



To Hell and Back (Magical Mayhem #2)

Author: *Laurie Roma*

Category: Fantasy

Description: ~ New from the Misfits of Magic Universe ~

Death is only the beginning of the story...

Seneca Lee has been cursed with good luck. Abused and mistreated since her awakening, she is finally able to escape the endless cycle of torment in death. However, fate isn't about to let her off the hook that easy. Reborn, she is granted a chance to save her loved ones and seek vengeance against those who have wronged her, but she can't do it alone. But she never expected her greatest ally would turn out to be one of the most dangerous supernaturals alive.

The ironic twist of fate is he also happens to be her destined mate.

A powerful reaper, Killian Black is a Guardian of the Underworld who is tasked with keeping the supernaturals residing in the Human Realm in check. His formidable reputation is well deserved, but the one being who need not fear him is his beloved mate. Exacting revenge for Seneca is a task he takes great pleasure in, and he will ensure everyone understands that crossing his mate means they will have to deal with him.

Their love is worth defying death for, and they will cherish the second chance they have been given. But ensuring she stays out of the Hell Realm will require more than a little luck.

Total Pages (Source): 12

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Seneca Lee was dying .

She could feel it.

Could sense her life slipping away with every drop of blood that left her body. Since there wasn't anything she could do to stop it, she simply lay there and welcomed the sweet oblivion that awaited her. She had no strength left to fight anyway. And even if she did, there was no way to release herself from the restraints that kept her strapped down on the medical bed she was lying on.

Waking up to find herself in a freaking dungeon with no windows was pretty damn scary. The flames from the red candles set up around the room made the setting even more eerie. Shadows danced on the stone walls, and the wax slid down the side of the candles to pool at the base like blood. She felt like a sacrifice laid out on an altar, and it was made worse by witnessing her own demise as her life was slowly drained from her.

As a witch born with exceptional luck, one would think she had lived a blessed life.

Sadly, it was just the opposite.

In truth, she was fucking cursed.

Things hadn't always been that way, though. Born to wonderful parents and raised in a home filled with laughter and love, Seneca had been carefree and happy for most of her childhood. Her mother, Claudia, had been a witch with basic magical skills but a lot of artistic talent. She had been a special effects makeup artist who could make any

injury seem real. She also created awesome monsters and other creatures using prosthetics and paint.

Originally from New York, she moved across the country to work in Hollywood. While working on her first feature film, she met Ethan Lee. Ethan was a famous director known for making horror movies. He was also a talented mage who specialized in visual illusions and effects. Most of his films were low budget, but audiences loved them and couldn't wait for the next one to drop.

Ethan and Claudia had instantly fallen in love, which made sense once they realized they were true mates. While they were both dedicated to making movies, they wanted a quieter life than living in Los Angeles full-time. They ended up establishing their permanent home close to a film studio run by some of their good friends up north near Seattle.

In addition to working in the studio, they also did quite a bit of traveling when it came to making movies. Seneca had been blessed to be able to travel the world with them. Sometimes it felt like punishment when she couldn't join them on location, but they made every effort to be home with her during the school year.

Their home had always been a favorite hangout for all of her friends since it was like living in a funhouse. New props were constantly being stored there, and her mother was always experimenting with new creature designs. Halloween in their house was next level, and people even traveled from miles around to visit the epic haunted maze her parents set up on their property every year.

While her friends thought their house was amazing, Seneca had grown immune to most of the craziness. It had gotten to the point where she no longer flinched when she passed by a monster in the hallway or saw an alien in the kitchen.

As expected, she had inherited her mother and father's love of a good horror story but

had wanted to forge her own path. Instead of working on films, she spent most of her free time creating graphic novels with her best friend, Shadow Warcloud.

Shadow was a demon-witch hybrid with an acerbic tongue and a heart of gold. They had met back in kindergarten and had been besties ever since. Their nickname in school had been Shadow and Light since Seneca's pale gray eyes and platinum blonde hair contrasted with her friend's black hair and eyes.

While she loved graphic design and drawing, her friend was a talented author who also liked to write romance novels. Even so, she committed herself to their shared projects with the same passion and dedication as Seneca.

Because the two of them were always together, their families had also grown close over the years. Their parents often had double-date nights, and Shadow's older brother, Thane, always treated Seneca like another sister.

Thane was a famous snowboarder who won the gold in the last Olympics after a spectacular run. When he wasn't busy practicing and traveling around the world, he could usually be found in his parents' garage tinkering on one of his cars or doing some other extreme sport. He was the inspiration for one of Seneca and Shadow's earlier graphic novels, and he got a kick out of telling his fans about it whenever he had the chance to brag.

Although their parents wanted to set them up with an agent to help them get a publishing deal, Seneca and Shadow had decided to self-publish in order to retain creative control of their work. It had taken some effort to build a following, but the supporters of their work had steadily grown into a flourishing fanbase.

Their popularity exploded after they published a new novel about a kickass female demon hybrid who hunted other demons that preyed on humans. While they tried to stay away from the true lore of the supernatural community, there was some overlap

that couldn't be avoided. They hadn't worried too much about that since they embellished the hell out of the fictional setting and characters they had created to make sure no one would mistake their stories as being true.

They hadn't expected the story to do so well but were thrilled when fans begged for more. Because of that, they ended up making it into a series instead of a single title. As their sales grew with each new release, they realized they had the start of a lucrative, full-time career.

Seneca wanted to spend all her time working on their graphic novels, but she agreed to finish college first since that was her parent's greatest wish. Neither of them had gotten a college degree, so they wanted her to be the first in their family to do so.

Even though she earned decent grades, she hated school. She had a hard time focusing and usually ended up drawing or writing bits of storyline on scraps of paper or her tablet instead of paying attention in class. Luckily, she did well enough on the exams to pass her classes, and that was all she needed.

She ended up attending Trifecta University since that was where Shadow and some of their friends had decided to go. Trifecta University was a top-tier school for both supernatural and human students, and lucky for her, they had an excellent art program. Although she couldn't attend the magical academy hidden within the university since she didn't have the magical abilities to qualify, she was able to hang out with her friends during their regular classes and free time.

While both of her parents had magic, Seneca had never experienced so much as a magical blip since she was born. It was disappointing, but there wasn't much she could do about it. Since she had always considered herself essentially human, she didn't miss what she'd never had.

Magic was more of an abstract wish than an actual reality for her.

Most of the people she hung out with were supernaturals, but they never made her feel like she didn't fit in. At least her core group of friends didn't. Of course, there were a few assholes who made fun of her.

Not having magic made her a target.

She also got mocked for her eclectic taste in fashion, which was a combination of goth and old Hollywood. People accused her of trying to act like a witch, even though she didn't have any magic. The irony of that was all the powerful witches she knew looked like totally normal humans most of the time.

While her friends usually shut the bullies up pretty damn quick, sometimes they were unavoidable. She'd been subject to several spells, charms, and hexes over the years, though most of those had been pretty harmless. It was difficult being part of the supernatural community when she didn't really belong, but that was simply a reality she had accepted.

It wasn't until the day her parents died in a horrible accident on her twenty-first birthday that her powers finally manifested. She'd made a surprise visit home to see them but had discovered they were spending the weekend scouting a new location for their latest film project. Instead of staying where they were, her parents had immediately changed their plans and caught a flight home to celebrate her birthday with her.

That had ended up being a fatal mistake.

During their flight back, they encountered a storm that turned out to be far more intense than originally predicted. Seneca had been on her way to the airport to pick them up when she'd been notified about the plane crash. She didn't remember driving off the road or tumbling down a steep embankment but had woken up when the rain started flooding into her damaged car.

At first, she hadn't been able to figure out how she had survived. The rescue team that had found her on their way to another accident had called it a miracle, but she knew better. The situation had been impossible to escape without some sort of magical intervention.

The trauma of losing her parents had triggered her awakening, allowing her to live through what should have been a fatal accident. She had walked away with barely a scratch, but she would have gladly traded places with her parents if it had meant they could have lived.

Losing them was a hell of a price to pay to finally come into her magic. Instead of being something to celebrate, it had marked the beginning of the end for her.

Besides dealing with the death of her parents, she also lost several friends that same night. Shadow had flown home with her that weekend. She'd claimed she wanted to visit her own parents, but the truth was she had arranged a surprise birthday party for Seneca at an exclusive club located in a private mansion on the outskirts of town.

The Manor had ended up being directly in the path of a devastating mudslide that had been triggered by a flash flood caused by the raging storm. Since the venue had been filled with a combination of supernaturals and humans, those with magic had done their best to save people and counter the flood. Unfortunately, the mudslide had hit so fast that there hadn't been much of a warning before disaster struck.

The chaos might have been caused by an act of nature, but Seneca still felt responsible for her best friend's death. If she hadn't gone home that weekend, Shadow could have remained safe at school. Their other friends wouldn't have been at the club that night either. Knowing that everyone she loved would still be alive if she'd made a different choice had wrecked her.

For months after the accident, she had lived in a haze of guilt and grief. She stopped

going to school and barricaded herself in the house where she was surrounded by the memories of her parents.

When her mother's sister, Clara, and her husband, Mark, had shown up, she hadn't protested them staying at the house with her. Even though she had never been close to them, they were the only family she had left.

