gremon stated. I forgot that hellhounds didn't understand human sarcasm.

"Anywaaaay..." Lycus raised an eyebrow in my direction. "We weren't finished with our interrogation. I found out it was an Archangel who returned his powers, but he refuses to tell me who."

"It's not that I won't. I can't. I physically can't say the name out loud. He put a hex on me that prevents me from speaking his name."

“Did he tell you why?” I was likely speaking out of turn, but I wanted some damn answers.

“Why would one of my former brothers be inclined to return a warlock’s powers? I’m sure he wouldn’t allow you to say his name in order to keep his actions secret from the other Archangels and the Creator.” I glanced at Lucifer to see his question was rhetorical.

Lucifer seemed to grasp the enormity of this news quicker than I thought he would—but then again, he was formerly a brother to the Archs and had fallen from the Celestial Realm. I wasn’t much of a Bible scholar, but I remembered that much from one of my father’s cases about a radical mega-church preacher secretly running a conversion camp in Ojai. It was odd, the things that stuck in the mind.

“What would get an Arch in trouble?” I wasn’t that up-to-date on the rules of Archs. Hell, I hadn’t known it was forbidden for a cherub and a lesser demon to have a relationship until I was told. I was, though, forced into the family, not born.

“I’d like to make a deal,” De Vil spoke up. I wanted to break his fucking jaw so I didn’t have to hear his stupid voice.

Lucifer stepped down the stairs and walked over to De Vil, towering over the warlock. “What kind of deal?”

I had an idea, so I hurried over to Lucifer and touched his arm. “Can I make a suggestion?”

He glanced down at me before taking my arm and walking me away from De Vil. “I’ll hear your suggestion.”

“I’m assuming you can do something about his powers, correct?” Lucifer nodded.

“Why don’t you take away his powers and make him your new valet instead of me. That way, you can keep an eye on him since we believe him to be in cahoots with Nyx. Maybe you can torture him and find out if she’s after your throne because she thinks you impregnated her daughter and didn’t make her grandchild a prince of Hell? Why’d you give it to me?”

“That’s a discussion for another time, Prince Jameson. But, since you are now a prince, it’s true I can’t have you as my valet. Aeacus is getting on my nerves, so I will need to replace him. You have brought a solution to me I can agree with. Well done.”

“May I please tell him?” It was hard to keep the grin off my face.

Lucifer chuckled. “You may.” He stepped over to Beelz and whispered something before returning to his throne.

I walked closer to Paxton De Vil and stared into his eyes. I could feel my anger flare and the flames in my eyes were reflected in his. “I’ve got some bad news, Paxton.”

“You still don’t scare me, demon. You can go to—” He glanced around and shut up. Yeah, we were already in Hell.

“After you relinquish your powers to Lucifer, you’re going to get a new job. How do you feel about holding Lucifer’s dick while he takes a piss?”

The room erupted in guffaws, and Paxton’s face paled considerably. That was quite satisfying.

“How do I go about removing his powers?” I was asking anyone there. I really just wanted to rip out his soul.

Beelzebub stepped up behind me. “I’ll show you how we do things, brother.” He then



stared at De Vil and smirked.

“Did you ever put your hand on a hot stove?” Beelz voice was sinister as he held up his hands. Flames shot out of his palms, and he touched De Vil’s bare forearms. His shirt had been removed at some point, and his back bore stripes from a flogger or whip. The hiss Beelz’s flaming hands made on De Vil’s biceps sounded like meat frying in a hot skillet.

De Vil wailed in pain, which made me smile. That fucker was the reason I was in this ridiculous position in the first place.

Beelz removed his hands from De Vil, blew on his palms, and stared at the warlock. “Next, I come for your face. I wonder how much pressure it will take to pop your eyeballs out of your head?”

A lot more princes had gathered in the throne room. I’d met them previously, so I just gave a wave and returned to watching Beelz.

“Who is Vagar’s father? Because it’s not Lucifer.”

“It was the Archangel—” Paxton tried to form his mouth to say another word, but it wouldn’t come out.

Beelz reached into De Vil’s chest, seeming to feel around a little before he pulled out a white orb that flashed as though lightning was held inside. “There’s the magic.”

“ Y-You can’t do that! ”

Beelz tossed the ball high in the air to Lucifer, who unhinged his jaw, taking it down his gullet in one gulp. It was impressive to witness.

“Nooooo!” That was loud and unhappy. I glanced at De Vil to see he was shocked. That gave me a pang of satisfaction as well.

Beelz nodded to Gremon, who was still holding the leash. “Lycus, you’re up.” Gremon took it off and stuffed it in the pocket of his leather jacket.

Lycus reached up and snapped Paxton’s neck without blinking, and before I could breathe, a cloaked figure walked into the throne room. There was no doubt who it was—the black robe and the scythe were a dead giveaway.

A hand appeared from the sleeve of the robe, pointing to the body of Paxton De Vil. The hood came down, and I recognized David Dearly.

“Hey, David.”

“Jay? How are you? Where’s Scotty?”

I hugged the Angel of Death, actually happy to see him. He was an amazing man who had sacrificed crossing over to save his son from having to leave the Human Realm. David Dearly was a great man in life and death.

“How much time you got? It’s a long story. Are you taking him, or what?” I pointed to De Vil, whose head was facing the wrong direction on his neck.

David chuckled. “Oh, he’s already where he needs to be. Since I’m here, what’s going on with you?” As I said, David Dearly was a wonderful man.

“I don’t know where Scotty is. I’m here because I’m a prince of Hell now. We have a dead warlock, a murdered lesser demon, and now, one of the Archs has mated with a daughter of Nyx. It’s truly a fucking—sorry—it’s a bit of a mess.”

David patted my arm. "I'll see if I can find out anything, okay? That one—" David pointed to De Vil— "will wake up soon enough."

The princes all laughed, as did I. "Thank you, David... I mean—"

"It's okay, Jay. I understand."

David then stepped over to the throne. "Lucifer, I assume you have this under control?"

Of course, Lucifer laughed. "Angel of Death, I have it under control. Go check on Alba Protectoris Scott so my son can calm down."

David nodded before lifting his hood to cover his head. He turned toward me and winked, and then he was gone. I hoped to fuck he could find out anything about my Scotty. I felt as though my heart had been ripped right outta my chest.

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Twelve

Scotty

“Scotty.”

A gentle hand on my shoulder had me turning to my left. Jay dropped onto one knee with a black velvet box in his hand, lid open. There was nothing inside, and everything began to shake, including me.

Was there an earthquake? Wait, I was in Michael’s condo, not in Sacramento. There were no earthquakes in the Celestial Realm.

My eyes popped open, and I was shocked to see David Dearly, Keir’s deceased father, now a member of the Angel of Death Collective. Azrael was on a leave of absence, so David was taking his place temporarily. I knelt on the couch and hugged him, hard.

“Oh, uh, yeah. It’s good to see you, Scott. Michael told me you were here. Are you okay?”

Oh, that was a loaded question. Was I? Fuck if I knew. “I’m here alone. I don’t think I’m doing well at all.”

David walked around the couch and sat on the edge of the coffee table, taking my hand. “Tell me what’s going on. There’s no newsletter blast on either side, and I’m now a neutral entity. I hear nothing about the business above and below, but anything

you tell me stays with me.”