Initially, she'd been grateful to have them around. They made sure she ate and took care of running the house since she was barely able to function. But before she knew it, they had completely taken over. She hadn't realized what they were doing until she'd woken up one day and barely recognized her beloved home. Almost every trace of her parents had been removed from the house, and the warm, cheerful atmosphere had been altered into a cold, ostentatious showpiece.

Looking back, she should have put a stop to things then and there. Unfortunately, she hadn't. She had trusted them, and that had allowed them to manipulate her into doing exactly what they wanted.

Despite experiencing her awakening, Seneca hesitated to use her magic. She knew it didn't make much sense, but she couldn't help blaming her powers for what had happened the day her parents died. Logically, she understood she hadn't been the cause of what had happened that night. However, she wouldn't have survived if her magic hadn't manifested, and the guilt she felt made it impossible to truly enjoy finally becoming a real witch.

When she hadn't shown any interest in learning how to use her magic, Clara and Mark had insisted on teaching her some of the basics. She had initially rebuffed their attempts but had finally agreed when they pointed out she could inadvertently hurt someone with her magic if she wasn't careful.

She hadn't known it at the time, but their training had been an excuse to try to figure

out exactly how she had survived. They had been certain something magical had saved her, but they didn't actually want her to learn how to use her magic. If she grew to be too powerful, she wouldn't have been as easy to control.

She had been curious enough to comply with their various tests. During training, a spell had backfired, but instead of hurting her, it had somehow been deflected before any of them could react. She had always believed that she didn't have magical abilities, but the truth was magic had been influencing her life all along.

She just hadn't realized it at the time.

Her ability wasn't exactly something that was easy to figure out. It wasn't an overt power, like controlling fire or the wind. It wasn't even something tangible, like being able to make it rain.

Seneca had literally been born lucky.

If she wanted to accomplish something, she managed to do so with minimal effort. In school, tests had always been easy for her, even if she had barely paid attention in class. She always thought she had a good memory, but it was more than that. She'd also never taken more than a cursory art lesson, but she had somehow figured out exactly how to draw the images she wanted to create for her graphic novels.

When it came to physical injuries, she had miraculously avoided being hurt in every sport she had ever played. Sure, she had gotten bloody and bruised a few times, but she had somehow evaded suffering any major damage.

Looking back, she could see that her luck had saved her from countless mishaps over the years. She'd always trusted that sinking feeling in her gut that told her not to walk down a certain street or to turn right when she was supposed to go left, but she had always considered it basic intuition. Her lucky magic had probably saved her from

numerous dangerous situations, but she had been oblivious to it all.

To test her theory, she had put herself through several risky training exercises, which she easily passed. Her uncle even bought her a bunch of different scratch-and-win lottery tickets. When more than half of them were winners, they realized she really had been blessed with luck.

Because her ability seemed so peculiar, it wasn't easy to understand exactly how it worked. The best way to describe it was to imagine she had a magical lantern inside of herself that only lit up when there was enough power to turn it on. Once it was on, the light from the lantern made her one of the luckiest beings in the realm.

After doing more tests, they discovered that she could also give luck to someone else, albeit temporarily. Using the light from the lantern, she could produce a few drops of blood laced with golden light, which was essentially pure liquid luck. A single drop of her golden blood could grant someone luck for a limited amount of time, but there was a catch. The blood had to be given freely, and it wasn't something that she could produce that often.

When she kept the luck for herself, it lasted a lot longer than if she gave it to someone else. Because of that, she could have spent every day living a magically lucky life. On the flip side, once she started giving out her golden blood, it left her feeling weak and drained of energy until her inner light could be replenished.

It almost felt like a punishment for sharing.

With enough time and rest, she was able to fully recover, but there were other dangers that came with being able to grant luck to people. At the time, she hadn't been worried about any of that because she had trusted her aunt and uncle to keep her secret. Unfortunately, that had been a mistake since their greed had outweighed any familial bond they shared.

Without her knowledge, they had begun to sell her blood using the supernatural black market. When she discovered what they were doing, she'd been furious. They had tried to reassure her that they had mixed her blood into magical pills they created so no one knew the real source, but that hadn't been enough for her. She wanted them to stop, but they had gotten used to the benefits her luck had given them and had no intention of stopping.

The pills diluted the magical luck, so it only lasted for a few hours, but that was more than enough for the people who wanted to purchase them. They were in high demand, but her aunt and uncle needed her compliance to produce their product. At first, they tried to negotiate with her to help them since her blood had to be given willingly. They pleaded with her and offered a share of the money from the magical pills, but the whole concept disgusted her, so she refused.

Even when they accused her of being selfish for hoarding her luck, she hadn't been swayed. It was her gift, which meant it was her right to determine how it was used. That didn't matter to them, though.

Seneca found herself being held captive in the home she had once loved. Clara and Mark had even used her own blood against her in the magical wards that kept her locked inside the house. They had held her prisoner in a dark room and starved her until she had finally given in. She hated to admit it, but she'd wanted to give up. To let the grief and despair over what her life had become take over, but survival instinct was a tricky reflex to deny.

She wanted to live and had hung onto the hope that she could one day free herself from the hell she was living in.

That, and she hadn't wanted to let them win.

In exchange for doing what they wanted, they had let her move back into her own

bedroom. She was given small liberties like food she liked or access to streaming movies and TV shows to help pass the time, but those little perks weren't enough to make her forgive them. Nor did it deter her from continuing to try to escape.

She tried to figure a way out, but her limited magical skills weren't enough to break through the strong wards keeping her locked in. Because she had isolated herself from the world during her grief, she lost contact with all of her remaining friends, and she had no other family she could reach out to.

That meant she couldn't count on anyone coming to save her.

Recently, her thoughts had started taking a much darker turn. She had never been a violent person or very vindictive. Even so, she understood that everyone had a breaking point under the right circumstances, and she'd definitely reached hers. Since they never gave her time to fully recover between transfusions, there was little she could do to fight back physically, but she could use stealth and strategy. She swore she would do whatever it took to stop them, even if it meant her death.

A few days ago, she'd gotten that strange feeling in her gut when her aunt and uncle had mentioned a new client they were trying to get close to. Always social climbers, they could never pass up the opportunity to kiss up to famous humans or supernaturals. They had often tagged along with Ethan and Claudia when they went to Hollywood parties and had even begged to go to a few award shows with them.

While Clara had more magical abilities than Seneca's mother, she had always been envious of her sister's success within the entertainment industry. To an outsider, it could have been considered nothing more than harmless sibling rivalry, but the reality was far more sinister than that.

There was no way Clara could do what she'd done if she truly loved her sister and, by extension, her niece. Her yearning for fame was an addiction that would never be

sated, and Mark enabled her bad behavior with his own self-indulgence and desperate desire for wealth and adoration.

Now, on her twenty-second birthday, it seemed like Seneca was finally going to end up paying the ultimate price for their greed.

The sound of the door opening immediately caught her attention. She wasn't able to move her head, but she did manage to glance toward the doorway to see a tall woman enter the room.

The woman was wearing a bright yellow sundress the color of cheerful daffodils and white heels that added a few inches to her already impressive height. Her short blonde bob was several shades darker than Seneca's own long hair, and it was styled into curls that bounced as she moved. Her slick red lips were curved into a deceptively pleasant smile, and the color matched the tips of her pointed fingernails.

"Good, you're awake." The woman clapped her hands together like an excited child, her long nails clacking together in an awful sound. "I'm sure you have a lot of questions, but first, let me introduce myself since we will be spending a lot of time together from now on."

It took a lot of effort, but Seneca managed to wheeze out two words that came straight from the depths of her soul. "Fuck...you."

The woman tsked, and she wagged a finger as she came closer. "Now, now. Don't be rude. My name is Whitley Dalkis, a witch of considerable spellcasting talent, and I will be hosting you for the foreseeable future. Of course, I already know who you are, Miss Lucky Charm. In fact, you've gotten to be quite famous within my circle of acquaintances."

That sent a shiver of fear racing down Seneca's spine.

“Well, at least your ability has,” Whitley amended with a chuckle. “Thankfully, I’m the only one who figured out the luck is coming from you. Trust me when I say you should be very glad about that.”

Whitley strolled over to the metal cart next to the medical bed and lifted a frilly white apron that had been hanging on the side. She put the apron on over her pretty dress, making her look like a perfectly styled housewife from a throwback era, ready to bake a pie, rather than a crazy witch intent on bleeding her dry.

She should have seemed out of place standing in the middle of the dungeon, but she seemed completely at ease in the dark, ominous space. The way she slipped on a pair of gloves before efficiently changing out the full blood bag for an empty one made it obvious it wasn’t her first time doing so. She had to have some medical training to be so proficient, or she’d had a lot of practice on other victims.

Either way, it was disturbing watching her work.

After removing her gloves, Whitley rolled a stool over and took a seat next to the bed. She smoothed her skirt down as she crossed her legs. “As you probably guessed, I previously purchased luck pills from your aunt. I was surprised by how well it worked, but it wasn’t difficult to decipher that magical blood was what actually made the pills so powerful. I am very good at mixing spellwork and chemistry. Much better than Clara, so I know I can make better pills if I tweak the formula using a stronger spell.”

Whitley reached out and stroked Seneca’s bangs back in an almost loving gesture. She wanted to cringe away but couldn’t move no matter how hard she tried.