I started at the beginning, explaining to him about Paxton De Vil. Vagar. Apate. Jay summoning the powers of Hell. My incarceration in the Celestial jail and Gabriel’s anger at Uriel before Michael stepped in. I don’t know how long I babbled.

David listened quietly, and when I ran out of breath and tears, David gently clasped my arm in a fatherly gesture I’d never experienced before in my life—or afterlife. “A loss like that is hard to accept. I remember how much I missed my Lucy when I first died. I still love Keir’s mother, and I miss her every day. That doesn’t stop. Our destinies simply didn’t line up at this point in time. Someday, she’ll be with me.”

“Was it hard for you when she fell in love with someone else? Will I have to sit back and suffer silently while Jay goes about his existence as though I was never in his life? I’ve been told princes can’t be mated, so that’s it, right? I’ll just have this hole in my chest where my heart used to be?”

“I’m sorry, Scott, but I don’t know. I am, however, well acquainted with that feeling. Even though I like Lenny, and I’m grateful he makes Lucy happy, I wish it was me instead. Lucy deserves to live the rest of her life to the fullest, even if it’s with someone else but I still have enough of my humanity that I’m jealous. At the end of the day, we all deserve happiness, Scott.”

“I know, David, but I don’t see where that’s in my future. Archangel Uriel said I didn’t deserve it, and I’m starting to believe him. I’m ready to... Michael said I shouldn’t say what I’ve been thinking because there are always listeners, but I miss my mate, and I’m no longer sure of my purpose.”

David stood and extended his hand. “Would you like to go with me to check on a few things?”

“I told Michael I’d be—”

“It’s okay. We’ll find him. Come with me for a little while before I have to get back to work.”

I took David Dearly’s hand and stood next to him. “I can’t thank you enough for checking on me. I’m not sure why you knew I needed it. Did you talk to Keir?”

David smiled sadly. “Not recently. I can’t check on him as often as I’d like, but Michael is kind enough to keep me updated. I’m so proud of Keir, and I had my last visit when he and Dash got married. I’ll be there to protect and support him when the fight begins.”

It wasn’t a surprise, but... “Do you have any insight into when Nyx will make her move?”

“Not a clue. There are things we’re just not meant to know, and it’s frustrating. I understand how you must feel right now, Scott, but don’t give up hope. There are times in our lives when all we have is hope. I have no proof, but I don’t believe you and Jay are through.”

All I could do was nod. In the blink of an eye, we were standing in the Celestial Hall, but no one seemed to notice us. “How’d we get in here?”

David chuckled. “As long as you touch me, you’re cloaked from other’s vision. We can’t hear them, but body language can be very telling, don’t you think? This is how I keep track of things.”

Michael stood about ten feet away from us with a menacing scowl as he watched Uriel laughing nearby. “What’s that about?”

“Michael is in investigative mode. He would have been a great CIA operative had he not been destined to be the leader of the Creator’s armies. You’ve seen him when the Council is seated. He observes more than speaks until he believes he has all the information.”

I chuckled. “Yeah, and then look out.” Michael wasn’t shy at all, and he called things as he saw them. I respected the being more than I could articulate.

“Exactly. There’s Jophiel. They’re another good investigator. They’ve been working hard to close the additional portals around the Human Realm to force the fight to take place in Reardon, where Keir and Dash will put an end to this uprising.”

“Is that in stone?” I certainly hoped so.

David turned to me and lifted his eyebrow.

“So, no?” Why would I be dumb enough to think the Universe would establish anything definitively?

“I brought you here to show you that there are beings on your side, and they’re working to get to the bottom of this, so don’t give up.”

“I’ll try.” And I would.

I blinked again, and we were in a place I didn’t recognize. “Where is this?”

Before David could answer, Jay walked down what appeared to be a street. His facial expression gave away his misery in an instant. My eyes prickled with tears again.

“Hades. Jay’s just as miserable as you.”

A being crossed his path, and Jay grabbed it by the neck, ripping off its head. “What's that?”

“That’s Paxton De Vil. With Jay being a prince of Hell now, Lucifer needed a new valet. Paxton is now Aeacus’s student. Every time Jay sees it, he decapitates it. He blames De Vil for this current situation, and he won’t let De Vil forget it. Lycus ended Paxton’s human life, and Lucifer ate his powers so De Vil could never harm another. Nyx can’t find him either.”

The head rejoined the body quickly before De Vil rushed away. I was sure Jay would enjoy removing De Vil’s head repeatedly.

“Is there any way Jay can have a mate? I’m assuming the princes aren’t allowed to have them since none do, but I’m not sure why. Is that a rule?” My own ears recognized the hope in my voice.

Even if I was elevated to the point that Jay and I were once again balanced, if Jay was now forbidden from having a mate, we would be no better off. Why was everything so damn complicated?

“The keyword here is rule , and who makes the rules in the underworld? Lucifer .”

It took a minute for that to sink in. “Wait, the Creator doesn’t make the rules?”

“Not down here. This is Lucifer’s domain. He made the rule because he wanted his sons at his disposal. I wonder if he could be persuaded to change that rule? I have no idea of the outcome, but I do know that he and the Council saw the benefit of having you and Jay probing problem situations that weren’t quite so black and white.”

Jay walked over to a bench and sat, staring into space. My heart stuttered as I studied him. He was even more beautiful than I remembered from our time together. I wasn’t



sure if he'd changed much since becoming a prince, but I didn't care. Whatever it was, I would accept it and love him more for it.

"We both know I won't get promoted to Custus Albus, which might not even be the equivalent to a prince of Hell." Definitely not if Uriel had any say.

David grinned. "As much as the underworld and the Celestial Realm seem to be static societies, there is the possibility for change. I'm a prime example of what can be done if one puts their mind to it. I got the Celestial Council to allow me to take Keir's place here so he can continue to live a happy life." Then, David jerked his hand from mine, and I felt a hot breeze on my face.

"Jay?"

My demon glanced up. "Scotty, what's—"

We ran toward each other, crashing and gripping as our lips found their purpose. The kiss was animalistic on both our parts. Devouring. Uncontrolled. Glorious.

Jay pushed away an inch so he could look into my eyes. "How?"

"One minute before we all get into big trouble." I turned to see David sitting on the bench with a huge smile.

I quickly turned to Jay. "I love you, and I'm not giving up. I'm going to do everything I can to fight for us. Somehow, we will be together again.

"Someone killed Nakir and Tork. They're saying it was us, but we know it wasn't. We've got to figure out how to prove it because I believe we're being punished for something we didn't do."

Jay's palms touched my cheeks. "I know, sweetheart. I think an Arch is behind all of this, but De Vil couldn't say the name, so we have no idea which one of them it is. Gods, I love you too. We'll figure this out, Scotty. Please have faith in me...in us. We can get through this. Just remember how great we are. We'll be sure someone pays for this."

"Thirty seconds." David stood and turned his back to us.

"Will you marry me?" It came out of my mouth without thought, but it was completely right. Why did I think Jay had to be the one to propose?

Jay grinned. "Yes. Just as soon as we're able to pinpoint who's behind all of this and be back together."

Our lips met again, Jay's arms wrapping around my waist as I held his face and kissed him with everything inside me. I felt the bond between us strengthen as our tongues tangled. It was exactly what I needed.

"Time to go..."

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Thirteen

Jay

My arms were suddenly empty and my tongue was sticking out. I must have looked like a dumbass standing there in a pose as though I had been kissing someone. I had, but now he was gone.

“Scotty?” I glanced at the bench where the Angel of Death had been sitting to see he was gone as well.

David Dearly had brought my heart to me for an instant, but it was enough to solidify my resolve. Scotty and I were going to be together for eternity, and some motherfucker was going to pay for pulling us apart in the first place.

And we were getting married.

I’d had no idea a human tradition such as matrimony could be so important to Scotty. When he popped the question, I could feel the sincerity pouring out of him through our bond, which I was happy to learn was still there. It dawned on me that maybe that was why Scotty was upset with me before we were separated. Gah! I’m an idiot!

“Hey, little bro. What’s that smile about?”

“I, uh, I dozed off and had a dream about Scotty. So, let me bend your ear for a minute. What would happen if an Arch murdered a cherub and a demon?”

“If it was one of us who murdered another demon, it would depend on the reason. If an Arch murdered a demon, we would be forced to retaliate. Why?”

Just as I was about to tell Beelz what was going on, Paxton De Vil, who had been transformed into an ugly monster thanks to his death, came around the corner. “Where’s Aeacus? Master is displeased with me and wants Aeacus to attend him immediately.”

Stupid fucker. “Haven’t seen him. Can you say the Arch’s name yet?”

Beelz spoke up. “Doesn’t matter. The Arch’s gotta confess. We can’t dispose of him without the Creator’s permission. We haven’t killed an Arch in millennia, so Daddy would want to do that himself. It would be a big production. Gods, I hope we get the chance. What do you know?”

De Vil stared at us, drinking in every word that was said. Is he going to try to get away and report to Nyx? Would he be that stupid?

“Nothing. I was just wondering.” I growled at De Vil. “So, uh, aren’t you looking for someone?”

He scurried off toward Hades, and I spread my wings. “I’ll catch up to you later.” I patted my new brother on the shoulder.

Beelz nodded and strutted away while I took to the sky. I followed De Vil down to the dock of Hades, seeing him take a seat on a bench to wait for the ferry. I landed in a Zaqquum tree on the Limbo side and waited. If I could get him to tell me the Arch, I’d know who to go after and then, I would.

Turned out, De Vil was exactly that stupid. He got on the ferry, and I watched as it floated down the Styx and then took a right at the River of Acheron toward Nyx’s

corner of Hell.

Kharon, the Ferryman, was a neutral being, even though Nyx was his mother. He'd take anyone where they asked to go, so I wouldn't execute him. But De Vil would be exposed as the traitor he was and dealt with by Lucifer.

I shot into the black sky and glided overhead, staying high and using the darkness for cover. I was determined to get rid of that guy for good.

No way was I going into Nyx's domain alone, but I'd get close enough to ensure it was De Vil's intended destination before I hurried back to my brothers.

It was becoming easier to think of them that way. Was it because I was accepting the idea of being a prince of Hell? What would that do to my being able to get back to Scotty?

I stopped and landed on a rock within eyesight of the dock at Droh. It was where Lucifer had banished Nyx's mother, Chaos, and where Nyx was gathering her minions for the big fight.

Once De Vil exited the ferry, I shot across the sky and landed beside Kharon. "Did he say why he was coming here?"

"No. Just asked for a ride." Kharon stared at me. "Are you getting off or do you want a ride back?"

I took off without another word, heading back to Hades. I needed help.

I flew above the street and landed at the mouth of the path leading to Lucifer's mansion. I touched down and ran up the stairs and into the house without knocking. Aeacus met me at the door. "You have no audience scheduled with the Ruler."

“Where’s your assistant?”

“He went to the shops for Master’s dinner.”

“I’m afraid not. He went to Droh. Unless Lucifer has a favorite restaurant there, I’d say De Vil lied to you.”

“N-No. He wouldn’t do that. He knows my existence is tied to his loyalty.”

Poor bastard. “I don’t think he cares. Get the rest of my brothers. De Vil is going to betray Lucifer, and I’m pretty sure that’s not going to go over well.”

“Jameson.” I turned to see Bereth, pride, and Mammon, greed. They must have heard my grand entrance and come to see what was going on because I hadn’t been quiet. I hadn’t spent as much time with them, but that was probably about to change if I was stuck being a prince.

“Gents, I’m on the way to talk to Lucifer. The warlock is visiting Nyx.”

Bereth stepped closer. “How do you know?”

He was kind of a pompous dick, but I got the feeling it came with the territory. If you were the epitome of pride, you probably had a hard time not being a prick.

“Seriously? Is he stupid or does he wish to burn in the eternal flames with no way out?” Mammon shook his head. “How do you know he went to see Nyx. Do not trust spies to be truthful. They are all self-serving.”

Bereth chuckled. “You’d know that better than anyone, you greedy bastard.”

Okay, they don’t trust the new guy. Got it.

“I didn’t follow him to Droh, but I followed him far enough to know that he was on the path. As did Kharon. He gave him a ride.”

Verrine and Beelz—envy and gluttony—exited the mansion. “What’s going on? Aeacus ran inside and shouted at Pop, which didn’t go well. Aeacus is currently regenerating. Where’s De Vil?”

“Jameson says the warlock went to Droh. He claims the Ferryman took him, and Jameson followed to the mouth of the path,” Bereth announced.

The growl from the mansion was akin to a rabid dog. “I think Dad heard us.”

Suddenly, the Ruler of Hell flew out of the mansion in all his deep-red glory, his wings blowing out the front doors.

“Shit. He’s Hellboy red. This will be bloody.” I turned to Beelz and saw his face filled with glee. That kind of scared me. Lycus’s eyes were black, and the vein in his neck throbbed as it pumped blood through his huge body. Apparently, wrath was ready to rumble.

Lucifer stopped when he saw all of us. “ We fight! Now! I’m tired of this. The Council can fuck off. They’re not being threatened by Chaos and Nyx. That’s just me, and I’m done.”

So, like the good demon sons we were, we followed Lucifer into battle.

I had no idea what we’d be met with, nor how we would fight Nyx, but I quickly realized I was in the position to perhaps get myself back to Scotty. This was likely my only shot. Before we arrived at the path to Droh, I caught up to Lucifer. It was time to make another deal.

“Got a minute?”

Lucifer came to a grinding halt, and I almost crashed into him. Apparently, the other princes anticipated his move and screeched to a stop behind us. I was sure it was a sight, the eight of us hanging in the air over the River of Acheron.

“Where is Asmodeus?” Clearly, Lucifer was unhappy. The deep voice echoed off the walls of the endless cavern.

The thunderous flapping of wings caught everyone’s attention, and we all turned to the entrance to see Asmodeus flying from Droh. He stopped when he saw all of us waiting because in his arms was De Vil.

Lucifer roared again before shooting off toward the two of them. I’d missed the opportunity to make my deal. I was well and truly fucked.



### Chapter Fourteen

Scotty

“Thank you, David. I can’t tell you how much it meant to me to see Jay. I have an idea I’d like to speak with Michael about when he returns, and I think perhaps you shouldn’t hear this. You might feel compelled to act, which could put you in a bad spot with the Council because you are in the neutral-being group.”