“It’s useless to fight. There was a paralytic mixed in with the sedative you were given to get you here that hasn’t worn off yet. This room is also warded against magic, so there is no chance for you to escape. But don’t worry, you won’t have to stay down

here for long if you behave. All you have to do is cooperate with me, and you can take your rightful place along with my other...helpers.”

Fucking hell, that meant this crazy witch had done this to others.

“I run a very lucrative business dealing in the magical black market. While some people fear dark magic, certain forbidden spells, hexes, and charms are in high demand. You’ll see that I can make your life far more comfortable than what you previously had with your aunt and uncle.”

The mention of Clara and Mark had Seneca wondering what had happened to them. For all she knew, they had probably sold her to Whitley for an exorbitant fee and were now on a cruise sailing around the Mediterranean.

“Oh, and I did you a huge favor by getting rid of your aunt and uncle for you. Really, you should be thanking me.”

Seneca wished she had the energy to curse the crazy witch out for that.

Thank her? Maybe if she wasn’t being bled dry in a freaking dungeon.

Whitley pouted and leaned forward slightly to whisper conspiratorially. “They weren’t very nice. But at least they are contributing to the ecosystem now. They are making excellent compost for the flowers in my garden. I even planted some new lilacs in honor of their contribution.”

Well, that answered that question.

As much as Seneca hated her aunt and uncle for what they had done to her, the way they had ended up still seemed harsh. No one wanted to end up being buried in someone’s freaking backyard.

Whitley wasn't just a power-hungry dark witch.

She was a fucking murderous psycho.

"Now, I should get going. Oops, I almost forgot this." She giggled as she stood up and lifted the bag of blood to take with her. "I have a lunch date with some friends, then I plan to spend some time in my lab. Don't worry, I will be back down to check on you again in a little while. Rest well, my little lucky charm."

As she sauntered out of the room, Seneca let out a relieved sigh. By the time Whitley checked on her later, she would already be gone. That thought should have scared the shit out of her, but she was too damn tired to worry about much at the moment.

Normally, she might have survived, but she had given Clara and Mark some of her blood the day before and hadn't been able to recover yet. What her aunt and uncle had done to her was horrible, but at least they had taken the secret of her golden blood with them to the grave. If the blood wasn't given freely, it wouldn't work. That didn't make up for everything they had done, but it ensured the crazy witch's plan would never succeed.

If Seneca couldn't escape, at least she got to have a final fuck you .

Closing her eyes, she lost herself in the weightless sensation that swept through her. It wouldn't be long now, and she had finally accepted that escape was impossible. To pass the time, she tried replaying her favorite memories of being with her parents and best friend in her head. Soon she would be reunited with them, and that gave her great comfort.

If she had time, she would replay every minute she had spent with them in her mind. But now, even her most cherished memories were drifting away like trails of smoke, carried away by the wind until nothing remained.

She had finally reached her end.

Or so she believed.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Death was a natural equalizer, but that didn't mean it was always fair.

Seneca had been a pretty decent person while she'd been alive. She tried to live a relatively good life. She was a loving daughter and a loyal friend and had never intentionally hurt anyone or been a bully.

While shewasn't a saint, she was far from a sinner. Because of that, she believed she would end up somewhere benign, like strolling through a field of flowers or floating on a cloud while she waited to be accepted through the golden gates that lead to whatever waited in the afterlife.

Clearly, she had been way off in her estimation of what happened after death.

She'd never believed things just ended after someone died. There had to be a reason there were so many stories about the afterlife and reincarnation for all of it to be false.

She just hadn't expected to wake up in hell.

The first thing she saw when she opened her eyes was a light so bright her eyes felt singed. The fire was so hot she was surprised she hadn't been incinerated already. She tried to back away from the heat but couldn't seem to move her body. That made panic surge through her, but it didn't last long. She relaxed again when the raging flamesdimmed,makingit more tolerable to be around.

Shelet out a relieved sigh once she realized she wasn't about to be cremated. Still, it took several more seconds tofigure outthat she was staring into an enormous stone fireplace where there was a roaring fire made of strange silver, gold, and black

flames.

Since her eyes seemed to be the only thing she was able to move, she tried to glance at as much of her surroundings as she could to figure out where she was. The only thing she could tell was that she was in a massive room that was completely unfamiliar to her. Although it looked like she was in the great hall of some medieval castle found somewhere in Europe, the strange flames made it clear she was somewhere magical.

Since waking up in strange places was apparently starting to be her thing, she was just grateful it wasn't another dungeon. She was also reassured when she didn't see any medical equipment within the vicinity. Relief flooded through her when she was finally able to move her head a little, but that didn't last long.

When she glanced down, she blinked in shock when she didn't see her own legs. Her legs had vanished, and in their place was a tiny pair of black and white paws.

What the fuck was going on?

Had that crazy witch saved her before she died and cast some sort of strange spell on her to make it easier to keep her locked up? Or had Seneca somehow been turned into a shifter?

"Nope. You really are dead, but that's only temporary."

The deep voice made her freeze in fear.

Well, considering the fact she still couldn't move, being frozen in place was sort of her default at the moment. Her mind was racing, though. That was to be expected considering she had just fucking died.

She gasped when an unseen force suddenly lifted her into the air, and she was spun so

her back was to the large fireplace. She tried to let out a gasp, but the sound came out more like a screeching meow. Hearing that noise coming from herself was as much of a shock as seeing four terrifying supernaturals staring down at her.

The two stunning couples in front of her were sitting on a pair of long, black leather couches that were placed in a V formation in front of the fireplace. The male sitting closest to her had to be one of the most menacing creatures she had ever seen. Not only was he freaking huge, his glowing eyes were a strange mix of black, silver, and gold.

He was dressed in a black shirt and matching pants, which was a stark contrast to his long silver hair. His bronzed skin shimmered with a soft glow that had nothing to do with the firelight, and his hands looked large enough to crush skulls. By his appearance, Seneca might have thought he was some sort of angel, but the dark, dangerous vibes radiating off him made him seem more like a demon.

The gorgeous female cuddled up against him was petite compared to his massive size, but she was as intimidating as he was, just in a different way. Her long pink and silver hair fell in soft curls to her waist, and her glowing bronze eyes had tiny specks of silver and black in them that made them look like stars. She might have been pretty and polished, but her oversized purple sweatshirt with a unicorn shitting sparkles on the front and pink leggings covered with tiny strawberries sort of skewed her powerful image.

On the other sofa, a handsome male with glowing silver eyes and black hair was holding the hand of a beautiful female with long shimmering bronze hair and glowing gold eyes. They were both wearing dark jeans and T-shirts under matching black leather jackets, making them look like typical humans when they were far from it.

Seneca thought the second couple looked slightly familiar but couldn't recall where they would have met since she would have surely remembered someone as powerful as they were. She'd been around formidable supernaturals before, but the power

radiating off them was nothing compared to the four beings sitting before her.

Just being in their presence made her want to flee as far away as possible.

She immediately realized how silly that was. Attempting to run would do no damn good against supernaturals who could teleport. Besides, she couldn't do much but blink at the moment anyway. If they had wanted to hurt her, they could have done so before she even knew what hit her.

Realizing that allowed her to push her fear aside.

There was no point in worrying about something that she had no hope of stopping or controlling. That would just be wasted energy. Instead, she focused on her curiosity. The powerful beings had obviously brought her there for a reason, and she wanted to know what it was.

The male with silver hair cocked his head to the side and frowned. "You are taking all of this better than we expected."

She wasn't sure how accurate that was, considering she was still pretty freaked out and had no clue what was actually going on. The only thing she was sure of was that she was dead and had somehow turned into an animal. Perhaps practically growing up in a funhouse had prepared her to take just about everything in stride.

She was afraid, rightly so, but she didn't react to scary situations like most people.

"That makes sense. Since you are technically just a soul now that you're dead, I had to borrow a body to stick you in so you can communicate with us. So, you are temporarily a cat."

He'd stuck her soul in a cat?

She wasn't sure if she felt offended or fascinated by that, then decided it was a mixture of both. At least the paws made sense now.

“We tried to put you in our hellhound first, but Snix really didn't like that. So, we tried again with our kitten, Oreo. We found her abandoned in the Human Realm not too long ago. She's just a regular cat and this type of magic is pretty intense, so that seems to be leading to some mobility issues. That's why you can't move right now.”

That sounded completely insane, but it had obviously worked. Sort of. She wasn't sure exactly how she was supposed to communicate with them since she was stuffed in an animal, though. She was still trying to accept that when the rest of what he'd said sank in. She hadn't even known hellhounds were real, but she imagined being inside one—even for a few seconds—wouldn't have been very pleasant.

“We can hear everything you are thinking, so communicating shouldn't be a problem.”

Seneca mentally cringed. Well, fuck. Knowing these beings had access to every thought in her head was slightly terrifying, not to mention embarrassing as hell. She was concerned she was going to inadvertently offend someone since she tended to get snarky and curse a lot when she was scared or nervous.

“Don't worry about that. Trust me, I was a human witch with very little connection to the supernatural community before I discovered I was mated to the big guy here, so I understand how overwhelming this shit can get. My name is Devon, and this is my mate, Braxton, the God of Souls. And that is Autumn, the Goddess of Revenge, and her mate, Kingston, a member of the Supernatural Council. Welcome to the Hell Realm.”

Hearing that made Seneca want to cry.

Not because she was upset she had ended up in Hell. If that was where the powers that be had determined she belonged, she couldn't really do anything about it. What made her immensely sad was the thought of never seeing her mother and father again since she had no doubt both of them had ended up in a better place.

"It's not like that," Devon assured. "Actually, all souls end up in the Hell Realm after they die. It's why this place used to be called the Realm of Souls. It just got renamed Hell by some power-hungry gods who...never mind. We can discuss all of that some other time. Right now, all you need to know is you are not in Hell because you did something wrong. I promise."

Obviously, there was a lot she needed to learn about the supernatural community. So, Hell wasn't the scary place it was rumored to be, and gods liked to hang out in casual wear instead of crowns and flowing robes. Good to know. She wondered if all souls got an audience with the God of Souls and his pals when they died, or if she was some sort of special case.

"Fuck, no," Braxton responded with a snort of derision. "If that happened, I would never get any sleep. Then, I would just want to destroy everyone, and no one would ever get reincarnated."

Since that was a terrifying thought, Seneca had no idea how to respond to that. Not wanting to think something that might offend her powerful hosts, she focused on trying to move one of her front paws. It was frustrating since she still couldn't move at all. She was glad she wasn't all the way dead, but she still wasn't quite sure why they had stuffed her soul into a cat instead of letting her go about her afterlife.

Kingston's lips quirked up in a smirk. "I still can't believe the big bad son of Lucifer has a cute little kitten as a familiar."

Braxton shot him a vicious glare. "Don't think I can't kill you in my own living

room. I'm the God of freaking Souls, after all. I can rip yours right out of your body."

Kingston just laughed in response.

"Please, don't," Autumn pleaded, sounding more amused than worried. "I really like his soul right where it is."

"Aww, thanks, sweetheart."

"It's not like I even wanted a damn familiar," Braxton grumbled. "I mean, seriously. What other god has a fucking familiar?"

"Sapphire and Raiden have their dragons," Devon pointed out. "Oh, and then there is your dad."

"He doesn't count. His psycho ass has an army of hellhounds, not familiars."

Autumn raised her hand. "I want one."

"You can have mine," Braxton offered.

Devon playfully slapped his arm. "Don't say that. You'll hurt Oreo's feelings."

"She's a damn cat."

"So? Animals have feelings, too. Oreo is adorable, and you love her. Admit it," Devon demanded, poking her finger against Braxton's chest. "You wouldn't have brought her home otherwise."

"We brought her home because you wanted to," Braxton muttered.

“You decided to keep her as soon as she sat on your foot,” Devon countered. “I know since I’m in your head, mate. You love her.”

Braxton kissed his mate’s forehead. “I love you.”

“Maybe we should pop over to Familiar Field at Aegis Academy to see if you connect with any animals that show up,” Kingston suggested to Autumn. “What type of familiar do you want? A cat? A rabbit?”

“Actually, I would love a hellhound.”

He blanched a bit. “Hellhounds aren’t normal animals, sweetheart. They are unstoppable beasts created from devil fire and dark magic.”

“Which makes them even cooler.”

“What’s wrong with hellhounds?” Devon asked. “I love mine. Snix is the best.”

As if sensing its master talking about him, a small brown dog appeared on Devon’s lap in a puff of dark smoke. His stubby tail wagged happily as she stroked him and kissed his head in greeting. When he turned, Seneca saw that he had glowing red eyes and elongated canine teeth that clearly confirmed he was not a normal animal.

After getting showered with affection by Devon, the hellhound disappeared in another puff of smoke. Then, to her utter shock, he reappeared right in front of Seneca. Only this time, he was twice as large as he had been a few seconds ago.

As he stalked closer, Seneca prayed that the hellhound didn’t see her as a potential food source. To her surprise, instead of biting her, the hellhound licked her cheek with its long tongue before lying down and curling its large body around her. Well, the cat, not her. She mentally shuddered as the big beast’s eyes closed and he let out a

snort of smoke from his nostrils as he fell asleep.

This really was turning out to be the strangest day.

She felt an odd sensation, like something was trying to push and pull her at the same time. Even though she couldn't move, she found herself curling up against the scary hellhound. Her head felt like it was going to explode, and her ears were going to pop from extreme pressure, then the impression slowly dissipated.

"Uh oh," Devon groaned. "We put Oreo to sleep while your soul is inside of her, but I think she is trying to wake up. She and Snix like to nap together in front of the fireplace, and I think she senses his presence."

"Then we better get to the point," Braxton announced. "I'm not sure how long we can keep her soul inside the cat before they start to fight one another for dominance."

That did not sound good.

"Okay, shit. Now, I feel pressured. Let me give you a quick recap. The Realm of Souls, or the Hell Realm, isn't the horrible place that people think it is. All of the souls within the six realms end up here to go through a reprocessing cycle. While some souls are immediately reborn, others are punished for what they have done in their previous life," Devon explained.

"And if a soul is really evil, they are immediately destroyed," Braxton added.

Devon nodded. "Right, like serial killers. Other souls have to reach a certain level of purity before they can move on to whatever stage is next. We've streamlined the sorting process, but we noticed something strange the other day that we haven't seen before. That brings us to how you ended up here."

“Souls usually appear in the Hell Realm as blue orbs of light, but yours was pulsing red,” Braxton said. “When I pulled you out of the river and reviewed your life, I immediately sensed you weren’t meant to die. At least, not yet.”

What the hell did that mean?

“It means, you have a chance for a redo,” Devon exclaimed. “You have the opportunity to go back and fix your life.”

“One,” Braxton repeated. “One chance only. If you fuck up and fail, you will end up back here to be recycled with the rest of the souls.”

“Around the same time Brax was pulling you out of the River of Souls, we also felt a disturbance in the force,” Kingston interjected. “Autumn has never been pulled all the way to another realm for a revenge case, so this was completely new for us.”

Seneca appreciated the movie reference, but she didn’t understand the rest of what he’d said.

“As the new Goddess of Revenge, I get pulled towards individuals who deserve revenge. Usually, I have to be at least within a certain proximity to a person, but I guess that is changing. Or maybe you are just a special case. This is my first time dealing with someone who is already dead so I’m not exactly sure how this is supposed to work,” Autumn admitted.

“Not being sure how shit works is kind of normal around here,” Braxton said dryly. “It’s not like this type of magic comes with instruction manuals.”

“I’ve basically been winging it since I was given my powers,” Autumn admitted. “But after reviewing your life, I know you definitely qualify for a chance to get revenge on those who wronged you. We are pretty confident that the four of us can

send you back. I know it sounds crazy, but I guess this is a new aspect of our powers we haven't tapped into yet."

"Yeah, I think we can do it, but we don't know what you need to accomplish to be allowed to stay in the new timeline." Braxton paused, then added, "We aren't sure how far back you will get sent either. It could be a few days, weeks, or hell, even years."

Hearing that made hope spring to life inside Seneca. The idea of reliving her entire life from birth was rather daunting, but if she got sent back far enough to save her parents and friends, that would be a gift beyond measure.

"We haven't been gods for very long, so if you return to a time before any of us have met, we won't be able to help you," Devon pointed out.

Autumn raised her hand again. "I will definitely think you are crazy if you contact me pre-godhood since I barely had enough magic to be considered a witch back then."

"You can try to contact me for help at the firehouse near Trifecta University. But before that, I was in the Supernatural Prison so I won't be much help," Kingston explained.

Recognition snapped into place.

Seneca might not have officially met Kingston, but she had seen him before. She had also heard about him since she and Shadow had been friends with Thayer Katz, a tiger shifter-fairy hybrid who was also a firefighter at the station close to the university.

Kingston grinned. "You're friends with Thayer? Feel free to reach out to us when you go back, then. I still might think you are crazy if you tell me this story, but I'll still try

to help. I'm sure Thayer will, too. He loves shit like this."

"I probably won't help you." Braxton sighed when Devon elbowed him in the side. "What? I'm just being honest. You remember what I was like before I met you, mate. I wasn't exactly very personable."

Devon flashed him a grin. "Like you are now?"

He laughed. "I'm better...because of you." He sighed again as he focused back on Seneca. "If you really get stuck, you can try to contact me. Tell me that you've been here at Guardian's Gate. No, that won't help. Better yet, tell me you know who my mate is. That should catch my attention long enough to listen to you."

"Be careful about that," Autumn warned. "We have to be cautious about changing too many things in the past. Whatever you do could create a paradox that could alter the future. What if you don't become the God of Souls? Or if you don't end up meeting Devon?"

"Fuck that. Don't contact us," Braxton ordered.

Devon sighed. "I think she just means Seneca has to be careful about sharing information about the future."

"I won't risk you," Braxton growled. "We're giving her the chance to be reborn, but she has to figure out how to fix her own life in order to remain in the new timeline."

"Unfortunately, I think he is right. Revenge is a tricky business and should remain personal," Autumn said. "Just focus on what you want to change in your own life."

"Don't go back and tell too many people what happened or try to interfere in events that don't directly relate to you," Kingston emphasized. "Something like trying to

stop a war might seem like a good thing, but that could end up with disastrous results for too many other people.”

“It also might attract the attention of other gods. You do not want that to happen because most of them are raging assholes,” Braxton stressed.

Since that sounded rather ominous, Seneca would definitely heed their advice.