We were standing on Michael’s patio after returning from seeing Jay. Something had occurred to me when I was watching my love before David released my hand. Maybe there was something I could do to move things at a faster pace?

“You’re welcome, Scotty. I’m secretly pulling for you and Jay. I’ll be keeping tabs on you. Be safe, son.” David pulled up his hood, picked up the scythe he’d left at Michael’s, and he simply faded away.

Not long after David left, Michael returned to his condo. I’d gone inside and stretched out on the couch, zoning out and thinking about what kind of wedding Jay and I would have. Where should we hold the ceremony?

The only spot that made sense was to have the ceremony in Keir and Dash’s memory garden. It was where people who’d had no one in life could rest in peace and know they were remembered. The idea of solidifying our commitment there gave me a feeling of serenity I’d rarely experienced.

“How was your day? Did you find out anything?” I was anxious to know if Michael

had come to the same conclusion as me, but I wouldn't ask until I knew his mindset. I would use every weapon at my disposal to rectify being separated from Jay, but I wouldn't tip off anyone in the process.

"I'll be right back. Let's go to the Human Realm and visit with Dash and Keir. I could use a beer or ten." He left the living room, and I heard his bedroom door close. I sat up and shoved my feet into my motorcycle boots. It had been a long day.

A bit later, Michael came out in one of his vintage band T-shirts—Wings—and a pair of well-worn jeans, his long brown hair pulled back in a man-bun, the kind Dash was sporting these days, and a pair of Converse sneakers on his feet.

"Ready?"

I nodded and stood, following him out the door. I pulled off my shirt just as Michael did, and the two of us took off, heading toward the portal outside Heaven's Gate so we arrived in the receiving bay at Dearly & Son. Once we were on the other side, I called the landline to the funeral home from my cell.

"Dearly & Son. Keir Dearly speaking."

"Keir, it's me. I'm here with Michael. Can we come up?"

"Oh, Scotty. Yeah. Come on up."

We entered through the embalming suite into the mortuary. I walked over to the walk-in and opened the door to see the portal inside wasn't glowing, which was a relief.

Michael stuck his head inside. "No weird glow. That's a good thing."

“Yeah. Let’s go up.”

We went to the top of the stairs to enter the funeral home, and I knocked. Seemed polite. The door opened, and Amelie offered me a big smile. “Scotty!”

She wrapped her arms around my neck, and I put my hands on her back. I hadn’t seen her when I’d been there after Jay and I were separated. She and Trent had gone to San Francisco for Thanksgiving and he’d proposed. It was good to see her so happy. She was like a ray of sunshine.

“Congratulations! I heard the good news.” I was happy about her engagement. Our little wannabe psychic would marry a medium and real psychic, Trent Simmons, and anyone who knew them was thrilled. I wanted to share my good news, but not until Jay was beside me.

“Thank you. I was just on my way out, but we’ll catch up soon. Take care of yourself, Scotty. I know you’re busy with other things but try not to be a stranger.” I hugged Amelie again, and then she hurried out the front door.

Michael had apparently disappeared while I was greeting Amelie, but he returned. “She’s a lovely young woman. I’m sorry I thought it was a bad idea to greet her. Her fiancé is the medium?”

“Yeah. Trent. He’s a great guy. He’s helped us a few times. So, you’re okay with Dash and Keir, right?”

Michael laughed. “Yeah. The Gatekeeper and the Key are old friends of mine now.”

I led him up the stairs to the apartment and knocked on the door. When Dash opened it, he gave both of us a huge grin. “Scotty, Mike. Good to see you. Come on in. Keir’s making some nachos, and I’m making margaritas. You guys will join us, right?”

Michael didn't hesitate. "Hell yeah. How've you been Dash?" The pair headed to the kitchen, and I followed. Dash and Keir were good people, and I was glad they were on our side. The love they had for each other was palpable when in their presence.

"Hi, Keir." I walked over to the counter where my former protectee was making chicken, pepper, and onion nachos. The mixture smelled delicious.

Keir quickly wiped his hands and hugged me. "How are you, Scotty? Everything okay?"

"It's getting there. How about you guys? You doing okay?" I could still sense a little tension between the couple, but I wasn't about to ask. It wasn't my business.

"Yeah. We're going away for a couple of weeks. We're going to Monterey to see Mom and Lenny for Christmas and then to Mexico for ten days. Dash planned the whole thing, and he and Amelie arranged for some of the local funeral homes to take our calls. Jonas has talked to some directors I don't know to get them to fill in if needed. I can't wait. It's my first real vacation in forever."

I wanted to offer to help, but I had a lot on my plate. I nodded and smiled. "Sounds good. You guys deserve some time off."

"Thanks, Scotty. Any word on Jay?"

"I saw him. I found out that he and I are being blamed for the death of a cherub and a lesser demon we didn't kill." I then turned to Michael. "I had an idea. I want Keir and Dash to hear it because if anything goes wrong, it could affect them as well."

Thankfully, Dash took that moment to put margaritas in front of Michael and me. "Shoot. We're all ears."

I took a deep breath. “A bit ago, Jophiel taught me a handy trick. I can change my appearance to look like anyone I have seen.”

Keir chuckled. “Oh, you did that to me. It’s freaky. Why do you need to use the power this time? Another ethnic funeral coming my way where you want to blend into the crowd?”

“Not quite. I need to trap an Arch. I believe I know who killed Nakir and Tork. As far as I know, Nakir’s body hasn’t been found, but Tork’s was found at the Gate to Hell, their head on a spike at the top. If I present as Nakir, I believe I can trick the Arch into panicking and admitting what they did.”

I then turned to Michael. “If the underworld finds out an Arch was in their territory, what will happen?”

“There will be retribution on the Arch, but you gotta get a confession from the son of a— Tell me who you believe it is, Scotty. I won’t go along with this if we’re not on the same page.”

“You first...”

### Chapter Fifteen

Jay

“Wassup, Asmodeus? Where you goin’?” Beelz’s voice couldn’t be mistaken, and when Asmodeus heard it, he dropped De Vil into the Acheron. His flailing body falling from that height was kind of funny, but the situation was dire.

“I-I saw him going to Droh, so I went after him.” Asmodeus gave each of his brothers a hard look before his nervous gaze landed on Lucifer.

“You saw him going to Droh so you went after him?” I heard a tinge of skepticism in Lucifer’s voice even if the others didn’t.

Lucifer then turned to me. “Did you see Asmodeus here when you were trailing the warlock?”

“Can someone get me out of here? I can’t swim.” We all glanced down to the water to see De Vil struggling.

The warlock could be a witness, so I answered Lucifer. “Nowhere in sight.” I then swooped down and grabbed the asshole, taking him with me to the gathering of the princes. I could still drop him if he was a problem.

“De Vil, why were you going to Droh?” I asked as I held onto him. I saw Asmodeus coming for him, so I ducked behind Lucifer.

“He’s working with Nyx. He betrayed all of you. I was going to Droh to beg Nyx to save me from being your valet. I don’t want to live if I have to do that disgusting job for the rest of eternity.” De Vil then hung his head, which brought a loud laugh from Lucifer.