She still had dozens of questions, but before she could ask for more information from her godly hosts, she experienced that same perplexing sensation she had felt before. This time, it was way more intense, and the pressure continued to build until it became excruciating. The scream that tried to escape came out in a horrifying feline screech as her soul was forcibly expelled from the cat’s body.

Braxton surged to his feet. “Shit, if this is going to work, we need to send her back now. Brace yourself, Seneca. I don’t think this is going to be very pleasant.”

That turned out to be the understatement of the fucking century.

When the blast of powerful magic hit her full force, it completely stole her breath. Light engulfed her, only this time it felt like her entire essence was being scorched to ash. She had no body to burn, but the agony she felt was soul deep. The pain was all-consuming, like there was nothing else in the entire universe.

It seemed like it would last forever, then it suddenly stopped.

In the darkness that followed, she was left wondering if the magic had actually worked or if she had finally reached her end.

As consciousness faded, a faint glimmer of hope flickered in the distance. She was already dead, so she didn’t have much to worry about in that respect. Whether it be a

new beginning that awaited her or a chance at rebirth, she was ready for whatever came next.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Seneca woke gasping for breath as a loud crack of thunder rumbled in the distance.

Normally, she loved storms, but the sound had disturbed her enough to wake her. Sighing, she stared up at the familiar sight of the vaulted wooden ceiling of her bedroom in her parent's home. What had once been a comforting sight was now a slightly depressive one.

Since she had the entire third floor to herself, it was a massive space, but that didn't make it any less of a cage. The bedroom area was sectioned off from the rest of the room by an open bookshelf room divider instead of an actual wall. Her queen-sized bed was next to a small sitting area on one side of the room, while the other half had been converted into a workspace. There was a large desk and table where she worked on her various projects, and a telescope was set up in the corner for stargazing through the wide wall of windows.

She loved flooding the large space with the natural sunlight so there were only black lace curtains covering part of the wide windows. There was also a special window film on the top section of the glass that painted rainbows across the gray walls of her bedroom when the sunlight struck it.

Right now, the sky was overcast and gray, making it difficult to tell exactly what time it was. Although she had just woken up safely tucked under the dark purple comforter on her big, comfortable bed, she didn't feel rested. She struggled to grasp the remnants of the strange dream she'd just experienced, but it faded away before she could make sense of it. The only thing that remained was a sense of urgency that left her feeling anxious and unsettled.

Her mind still clouded with fatigue, she decided to go back to sleep. She never had much to do anyway so she figured she could just stay in bed. If her aunt or uncle needed her, they would pound on her door until she woke up. Glancing over at the clock, she frowned when she saw her phone on the nightstand next to the bed.

That wasn't right.

She hadn't had access to her cell phone in months.

Reaching out, she grabbed the phone off the wireless charger on her nightstand. Blinking in surprise, she shot up to a sitting position on the bed and stared down at the display in disbelief. According to the date, it was her birthday, but not the one she expected it to be.

She had just turned twenty-one...again.

The haze that had been clouding her mind began to lift, and her heart began to race. Like a shock to the system, she realized the strange dream she'd just experienced had been real. As absolutely batshit crazy as it seemed, it had truly happened.

Fucking hell, she really died.

Now that she was able to think clearly, the last year of her previous life flooded back. All the grief, heartache, rage, and despair she had experienced hit her full force. It felt like a fresh wound to her heart, and the weight of it made it difficult to breathe.

However, none of that had happened in the current timeline.

Reminding herself of that left her feeling confused and disoriented. Her mind tried to adjust and separate the present reality from what had happened before her death, but it all still felt like a dream. Despite her forced excursion to the Hell Realm, she had

managed to cheat death. And now, the gods had really sent her back into the past to the day that had started her downward spiral.

Being back was a blessing, but she still wasn't sure why she had been given the opportunity to live again and seek vengeance against those who had wronged her. Surely, there were other souls more deserving of a second chance at life.

Whatever the reason, she was damn grateful for it.

Seneca had never been a vindictive person, but the dark desire for retribution was an aching need she couldn't deny. She wanted revenge. Wanted glorious, blood-soaked vengeance for everything that had been done to her, but she couldn't do it alone. She would need help, but she had to be careful about who she recruited to assist her.

She tried her best to replay everything that had happened in the Hell Realm since her survival literally depended on it. The gods hadn't been particularly forthcoming about what she needed to do to remain in the current timeline, but they had made it clear she needed to be cautious about who she told about her situation. She also had to worry about what events she altered so she wouldn't cause some sort of cataclysmic paradox.

Besides that, she had to keep in mind there could be repercussions for her actions, especially since those who had wronged her hadn't technically done anything to her...yet. She couldn't walk up to Whitley Dalkis and stab her in the chest, no matter how much the crazy witch deserved it.

Seneca would end up in prison if she did that, which would be a total waste of her second chance at life. Needless to say, she really didn't want to die again either. Pushing those worries aside, she focused on the most pressing issue.

She needed to save the people she loved, starting with her parents.

If the timeline was accurate, last night she would have arrived home to discover her mother and father had been out. Thinking they were either on a date or working late at the film studio, she decided to wait until the morning to surprise them.

In her previous life, she had called them once she had woken up to tell them that she was home. Once she discovered they had flown to Canada for the weekend to scout out a site for their upcoming film project, she told them to stay where they were and enjoy themselves. Of course, they hadn't listened. Since it was a short flight, they immediately changed their plans to fly back to spend her birthday with her.

But they had never made it home.

She lifted her phone to call them. If she could tell anyone about her death experience, it would be her parents. Not only would they believe her strange story without hesitation, they would also have some pretty creative ideas about how to go about getting her revenge.

She lowered the phone again without placing the call when a foreboding sensation swept through her, telling her that it was a bad idea to contact them. Even if she told them what would happen, their concern for her might make them try to head home anyway. If they didn't fly, they could rent a car and try to drive. Although they weren't that far away, it would still be dangerous once the storm hit.

The best thing to do to keep them safe would be to have them stay where they were, so she would have to wait to tell them about her trip to the Hell Realm.

She glanced down at her phone when it pinged with an incoming text. She had already gotten several birthday messages from friends that she hadn't bothered to look at earlier. Tears stung her eyes when she saw her parents had just sent her a video message, and she eagerly pressed play.

Her mother beamed a smile at her. “Greetings to our darling birthday girl from Vancouver! Hope you are taking a break from studying to have some fun with your friends today.”

“Now that you’re finally legal, be careful heading out to the bars tonight with your friends. Make sure you guys don’t drink and drive,” her dad warned. “Isn’t there a free shuttle that runs from the university to the downtown area of Mystic? If you go bar hopping, just take the shuttle. And make sure someone watches your glass if you leave the table. There are too many assholes in the world. No, just get a new drink if you have to leave it unattended. It’s not worth the risk.”

“Good idea. Oh, and have one of your friends whip you up a hangover potion so you don’t get sick. We miss you and love you. Wish you were here with us! Dad and I have a break in our schedule next weekend, so we thought we would head down to visit you. We can have a belated birthday celebration then. Let us know if that works for you, okay?”

“Love you to Jupiter and beyond, baby! Happy Birthday!”

Her parents each held up one of their hands to form a heart with their fingers, and seeing it made Seneca’s own heart swell with love. She wanted to wrap her arms around them and hug them close, but seeing them happy, healthy, and alive was enough for the moment.

Wiping at the tears spilling down her cheeks like waterfalls, she quickly sent them back a dozen heart emojis, then confirmed they had a date for the following weekend. Even though she was glad they were safe, she couldn’t stop herself from telling them to be careful of the upcoming storm. She added a warning that one of her supernatural friends had told her it was supposed to be stronger than predicted to make sure they listened. When they sent back a text telling her they would make sure to stay at the hotel that evening, she sighed with relief.

One problem settled, now onto the next.

The sound of rain pinging against the windows made her glance outside. While it would continue to rain all afternoon, the worst part of the storm wouldn't hit until later that night. There was still a lot she needed to do before that. She had to save as many people as she could without altering too many things that might attract the wrong kind of attention.

It was a delicate balance, but at least she didn't have to do it alone.

Tapping her phone, she called to her best friend and cursed when it kept ringing until it went to voicemail. Knowing Shadow, she was still sleeping. Doing what any stalker bestie would do, she called over and over again until her friend finally answered.

"I swear to fuck there better be a good reason you are waking me up at this hour."

Seneca felt overwhelmed with joy at the sound of her best friend's irritated voice. She had missed Shadow, desperately so, and being able to speak to her again felt like she had really come home. She had to clear her throat before she could manage to speak.

"It's two in the afternoon."

"I was up late chatting with the fam. You know how it is." Shadow yawned. "Happy birthday, bestie. You spending the day with your parents?"

"Actually, no. They aren't home this weekend."

"Well, that sucks. Don't worry, we'll go out and celebrate tonight. Since you are finally legal, I'll take you to dinner at The Manor, then we can—"

"We won't have time for that. Listen, something pretty fucked up happened to me

and—” Unsure where to begin, she simply blurted out, “So, I died, or I will exactly one year from today. I got sent to the Hell Realm, where apparently all souls go after they die, but instead of being recycled or whatever, some gods I met gave me the chance to be reborn.”

There was a long pause. “Is this a storyline for a new novel? It sounds fucking fascinating and slightly unhinged. I love it.”

“Unfortunately, I’m dead serious. I really died. It actually happened. I went to Hell, but now, I’m back again.”