I didn’t expect Lucifer to grab Asmodeus by the throat and pull him closer. “You betrayed me. Are you the father of Vagar as well? Have you decided to join Nyx and her mother in their attempt to take over the Human Realm and my kingdom?”

“It isn’t fair that you can father demons to hell and back, and we aren’t allowed. And then, you welcome that former human into our family without asking us? You betrayed your sons a long time ago, Father.”

In a snap, Lucifer released an ear-piercing screech and removed Asmodeus’ head, swallowing it before he ripped the body to shreds and then consumed every bit, wings, feathers, and all.

He snatched De Vil from me and started to do the same with him, but Beelz touched his father’s shoulder. “We might need him as a witness.”

“A witness?” That seemed to intrigue Lucifer.

Brokorol flew up to where we were still hovering, awaiting orders. “I’ll have him shackled and waiting for us at the mansion.” Beelz then handed the warlock to Brok and nodded, so the hellhound flew away with him.

“What now?” Lycus asked his father. He was spoiling for a fight—or so I believed.

We heard running beneath us, and I saw a sight I never had before. Cerberus, the three-headed, former guard dog at the mouth of Hades, was being followed by an infinite number of big, vicious dogs. On Cerberus’s back was Er’on, holding onto the

scruff. They held up their fist, and all the snarling hellhounds stopped.

“At your service, Master.” Er’on, bowed their head in deference.

Lucifer floated away to a central spot to address the multitude. “We go to fight the enemy. We will be victorious, and at the end of the battle. I’ll have Chaos, Nyx, and Erebus as trophies in my throne room. Burn it all down. Leave nothing untouched.”

I glanced at Beelz, and he nodded. The fire was already in his eyes, but he took me to the side as the others talked strategy. “I realize this is the first time you’re doing something like this. Just follow my lead. You have our full support. You are one of us, now, Prince Jameson.”

Lucifer flew over to me and took my hand. “You are now lust . Jameson will take the traitor’s place in our family. You will fly with us. The hounds will come behind.”

The Ruler of Hell touched my chest where my heart used to be, and I was nearly knocked on my ass. My mind was flooded with lust, and my cock followed suit.

What the hell?

My actions weren’t my own as I followed the throng into Droh. The loud flapping of our enormous wings was nearly deafening in the cavern, and as I studied the landscape beneath, I noticed one very startling development: there was no movement. No demons. No goddess or god of darkness. No chaos—or Chaos, the mother of Nyx.

We landed on a rock path and everyone scanned the area. Hellhounds began running around, sniffing everything in sight. Cerberus stopped pacing, and Er’on hopped off. The hounds circled around them, all barking and snarling.

Finally, one of the dogs stood from its canine form and began walking through the



group. It was one of the Brokorols. He spoke briefly in a language I couldn't decipher, and then Brok stepped to where we were watching and waiting.

Brok dropped to his knees before Beelz and said, "They're all gone, Prince Beelzebub. Droh has been abandoned."

I turned to Beelz. "How many we talkin' about?"

"Millions."

"Where could they go?"

Beelz didn't answer me. I scanned the faces of my new brothers, seeing none of them had an answer.

Lucifer turned to Lycus. "Find the portal at the other end and seal it. Then destroy Droh and seal this entrance. They are never returning."

Next was Verrine and Belphegor. "Go with him but pass through the portal and report back where it leads. Track them. I will destroy them all."

To Mammon and Bereth, he ordered, "Go to Limbo and deep into Hell. Find any sympathizers of Nyx and question them. Destroy anyone who refuses to cooperate."

That sounded like a truly shitty job.

The Ruler of Hell then turned to Beelz and me. "We're going back to the mansion. I need to speak with the Celestial Council. They must be notified that Nyx has left Droh and taken her followers."

If only I had a hotline for Scotty. We might be able to cut through some red tape so I

could tell him what was happening.

“Give us a minute. We’ll be there, but don’t do anything until we arrive.” Beelz reached into the pocket of his track pants and retrieved a blinged-out cell phone. “I have Jo on speed dial.”

Thank heaven!

I stood next to him and heard the call answered. “Beelzebub? What’s wrong?” It was Jo’s angelic voice, which was deep.

“Jophiel, we need to meet. There’s been an undesirable development. Can you come to Limbo?”

“How undesirable?”

I spoke up. “Game changing for all of us.”

“I’m leaving now.”

Beelz hung up, and we stared at each other for a moment before I finally spoke. “I guess this is the beginning of the battle?”

“I suppose we’ll see. I’m not ready to concede, are you?” Beelz steadied his eyes on me, but I wasn’t intimidated. I had more skin in the game than Beelz, really. I had the love of my life. The owner of my heart. The one being I would die for.

Nothing was more important than Scotty.

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Sixteen

Scotty

“It’s Uriel. He’s jealous of all of us.” Michael was adamant, and I’d like to say I agreed with him, but...

“I believe it’s Gabriel. He mentioned the upcoming vote for the head of the Celestial Council. I think he found out about Uriel’s affair with Nakir, and I believe Gabriel murdered Nakir and Tork to try to frame Uriel.”

Michael stared at me. “Why do you think Gabriel would...? He’s not aggressive at all, Scotty. Uriel would kill anyone who threatened him or his position on the Council. Gabriel would never kill an innocent like Nakir.”

I wasn’t surprised to get pushback from Michael. He disliked Uriel, just as many on the Council did. But, in my mind, Uriel wouldn’t kill a lover. He was a being who experienced emotions, and if he loved Nakir, he wouldn’t kill him. He’d be sad about the betrayal, but murder would never be a part of his agenda.

Gabriel, on the other hand, was an unsympathetic being. He had no emotions, but beneath the surface, he wasn’t perfect. He didn’t like Uriel. That much was easy to see if one opened their mind, but I could see Michael wasn’t there yet.

“Look. We have one shot. I corner Gabriel as Nakir when Gabriel is alone. I ask him why he killed me and see what he has to say. You’ll have to be nearby, but you don’t have to be seen. If we get a confession, then we can proceed to the Council. If we

don't, then you can destroy me and banish me to Hell. I won't protest, and I won't try to find a loophole."

Michael stared at me. "How convinced are you that it's Gabriel?"

"I want to be wrong, Michael, but—"

"Wait, is this a fight in the Celestial Realm? Tell me why this involves us?" It was Dash, and the protest didn't surprise me. He was protecting Keir, and I couldn't blame him. I'd protect my Jay the same way if given the chance.

I turned to Dash. "It involves you if there's an uprising in the Celestial Realm as all Hell cracks open. This could be the end of all of us if we don't figure it out."

Keir choked on his margarita. "So, this is the beginning of the war?"

I wanted to tell my friend no . I wanted to say it was just a little dust-up between the realms, and humans would be just fine, but that might give them a sense of complacency, and we couldn't afford to let our guard down, especially right now.

The truth was, none of us knew when the fight would begin. "I'm not sure, Keir. I just want to try to hold it off as long as I can. That's why I want to try to see the reaction from Gabriel when I confront him...as Nakir."

"So, you're going to transform into the cherub and what?" It was a fair question from Dash.

"I'm going to ask Gabriel why he killed me and decapitated my lover, posting his head on the Gate to Hell. It should bring a reaction from him, don't you think?"

Michael and Dash laughed at the same time. "You're playing with fire, Scotty."

“I’m in love with a prince of Hell, Dash. I must love the burn.”