“I’m coming over.”

“Wait,” Seneca hurried to say. “Let me just give you the abridged version for now. Then, I’m going to need your help with some shit.”

Flopping back down on the bed, she laid out everything that had happened over the last year of her life as concisely as she could, ending with her trip to the Hell Realm and her conversation with the gods.

When she was finished, there was a long pause. Then, Shadow exploded into an excited outburst.

“That’s fucking bonkers! Were the gods hot? No, never mind. We can talk about that later. I’m totally down to help you get revenge against your asshole relatives and that fucking bitch of a witch, but I guess that part has to wait. Right now, we just have to focus on not dying. So, me, your parents, and most of our friends are wiped out by the storm? How exactly do we stop that? What do you need me to do?”

Seneca swallowed hard as emotions welled up inside of her. Shadow was a ride-or-die friend, and she was so grateful her rebirth had given the people she loved most a

second chance at life as well.

“I don’t think we can stop the storm. That might fall under the do not fuck with anything that might put us on the gods’ radar type of shit. However, we should be able to decrease the damage it causes. Leave that part to me. What I need you to do is go find your brother.”

“Why? What’s wrong with Thane? Oh, fuck. Does he fucking die tonight too?”

Seneca could tell her friend was close to reaching her breaking point by the number of “fucks” she interjected into the conversation. In order to prevent her from reaching critical mass, she hurried to explain.

“No, but he gets injured pretty badly, and that ends his snowboarding career. He is training up on the mountain today. They thought they could avoid the rain, but the storm was larger than anyone predicted. Once it hits, they stop to help some people on their way home, and Thane ends up getting hurt in an accident. I’m not exactly sure what happened, but there were rumors that someone in his group caused the accident, so you have to warn him to be careful.”

“Don’t worry, no one is going to hurt my brother. Dad can do a locator spell, and I’ll drag my mom with me to go get Thane.”

Although Shadow could teleport, it was still difficult for her to visit places she’d never been before. Since her mom was a powerful demon, Seneca felt relieved that she would be accompanying her.

“Once we’ve collected Thane, we can—”

“Contact everyone you invited to my surprise party tonight and tell them to stay the fuck home.”

“You know about that? Duh. Of course, you know about the party since you’ve experienced this day before. Okay, I’ll contact everyone. Should I warn them about the flood or is that too risky?”

“I think that would be okay. As long as you don’t tell them you got the info from a dead girl.”

Shadow snorted. “God, that shouldn’t be funny, but—”

“It is.”

“Yeah, it really is. But I don’t want people thinking I developed the ability to speak to ghosts or something like that. People already think I’m weird enough. I can meet up with you after—”

“No, I need you to stay home tonight. Find your brother, then go home. I wouldn’t be able to handle it if something happened to you again,” Seneca said honestly. “Stay home and keep your parents and brother there with you. That way, I won’t have to worry about any of you. Please. Just...do this for me. Consider it my birthday present.”

“That was fucking tricky of you. Fine. But what about you? What are you going to be doing?”

“I’m going to head to The Manor to warn them about the mudslide and try to convince Arson to weaken the storm a bit,” she said, mentioning the owner of the private club.

As a dark angel, Arson Altera was probably the most powerful supernatural who lived in the area. While there were many people who feared him, he was a close friend of Shadow’s family. Through that connection, Seneca had gotten to know him

as well. Calling him wasn't an option since The Manor was laced with strong magical wards. Technology and magic didn't mix well, so phones never worked inside the private club, and he rarely ever left the grounds.

"I could teleport over there and warn him for you," Shadow offered.

She considered that for a few seconds. That would make her life a whole lot easier, but ultimately, she decided against it. "I don't know how to explain it, but I feel like I need to speak to him."

"Did you get a vibe? Is this your luck magic? How is this possible if you haven't gone through your awakening yet?"

That question made her gasp.

Scrambling off the bed, her bare feet slapped against the hardwood floor as she raced toward the bathroom. Turning on the light, she ignored the bright yellow melting smiley face printed on the oversized gray T-shirt that she'd slept in and focused on her own reflection.

Her platinum blonde hair was back to being shoulder length instead of the long, unkempt mess it had been when she'd died, and there were dark circles under her gray eyes. Added to that, her skin had a healthy glow from the hikes she and her friends liked to go on during study breaks instead of the pale, shallow appearance she'd had before her death from lack of sunlight.

After her awakening during her previous life, a tiny birthmark in the shape of a star appeared on the left side of her neck right below her ear. She hadn't realized it at the time, but the mark was like a physical reminder of the luck she had stored inside of herself.

Sure enough, the star birthmark was there.

The mark was small enough to be overlooked by most people, but its significance was immeasurable. Closing her eyes, she sought out the magical lantern she used to visualize her luck and found it burning bright.

That confirmed she had been sent back with her magic intact.

Relief flooded her. This time, there would be no need to experience a traumatic event to force her awakening. She had her magic and was armed with the basic knowledge she had learned during her previous life. Now, it was time to truly embrace her destiny as the lucky star she was always meant to be.

“Are you okay? What the fuck is going on?”

“My magic is awake already. I’m not sure how, but...”

“Score. Maybe the gods took pity on you and didn’t want to send you back without your magic? Or perhaps it’s a perk of surviving death?”

Seneca had no idea. “Could be. I seemed to be a test case for this rebirth thing, so I don’t think they really knew what they were doing when they sent me back.”

“Right. Well, having your magic is still a good thing. I’ll go wake my parents up and head out to track down my brother now. I’ll call you when—shit, you won’t be able to get my texts if you are at The Manor due to all of the protection wards. Fuck it, I’ll text you with updates anyway. You do the same and let me know if you need me.”

“Will do. Love you, Shadow.”

“Love you too, birthday girl. Don’t die...again.”

She snorted at that. “Same.”

Ending the call, Seneca set the phone down on the counter. She had to get going, but she really needed to wash the lingering memories of death off first. After taking care of necessities, she stripped down and got into the shower. As she stood under the flood of hot water, she tried to plan out everything she needed to accomplish. Luckily, she had hours before the storm would start to increase in power, so taking a few minutes to indulge in a hot shower wouldn't make much difference.

After she was done, she made her way into the huge walk-in closet that had once been another bedroom. A shiver raced down her spine as she entered the enclosed space. In her previous life, she had spent a lot of time there. Her aunt and uncle had locked her inside that room for days whenever she upset them or whenever they went out of town.

With a couch and access to the bathroom, it had been a far more comfortable prison than being locked away in a storage closet in the basement. When they had first tried to force her compliance, she had spent weeks locked away in the basement. It was only after she agreed to work with them that she had been allowed to return to her bedroom. She had been comforted by the familiar space.

That didn't make it any less of a cage, though.

Shaking off the past, she tried to decide what to wear for her first official day of rebirth. Half of her closet was filled with designer clothing that suited her goth glam aesthetic, while the other half was filled with swag from her parents' movies. Skipping the fancy, she went with practical. If she was going to be out in the storm later, she needed to dress for comfort.

She chose a pair of thick black leggings and a black shirt with a knife sticking out of a red heart printed on the front that was the official logo of her parents' last movie.

She also put on a pair of black, water-resistant knee-high boots that would protect her in case she needed to wade through the mud later.

It was a little cool outside, but the temperature was going to drastically drop once the storm hit, so she put on a silver reflective ski jacket with black zippers that she normally wore snowboarding. Heading back into the bedroom, she paused to stuff a few essentials into the various pockets. She didn't want to bother taking a bag with her, and she wouldn't need much once she arrived at The Manor.

Although she had felt confident about going to speak to Arson when she had been on the phone with Shadow, that confidence was starting to wane now. She knew him, but they weren't exactly close. So, what would make him believe her? The only thing she was sure about was that she had to be the one to speak to him.

She just didn't know why.

But with luck on her side, what could possibly go wrong?

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Killian Black was bored with life.

No, that wasn't quite accurate. It wasn't that he was dissatisfied with his life. He still experienced joy and pleasure. Still found countless ways to entertain himself, but things just didn't feel the same as they once had.

There was no originality or newness.

No surprises or wonders to appreciate.

The colors of life had become muted, faded until it was all muddled together into an endless, dull existence with little variation. The reality, as unremarkable as it was to acknowledge, was that he was simply restless. He wanted something to happen. Something that made waking up every day worth his time.

A bored reaper was never a good thing.

In fact, it was downright fucking dangerous.

As an ancient dark god, it was no wonder things had lost their appeal over the centuries. Part of that was his own damn fault. Since his brethren had disappeared, he felt a little guilty that he had escaped whatever mysterious fate had befallen them. Because of that, he had sequestered himself in the Human Realm as punishment until they returned.

While he wasn't an altruistic soul, he did have his own set of principles he followed. Picking up the slack and watching over the humans for his missing friends was the

least he could do in their absence.

But he was starting to worry that his fellow reapers might never be found.

Since the dawn of humanity, supernaturals had meticulously observed their progress to determine if they would acquire any magic. Only a small fraction of humans became witches or mages, while the rest of society remained unaware of those with magical abilities living amongst them.

While the Human Realm did have its appeal, it was nothing compared to the realm Killian called home. The Realm of Souls, which was more commonly known as the Hell Realm, was nothing like it was fabled to be. Although it could be construed as a dark, mysterious place, it was also a beautiful world filled with wonder and magic.