The laugh from the collective audience was a bit hard to take, but I wasn’t leaving my demon behind.

“Well, we might as well go do this now.” Michael’s cell phone rang as he finished his drink. “Jophiel? What’s wrong?”

Their voice was frantic. I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. If they were calling Michael, something terrible must have happened.

Michael hurriedly left the room, and I turned to Keir and Dash. “Who’s in the walk-in?”

“A ninety-five-year-old man named Burgess Kincaid. He’s being cremated tomorrow. We’ll drop him off at Steinbeck’s in the morning. We leave on Wednesday if the world doesn’t end tonight.” I could see Keir wasn’t joking.

“I don’t think it’s quite that bad. Probably something to do with closing the portals. Jo’s been working on it.” I glanced at them to see concerned expressions.

“Are they closing the one here?” Dash studied my face, so I knew I couldn’t lie.

“No. This is the only portal they want to leave open. They want to bring the fight here to you.” Keir nodded before wrapping himself around Dash, the two of them hugging.

Michael returned to the room appearing a little shaken. “Okay, Scotty, let’s go. We’ve got work to do.” He then turned to Dash and Keir. “Is anyone staying here while you’re gone on your vacation?”

“No. Should we ask someone to stay?” Dash’s eyes danced between Michael and me.

“I think Adonis should stay. He’s nearly impossible to kill and doesn’t spook easily. If the neighborhood kids see nobody coming and going, they might decide to break in and look around. That’s all you’d need.” I didn’t mention that we had no idea if anyone would come through that portal, so it would be best if an immortal was there to greet whoever did.

“Oh, I didn’t think about that. Great idea, Scotty. Well, let us know if there’s anything we can do for you guys before we leave. Don’t bother us until we return unless it’s time to fight.”

Dash was staring at me, so I gave him a grin. “Promise. Have fun, you guys.”

Michael and I went down the stairs as quickly as possible and through the portal in the receiving bay. When we stepped out on the other side, I grabbed his arm. “What did Jo want?”

“Nyx and her minions have disappeared.”

I stared at him, but Michael didn’t crack a smile. “Disappeared?”

He nodded. “They’re gone. Beelz called Jo. She’s on her way to Limbo. We need to get to the Celestial Realm now. We need to try to head off whatever this is.”

We discussed what each of us would do and went our separate ways. A weight was on my shoulders that I’d never imagined, but I had to be sure everything went smoothly. I didn’t have a lot of time to pull it off, but I was determined.

When I arrived outside the Council building, the butterflies in my stomach had changed into pterodactyls, and I didn’t see them calming anytime soon. The courtyard was filled with folks chatting, some sitting at tables and having coffee.

I ducked behind a white marble pillar and closed my eyes, picturing Nakir the last time I saw him. He was adorable, and my heart hurt that he'd been murdered. As Celestials, we were taught that life, any life, was a gift from the Creator and should be honored as such. How had the thirst for power become more important than honoring that gift? More importantly, how had that happened in the Celestial Realm?

I opened my eyes and was a little dizzy. My line of sight was much lower to the ground than it had been a moment ago. I glanced at my body covered in a Celestial robe. I touched my cherubic face to find it was the human face I'd seen on Nakir, not the lion, the ox, or the eagle they sometimes wore. I glanced down to see the hooves I expected, and I wiggled a little in my robe to feel two sets of wings on my back instead of my usual one.

"You can do this." It was a little pep talk to myself because I was going in alone.

I stepped from behind the pillar, put my hands behind my back as I'd seen cherubs do, and slowly traversed the stairs on my much shorter legs.

"Nakir? Where've you been?" It was Chasan, the cherub who had told me Jay and I were rumored to have killed Nakir. If Chasan thought I was the cherub, I must have remembered him correctly.

"I've been trying to figure out how to get back." Seemed like the best answer to give. Non-committal, but not a lie.

"Uriel—"

Suddenly, I was grabbed by my short hair and dragged down the hallway leading to the Celestial Chamber, where the Council convened daily. I couldn't look up to see who it was, and as I was about to reveal myself, we ran into two Council members, one of whom was Gabriel. The other was Remiel.

“Oh! It’s back. Where was it? Did it run away after killing the demon?” Remiel asked.

“I didn’t kill Tork.” It was time for me to speak up.

“Rumors have circulated that the balanced pair made you kill the demon and put him at the Gate of Hell. How did you get in and out without being discovered?” Gabriel asked.

“Don’t answer their questions, Nakir. Go to my home and wait for me,” Uriel demanded, putting his hand on my back, and ushering me toward the exit.

Suddenly, Gabriel grabbed my arm and picked me up, tossing me over his shoulder. “You’ve been hiding him at your abode, Uriel. No wonder you wouldn’t let me in when I dropped by to walk with you to the Council meeting.”

Uriel stared at me before he turned to Remiel. “I don’t—didn’t have Nakir staying at my abode. He disappeared. I’ve been looking for him everywhere. When I couldn’t find him, I assumed he was eliminated and reported him as such. Someone murdered his lover, but it wasn’t me.”

Gabriel cleared his throat. “It had to be the cherub, of course. He then ran to keep from facing the wrath of Lucifer. We know they’d love to get their hands on one of the Celestials. We should turn him over and satisfy their taste for retribution.”

I decided it was now or never. “What if I tell them you killed my lover and put him at the Gate of Hell. That means you went down to the underworld on an unsanctioned visit. I saw you put his head on a spike.”

“Nakir, what do you mean you saw him?” Uriel asked.



“He’s a liar! Damn him to Hell!” I expected a protest from Gabriel—not from Remiel. Was it possible it was a conspiracy?

I gasped. “You helped him!”

Remiel grabbed me while Gabriel reached for Uriel. “We found you with the cherub and you were killing him.”

My head was twisted, so I closed my eyes and released the vision of Nakir, returning to my normal state—except I was naked because the robe was shredded. Eh, it wasn’t perfect.

I disregarded the order to never touch an Archangel unless invited and grabbed Remiel’s hand, twisting his arm behind his back. “You weren’t what I expected, Remiel. I knew Gabriel was guilty, but I can’t believe you worked with him to frame Uriel.”

Gabriel and Remiel both lunged at Uriel, but I stepped between them. “You will answer for your crimes.” Both laughed as Gabriel drew a sword and swung it toward my head.

I dodged to the right, and the sword came down on my shoulder, but I had Uriel behind me. I would die defending him, even though I didn’t like him. We defended the innocent, or so Jo had taught me.

Suddenly, the sky lit up and it began to rain—which was quite unusual for the Celestial Realm. I turned to Uriel and grabbed him with my left arm which I could still use. “What’s happening?”

“The Creator is crying for the deception by two of his trusted Archangels. And, Uriel, you know you broke the rules, so you will atone, but you two will admit your guilt to

the Ruler of Hell.” It was Michael, and I was relieved.

“Took you long enough.”

Michael’s booming laugh broke the tension in my body. Four Celestial guards filed into the room and escorted Gabriel and Remiel from the hallway.

Michael turned to Uriel. “You need to go to the Creator and confess your actions. Do we know what happened to Nakir?”

“Only the Creator knows,” Uriel answered.