He was often amused by the stories people made up about the Hell Realm. Sure, reapers and demons could be scary, but every race had its good and bad members. Some of the biggest threats to humanity came from the Celestial Realm. However, the gods and angels liked to exaggerate and boost their own reputations so very few people knew the truth about who the real monsters were.

As more supernaturals decided to make their homes in the Human Realm, it became evident that humans needed protection from the magical community. The Supernatural Council had been created to deal with issues concerning the six realms, but they had little interest in policing the Human Realm on a day-to-day basis.

And so, Killian had created the Guardians of the Underworld.

The guardians made sure the supernaturals living in the Human Realm didn't cause too many problems. They also ensured the supernatural community remained a secret to the general populace. Even without magic, humans could become a threat if given the chance, so Killian and those who worked with him made sure that didn't happen.

While the majority of humans remained unaware of the guardians' existence, they were well known throughout the supernatural community. Most people admired them as much as they feared them. Killian didn't mind the notoriety. He considered it well deserved.

The guardians were dangerous, there was no mistaking that. Some people considered them the supernatural mob that should be avoided at all costs, while others thought of them as protectors. Their methods might not have seemed suitable to some, but they didn't particularly care what others thought of them. As long as the guardians were effective, even the Supernatural Council was wise enough not to interfere in their business.

While he was technically still in charge, Killian rarely had to handle any incidents personally. He gave a certain amount of autonomy to his guardians and only stepped in when the others weren't sure what to do or when something big occurred.

And the magical disturbance he'd just felt certainly fell into the latter category.

Whatever had caused the spike in magic was unknown. But the fact that it had caught his attention an ocean away meant he definitely needed to check it out for himself. At least, that's the excuse he was using to go investigate.

Killian also considered it the perfect cure for his boredom.

He strolled down the marble hallway leading from his private wing of the villa toward the front entrance. Pulling on the cuffs of his black dress shirt, he made sure the priceless blood-red ruby cufflinks were visible beneath the sleeves of the black suit jacket he wore. Barely anyone would even notice the gems since they were so dark, but he only dressed to please himself anyway.

He didn't break stride when a male with short, silvery white hair and glowing blue

eyes suddenly appeared by his side at the entrance. Dario had become his companion after Killian had saved his life centuries ago. At first, it had been nothing more than a life debt needed to be repaid, but over the years their relationship had turned into a true, lasting friendship.

Although it wasn't necessary, Dario considered himself Killian's personal bodyguard. That notion seemed laughable since Killian was one of the most powerful beings in the six realms, but he appreciated the sentiment enough not to argue.

The dark angel wasn't much of a talker. His throat had once been damaged, but those injuries had long since healed. He preferred to remain completely silent if given the choice, though he was able to freely speak to Killian and whoever else he needed to telepathically.

There was something about hearing his own voice that seemed to bother him, but Killian didn't pry into his friend's reasoning. He figured everyone was entitled to their own little idiosyncrasies without someone trying to rationalize them. Hell, he had plenty of his own that he was sure made him seem crazy, but that only added to the fun.

One of those quirks was he preferred a well-made suit over casualwear even when he was lounging around the villa, although he refused to wear a tie. It reminded him too much of a magical noose that had almost caused his early demise during his youth. He enjoyed luxury and spared no expense when it came to comfort, but he didn't mind getting his hands dirty if and when the situation called for it either.

Actually, he thoroughly enjoyed that part of his duties.

Although his magic allowed him to create anything he wanted, Killian had also accumulated a disgusting amount of wealth over the centuries. Since he had more than he could use in several lifetimes, he spent it lavishly on himself and the other

guardians. Despite what most people thought, money couldn't buy loyalty. However, generous compensation not only ensured the guardians were well rewarded for their efforts, it also made them feel valued and cared for.

Dario was similarly dressed in black, but he had on a plain shirt and pants under his gray overcoat. His outfit might have seemed basic, but he had adopted Killian's habit of only wearing the finest fabrics and brands while in the Human Realm. He handed Killian a cane with a dark crystal skull handle, then draped a camel-colored cashmere coat over his shoulders.

The cane might have looked like an average walking stick, but it was really a powerful artifact that could destroy the world in the wrong hands. Thankfully, the artifact was like the legendary sword in the stone, meaning only those worthy could wield it.

The cane's original form had once been that of a scythe, but Killian had altered it once stories of a grim reaper carrying that exact weapon had started to spread. He'd been the cause for that particular myth after he'd gotten rip-roaring drunk one night and had been spotted wandering the streets trying to find his way home. Well, the fact he had dusted a group of would-be robbers during his walk home probably hadn't helped the rumors.

Needless to say, that had been before he'd been serious about doing damage control in the Human Realm.

He considered it a lesson learned.

Dario opened the door for Killian, then silently followed him outside. The air was warm on the Amalfi coast where the villa was currently located, but the light breeze was enough to cut through the heat and make it pleasant. Still, it would be much cooler where they were headed.

Killian could have used magic to transfer the villa anywhere he wanted, but it was much easier to create a portal at the end of the driveway that would allow them to travel to wherever they needed to go. It would be even faster for them to teleport, but they liked to keep a vehicle with them while traveling around the Human Realm. Not only did it keep up with appearances, it was also more practical if they were going to travel around a specific area.

The wind ruffled Killian's hair, and he reflexively used magic to keep the strands in place. Unlike most reapers, he preferred to keep his black hair cut in short, stylish waves that almost reached his jawline. He usually hid his eyes behind a pair of dark sunglasses since glowing black eyes made people nervous, but since the sun was already setting, there was no need.

As Dario opened the back door of the sleek black Rolls-Royce, Killian pointed the cane toward the driveway when the tip lit up. Since the artifact understood exactly what he wanted, a portal immediately shimmered to life several feet in front of the vehicle. He could have created the portal himself, but it seemed as though even the cane was a little restless and in need of some action.

He slid inside the backseat of the car with practiced ease, then waited for Dario to get into the driver's seat. A female with long, dark red hair wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket with matching pants and boots teleported directly onto the seat next to him.

Anika was a particularly vicious demon, though her victims were those who deserved harsh punishment for their own dark deeds. Killian had taken her in after the rest of her relatives had been slaughtered in a blood feud with a business rival. He'd tried to find another family to leave her with, but she kept returning to his side no matter how many good people he'd introduced her to.

After a while, he'd stopped fighting it and let her stay. Since he had no clue how to

raise a temperamental teenager, it had been a collective effort of the guardians. That had clearly been a mistake, considering how she had used everything she'd learned to track down and execute every person who had been responsible for the death of her family before she had even graduated from the magical academy he forced her to attend.

When Killian had discovered what she'd been doing, he hadn't been that surprised. Instead of getting angry, he was impressed by her skills and fortitude. Getting upset would have been hypocritical anyway since he would have done the same damn thing if he'd been in her position.

Only less stealthy and with a whole lot more bloodshed.

As crazy as she seemed at times, Anika was instrumental in managing the Guardians of the Underworld. She did an excellent job keeping everyone in line, and she kept meticulous records that allowed them to track patterns and conduct follow-ups on cases when necessary.

"Where we going, boss?"

He wasn't sure her specific talents would be needed for this outing, but it couldn't hurt to let her tag along. Besides, if she got bored, she could just teleport home without them.

"The Manor."

"Sweet. It's been a while since we visited Arson. Are we hunting someone?"

That made him sigh again. He wished it was that simple. "We are going to investigate a surge of magic."

She frowned. “I didn’t sense any surge.”

“Neither did I.” Even through their telepathic connection, Dario sounded aggrieved by that fact.

“At this time, I don’t know who or what caused it.”

“Sounds interesting. I’ll tag along since I’d like to speak to Neely,” she said, mentioning the demon-fairy hybrid who was the executive chef at The Manor.

She snapped her fingers to add a little flourish as she used her magic to change her outfit to a dark gray pencil skirt and matching jacket with a pale pink shell underneath, along with a pair of stilettos. Her long hair had been pulled back into an elegant chignon, and she wore a pair of thick-rimmed glasses that did nothing to detract from her natural beauty.

One second was all it took to alter her image from a wild biker to a studious assistant. She liked to dress in what she called “work mode” while they were investigating since it made it more fun to surprise people whenever she started kicking ass.

“Thought you were spending the weekend in London,” Dario commented.

Anika sighed heavily. “The problem was already solved by the time I got there. The wolf shifter who had been attacking those women had been sliced and diced by an angry fairy. You really should consider recruiting her. The way she carved up that vile rapist was like a work of art.”

Dario snorted in amusement . “You want to recruit a rage fairy?”

“I do,” Anika confirmed primly. “I think she would make a great addition to the team. That’s actually what I want to talk to Neely about. I think they know each other, and I

figure I can start the vetting process.”

“Hmm,” Killian murmured noncommittally, though he did make a mental note to check the fairy out later.

He glanced out the window as Dario drove them straight through the portal he created. They didn’t have to worry about being seen since they would be appearing in a section of the grounds that was surrounded by trees and heavily warded against prying human eyes. They would be able to exit the portal and turn onto the driveway without anyone noticing anything odd about their arrival.

The portal closed behind them the moment they drove through it, and Killian frowned at the splatter of rain that immediately glazed the windows. Dario paused the vehicle before leaving the warded section to make sure the area was clear before turning onto the long driveway.