I was sad that perhaps Nakir had met his demise, but the fact that neither Gabriel nor Remiel had been surprised to see the cherub gave me a little hope that perhaps he still existed somewhere. As I studied Uriel, I could see he had hope, too.

Uriel left us alone, presumably headed to meet with the Creator, so I took the robe Michael offered and covered myself. “You did an amazing job, Scotty.”

“How is Jay?” That was all I cared about. I understood that Heaven and Hell stood in the balance, but I was selfish.

“Let’s go to Limbo. Jo is meeting with them, but I got a message from a frantic cherub named Chasan that his friend was in trouble, so I came as quickly as I could. Who knew Gabriel and Remiel would collude? Well, it just goes to show you that we all have free will, and they wanted Uriel out as the Council leader. We are accountable for our decisions. Let’s get you some clothes.”

I nodded and started to follow Michael when something sunk in. “Wait! Are we going to Limbo? Will I get to see Jay?”

Michael nodded, and my heart began to gallop. I couldn't ask for anything more than to see my mate. Maybe there was light at the end of the tunnel?

I sure as hell hoped so!

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*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 9:43 am*

### Chapter Seventeen

Jay

We searched for Nyx's followers near the portals to no avail, finally sending sets of demons and hellhounds through the other three portals to continue looking wherever they led. There was no way a million or more of anything could go unnoticed, right?

We were at the mansion, and Lucifer was upset. He was pacing and still Hellboy red. That couldn't be good.

"I want answers!" Lucifer's voice bit through the air and echoed in the large room.

Beelz walked over to the throne where Lucifer was sitting. "Look, they were able to mask themselves, so the hellhounds couldn't track them. We're doing everything we can, but we need to figure out how to find them."

Lucifer hissed. "This shouldn't be so hard."

I laughed. "You're the Ruler of Hell. Don't you have ways to deal with this sort of situation?"

He gave me a snarled look. "I've run this place for a very long time without your smart mouth, you know?"

"Yes, sir. I understand, and if I offended you, I'm sorry." I damn well didn't want to get on Lucifer's bad side. The image of him ripping apart and devouring his own son

was enough to tell me it was best to placate the being at all times.

“Come on, boys. Let’s not turn on each other.”

I glanced behind me to see Lilith strutting into the throne room in an outfit I was sure made Quinn bite his fist.

Lucifer chuckled. “You’re right. What brings you by?”

“I got a text from Scotty. He and Michael are headed to Limbo. That’s why I’m here. This whole thing with the death of the cherub and the lesser demon doesn’t need to explode.” Lilith was right.

Lucifer stared at her. “So, who killed the demon?”

“It was an Arch, but you knew that. Put that aside. We need to worry about Nyx and the upcoming war. I almost wonder if she’s behind this? It’s a great diversion, isn’t it?”

Lilith then turned to me. “Do we know where Nyx and her followers have gone?”

“No, but we’re searching.” Beelz stepped into the room and stared at me.

“What?”

Beelz grinned. “Celestials are waiting for us in Limbo. You ready?”

Lucifer chuckled. “Go. Bring back information.”

I didn’t wait to be told twice, and I followed Beelz through Hell and Hades and then stepped onto the ferry. Kharon nodded in greeting, but I wasn’t sure why we were

taking the boat in the first place. We could fly.

“Why are we taking the ferry?”

Beelz grinned. “Shoot me. I love a boat ride. Besides, the Celestials are willing to turn over the one who killed the lesser demon. We have more important things to worry about than taking the ferry, and I know you want to get back with your mate.”

“What?” Had I heard Beelzebub correctly?

“Your mate took a risk that paid off. He loves you very much and was willing to risk his existence to get back to you. Scotty’s a true angel. Let’s get to paddling, Kharon.”

Beelz and I made our way to Limbo, seeing the Celestials at a large table. Cato had roped off the area, but a large gathering of spirits awaiting judgment were taking an interest. It was easy to see the Celestials were nervous—they would be on the other side of judgment if they handled the situation wrong.

I scanned the crowd and found my Scotty among them. When he saw me, he quickly pushed his way through and was in my arms before I had the chance to take a breath.

The future wasn’t certain, but holding Jay gave me hope that maybe we had a chance to live the future that had been taken from us without our permission. At least, that was what I hoped.

Uriel, the current head of the Council, was sitting midway down the table with a few other Archs on his left and right. Four guards stood behind the table with two Archs secured in handcuffs, and Jophiel stood behind Michael, who was seated at the end of the table.

“I love you so much. Michael told me about Nyx going missing. He also discussed

with his fellow Archs how to level our playing field so we can continue our work,” Scotty whispered to me.

That sounded better than just about anything I’d heard to date. “Good. I know our side is motivated. Let’s hope your side is too.”

Uriel stood and raised his hands to silence the crowd. “Greetings from the Celestial Realm. We are here to deliver one of the culprits who caused the death of the cherub Nakir and the demon Tork. The division between the mission of Heaven and Hell brought these useless killings about. We, as the Celestial Council, want to assure the Ruler of Hell and those who serve him that we won’t fall to the level of treachery this crime reveals. There will be retribution for those accused. We will turn over the Celestial of Lucifer’s choice, return to the Celestial Realm, and punish the other. Let the hearing begin.”

Scotty kissed my cheek. “I’m a witness. I have to go testify in front of the audience. I’ll be back.”

Chairs were brought for us to sit, and then the hearing—for lack of a better word—began.

Michael stood and turned to face us and the crowd. “The first and most important thing is that we want to apologize for the death of Tork. As the Creator was quick to remind us, love is love, and the fact Nakir fell in love with a demon shouldn’t have led to either of their deaths. It could have been negotiated and shouldn’t have been dealt with by the two former Archs, who have admitted they murdered the two to set up the head of the Council, Uriel, in order to take over leadership.”

Michael told everyone how Gabriel and Remiel had conspired to make it appear Uriel had killed the cherub and lesser demon out of jealousy because he was in a secret relationship with the cherub, which was also forbidden.

“Where is the body of the cherub? Do we know for sure that he was murdered, or was it only our demon who paid the price with his life?” Beelz had that walking stick across his lap and looked every bit the imposing threat the man could be...until Thea, the waitress, delivered a large basket of chicken wings and fries. I struggled not to laugh, as did Michael, Jo, and Scotty.

“The body of the cherub was dropped into the Styx, according to Gabriel, who did the actual murders and brought the body of Tork here and placed it outside the Gate of Hell and mounted the head on the spike.” Michael then gave Gabriel a murderous look which would have made me squirm.

Gabriel and Remiel were forced to speak their crimes out loud and apologize to Beelz, as the representative for Lucifer. Beelz explained to the Council that Nyx had disappeared with her followers and how we were searching for them.

Michael turned to his fellow Archs. “We must aid them in their search because Nyx is a threat to the Human Realm. We are charged to protect humanity. This is part of our responsibility as well.”

“Are you proposing we work with Lucifer’s army? That’s absurd!”

“Who’s that?” I turned to Beelz to see him licking his fingers before he grabbed the napkin Thea had given him.

“That’s Sariel. He’s a wuss, but this might be your chance. Stand up, announce yourself, and propose that you and Scotty would be happy to handle the search on behalf of both realms. They’ll need to elevate Scotty to meet your power level so the two of you can be balanced and your bond can be reinstated.”

“Our bond never went away, Beelz. It’s still strong.” And it was. I felt his heart beating in my chest, and I was sure he could feel mine. The bond had never been



severed, but if they'd tried to, they'd failed.

“So, a true soulmate then? Fan-fucking-tastic! I'm happy for you, brother. We'll fix this with Father. Make no mistake.”

I nodded and stood. “I am Jameson, the newest prince of Hell. I propose that Alba Protectoris Scott Locke and I resume our duties as a balanced pair and lead the search for Nyx. Our record in assisting the Council and the underworld is untarnished. Elevate Alba Protectoris so that we may resume our responsibilities. We are true soulmates, and we will be married soon.”

There was a lot of chit-chat in the crowd and even among the Archs. We watched as Uriel and his fellow angels stood and gathered in a huddle. I watched my angel as he nervously fiddled with his hands. My stomach was in knots, as well.

Would we succeed in getting back to each other? If not, could we run away from all this bullshit and find a place to be together?

There was a lot of shit to try to understand, but one thing was sure... I couldn't wait to marry him.

And that was a beautiful thing.

Scotty

I was on pins and needles as we awaited the Council's decision. There was no way they'd promote me to a level anywhere near Jay's new position. He was a prince. The closest thing we had to a prince was the Archs, and that was something that couldn't be promoted. They were created for the job.

Michael laughed at something Uriel said, but they all took their seats again. Uriel motioned for Michael to speak. As he was about to open his mouth, a hot breeze filled Limbo. The remaining princes of Hell landed beside Beelz, and he stood, our side creating a huddle of their own.

Beelz smacked Jay on the back of the head. "Get up here. You're one of us." I chuckled at the stunned expression on Jay's face.

The princes formed a huddle of their own, and it seemed like an eternity before they all turned to the Council.

Beelz stepped forward as a plate of sliders was delivered to the small table Cato had put next to his chair. Beelz glanced at it, and then turned to the Council.

"I am Beelzebub, a prince of Hell. Lucifer has sent word through my brothers that he wants Gabriel. He plans to make him his valet, which is a fate worse than death, I assure you. The Council can take Remiel, but Lucifer wants your assurances that the former Arch will be punished for his part in the murder of a demon."

Brokorol and Er'on appeared with a golden rope like they'd put on De Vil. The

guards walked Gabriel over to Brok and Er'on, and Brok put the rope around the former Arch's chest and arms, leading him away.

Michael stood. "Okay. Anything else?"

Beelz snapped his fingers before he sat down and dug into his food, which made Verrine and Bereth laugh. Lycus turned toward the Council. "I am Lycus, a prince of Hell, and I come with a message from my father. He is willing to make an exception to allow Prince Jameson to remain on loan to the Council to continue the work of the Celestial Realm and the underworld. He values the job Jameson and Scott Locke did before Jameson was elevated to a prince of Hell. My father asks that you consider changing the rule that the pair must be perfectly balanced. They are soulmates, so they will hold each other as equals and decide punishments with equal weight for good and evil."

My breath caught in my throat as Jo stepped closer and took my hand. I watched as the Archs whispered among themselves. Uriel was waving his hands around, and then Michael spoke to him and finally, Uriel nodded.

Michael stood. "We agree with Lucifer's suggestion to allow the pair to resume their duties, but we are elevating Scott Locke to Custis Albus. Jophiel, the Creator's loyal servant, will be elevated to the Council as an Ad Hoc General to the Order of Heaven." Michael looked pointedly at Beelz, and the two of them had quite a laugh.

Uriel stood next to Michael. "Thank you for meeting with us." He then turned to me. "You may resume your position at the side of Prince Jameson. Please keep the Council updated on the status of your search."

All the angels except me spread their wings and left, and all the princes did the same—except my Jay and Beelz, who was elbow-deep in a platter of mozzarella sticks.

I made my way over to the two of them, anxious to touch Jay. He took my hand and pulled me into his side, kissing my lips chastely before he turned to Beelz. “We’ll get right to work on tracking Nyx. Can we borrow Brok—or one of them—to help with the tracking?”

Beelz wiped his mouth and snapped his fingers. From nowhere, a hellhound appeared. He was very muscular with a beard and a bald head. He immediately dropped to his knee and bowed. “Master, I am Appollin. I am an enforcer for the Hellhounds Motorcycle Club, and I am at your service.”

Jay chuckled as he looked at me. “Another perk, I guess.” He then turned to the hellhound. “I’m gonna call you Apollo. Rise.” The hellhound stood, spreading his feet shoulder length apart as he clasped his hands in front of him.

Jay turned to Beelz. “We’ll be off. Can I get one of those blinged-out phones to keep up with you? I’m assuming you’re not in my head anymore.”

That reminded me I hadn’t had Jo in my head either. I was guessing they were too busy sealing portals to bother with me. I’d have to find her, but first, we had some things to do.

“Yeah, uh, I think you’ll be okay to start your new job tomorrow. Take the hound with you to your home in the Human Realm so he can get a feel for the area. He won’t be a bother. He’ll get a place in your neighborhood. If you don’t want him, you can send him back to Hell to his mother. I kinda like having Brok around.”

Jay grinned. “Thanks, Beelz.”

Beelz turned to Apollo. “Come by my place when you pick up your things, and I’ll give you Jay’s phone. We’re trusting you to keep them safe.”

Apollo bowed to Beelz, and then Jay and I unfurled our wings and flew out of Limbo,

hand-in-hand. Apollo took his canine shape and ran with us back to Jay's little house in a quiet suburb of Sacramento.

I had no idea what we'd find as we searched for Nyx, but I knew the gravity of the task. If there was any way to keep the invasion at bay, I knew Jay and I would find it.

"Fuck me harder, baby." Oh, I had no problem with that. I thrust my hips harder, pegging his prostate as hard and fast as I could.

There hadn't been any foreplay. We'd come into the house and ripped off our clothes. Jay had run to the bedroom and returned with a bottle of lube, throwing it at me as he bent over the back of the couch.

"I love you. Come for me, love," I whispered in Jay's ear. I was holding on by a thread, but I wanted him to come first. It seemed as though we'd been apart forever. It was great to finally reconnect.

Jay cried out, " Gah! " and I heard the splash against the back of the couch. That would be a mess to clean up, but at least it was leather.

I followed, quickly filling him with all the love and cum inside me. We'd have to do this again soon.

I slid from his channel and hurried to the kitchen, wetting a wad of paper towels to clean up my lover and the back of the couch.

I gently cleaned him, seeing the love bite I'd made on his neck and grinned. "I marked you as taken."

Jay stood and turned around. He'd broken the couch where his fingers clutched while I railed him. "I guess we'll be getting a new couch, huh?"

I glanced down to see his cock was hard again. “That’s some quick recovery time.” I reached out and touched the head, seeing the precum starting to leak from the slit.

“Oh, I forgot to tell you something. I’m now lust.”

“Excuse me? What does that mean?”

“Lucifer killed Asmodeus, and I inherited the trait. Come on. We oughta be able to get a few more in before Apollo returns, and we have to start looking for Nyx. I know for sure I’ll never get enough of you. We’re getting married!”

The excitement on his face was everything I wanted to see. He was my future, my fiancé, and my soul’s other half. Now, I had to be sure nothing happened to tear us apart ever again.