“What do you think caused the surge of magic?” Anika asked.

“I’m not sure,” Killian admitted. “But I’m looking forward to finding out.”

An unknown mystery to solve was definitely a good way to cure boredom. A sense of anticipation tingled in the air, hinting at secrets waiting to be uncovered. He wasn’t sure what the answers might be, but he had a strange feeling that nothing would ever be the same once it was revealed.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

The Manor was actually three separate buildings centered around a massive fountain and large circular driveway. The entire compound was surrounded by a natural barrier of lush trees and vegetation, affording those who visited a feeling of privacy and exclusivity.

The main building was a towering six-story structure made of gray stone, glass, and steel. Over the years, it had been renovated and remodeled, but the foundation remained the same. Some might have called it a modern palace, but Killian had always thought it looked more like a luxurious fortress.

The interior of the building was more like an opulent hotel than an average club, with several lounges, a snack bar, a fine dining restaurant, and discreet staff who catered to the members' every whim. There were also private suites that could be reserved by club members. The upper floors were supernatural-only areas that were heavily warded to keep humans away. That was where most of the employees lived, and there was plenty of space for any other supernaturals who might need sanctuary.

A full fitness center and spa were located to the right of the main building. Besides a state-of-the-art gym and relaxing spa, there was a large indoor pool, racquetball courts, and a full-sized basketball court. Behind the building was an outdoor pool that was only available during the warmer months, along with tennis courts, a golf course, an impressive garden, and a small orchard.

A nightclub was located in the large atrium to the left of the main structure with a domed ceiling. The interior of the building could be altered into a concert hall or a ballroom for special events. It was only open on the weekends, and even though it was located in the middle of nowhere, it always seemed to be packed.

Overall, The Manor was its own magical kingdom.

The short drive up to the entrance only took a few minutes, yet it was still enough time to alert the owner of their presence. Arson Altera was waiting for them outside the entrance with his hands braced on his hips, completely unconcerned by the falling rain. His long bronze hair had been pulled back in a messy bun, and his usually glowing gold eyes were dimmed to a more appropriate amber.

Wearing an old, faded T-shirt for a metal band that had been popular in the 80s that looked like it had been washed about a thousand times, jeans, and a pair of flip-flops, he looked more like a college student who had just rolled out of bed than a powerful dark angel and successful business owner. However, he was well known for being an eccentric soul so his attire wasn't that surprising.

Arson had once been one of Lucifer's most trusted generals, but now the dark angel spent his days in a more leisurely manner as the owner of the private club. As a member of the Guardians, he kept a close watch over the entire Pacific Northwest. He used his club to monitor the supernatural community within the area in addition to extracting valuable information from the patrons who visited the club.

Because Arson and his crew usually had everything under control, Killian hadn't had to visit this particular location in quite a while. He secretly admired how well the dark angel had acclimated to living in the Human Realm. It took a lot of work to blend into the human community as seamlessly as he had. Arson even pretended to inherit the property from himself every few decades just to keep the locals from asking too many questions.

When the vehicle pulled in front of the entrance, Dario said, "I'll meet you inside after I park."

Since he was a fanatic about their collection of vehicles, there was no way he would

ever let a stranger drive one.

As the car rolled to a stop, Anika climbed out of the backseat and shot the eager valet who rushed forward an icy stare that made him freeze in place. Waving him away, she rounded the car and opened the door for Killian herself, standing like a sentry until he got out. It was amusing that they treated him as if he wasn't capable of doing simple tasks like opening doors or driving himself around, but he allowed them to fuss over him without complaint.

Being the boss certainly had its perks.

Arson strode forward to meet them as Dario drove off toward the parking lot. In lieu of a proper greeting, he grumbled, "It must be really bad for you to drag your ass all the way out here. What the hell happened?"

As was his habit, Killian created a magical barrier around them so their conversation wouldn't be overheard. The invisible safeguard also shielded them from the rain. "I was hoping you could tell me. There was a significant magic surge in this area not too long ago. I want to know who or what caused it."

Arson frowned as he led them toward the entrance. "I was wondering what that was. Something woke me from a sound sleep, but I couldn't figure out what happened. Wait. Weren't you in Italy? How the hell did you—never mind." He chuckled as he shook his head. "Sorry, I forgot who I was talking to for a second. You reapers have all kinds of weird abilities I don't know about."

"Did anyone else sense anything?"

"I just started asking around before you arrived. So far, only the dark angels and a few of the more powerful demons on staff sensed something, but none of us could tell what it was or where it came from."

“I’d like to speak to them.”

“Of course. I’ll arrange it.”

“Is Neely around?” Anika asked, cutting in. “I have a few fairy questions I want to ask her.”

“I just saw her a few minutes ago in the dining hall. I should warn you, she has been training some new kitchen staff, so she might be in a foul mood.”

“Noted.” She glanced back over at Killian, who gave a slight nod of permission for her to leave. “Would you like for me to arrange rooms for us?”

Killian would prefer to teleport home, but he didn’t want to leave until he figured out what had caused the influx of magic. “Might as well.”

She bowed her head before striding away.

“Do you want me to clear the club out?” Arson asked. “There are several humans currently on the premises.”

“There’s no point in interrupting your business until we know more.”

“Don’t worry about that. Not a lot of people are going to be venturing out in the rain today anyway. I’ll just have Celine spread the word that we are closing for a private event,” he said, mentioning the dark angel who had been his second-in-command since The Manor had opened. “It’s not often we have a dark god show up for a visit, so we might as well make your stay as enjoyable as possible. Let’s head up to my office, and I’ll arrange for the staff to come up and join us.”

As they strode through the private club, Killian took note of the people they passed.

Everyone did their best to avoid glancing at him. He couldn't blame them for that. He knew his presence made people uneasy, but that couldn't be helped. It wasn't personal. It was simply the power structure of the supernaturals. Even though he was concealing most of his powers since they were out in public, there was still no mistaking what he was.

Someone powerful enough that everyone naturally feared him.

Killian enjoyed leaning into his dark and mysterious reputation. In fact, he reveled in it. He found that people tended to be more honest when they were afraid. Even if they didn't speak the truth, their body language could speak volumes. However, using fear wasn't always the best option to get the information he required, especially when questioning the innocent. Because of that, he would allow Arson to do most of the talking.

They could have teleported directly to the office, but walking around the club was routine for Arson. Killian didn't mind taking the long way. It gave him the chance to observe what had changed since his last visit to The Manor.

While the interior still had the aesthetics of an opulent private club, a lot of the décor had been updated, replacing some of the old-world elegance with a more modern style. The crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling looked like they belonged in an ancient cathedral, yet the art on the walls ranged from classic masterpieces to contemporary creations.

There was also a new fountain between the base of the double curved marble staircase that made it look like it was a wall of water that flowed into a long, narrow decorative pool lined with gemstone-colored tiles.

When they got to Arson's office on the second floor, he didn't bother turning on the overhead lights. Instead, he used magic to light a few candles and the large stone

fireplace at the far end of the room. Arson preferred candlelight over harsher human light fixtures, and Killian was able to see perfectly in the dark so his eyes immediately adjusted to the dimmer light.

The office had been magically altered, making it a much larger room than it seemed from the hallway. Besides a large desk and towering bookshelves made of dark wood that lined the walls, there was a comfortable sitting area with brown leather chairs and a matching couch centered around the stone fireplace.

Killian used magic to remove his coat before he settled onto one of the leather chairs. He'd tried to send the cane back home as well but it refused to leave so he propped it against the side of his leg instead. The damn thing could be quite temperamental at times. That was the problem with possessing a magical artifact.

One could never be sure exactly who was in charge.

Arson carried a tray with a crystal decanter filled with dark liquid and two glasses over to the sitting area. He set the tray down on the table and poured them each a glass of amber liquid before taking his seat.

"I just opened a bottle of scotch from my private collection." Arson smiled wryly. "I must have sensed you were coming for a visit."

Killian took the offered glass and sipped. "Very nice. Did this bottle hit the century mark?"

"A couple, actually. I thought I would have to tweak it with magic, but it turned out to be fine on its own." Arson took a long swallow before saying, "Should I tell Celine to start sending people up?"

"Anika and Dario are questioning the kitchen staff," Killian stated, relaying what his

friends had already conveyed to him. “So, we just need to speak to the others.”

“Any idea what that surge of magic could be?”

He hesitated briefly before admitting, “I’m worried that it was either a powerful supernatural using some serious magic or a new god was created. If either of those predictions are accurate, it could be extremely dangerous for the humans.”

Arson’s eyes narrowed. “A new god? I thought the only way for that to happen was to go through the Merit of Godhood Trials in the Celestial Realm, or be burned to a crisp in the Black Fire Mountain in the Hell Realm.”

“Occasionally fate chooses some poor soul to give god powers to, and it doesn’t always go well for the recipient or the people around them since this type of shit doesn’t exactly come with instructions.”

“Why the hell haven’t I heard of this happening before?”

Killian sighed. “Because people’s memories are usually wiped to keep this information contained.”

Arson’s expression darkened. “That’s fucked up.”

“Take it up with the magical source.”

When a knock sounded on the door, Arson called out for them to, “Enter.”

A demon slowly pushed the door open just enough to stick his head in. He obviously didn’t want to get any closer to Killian than was absolutely necessary, not that he could blame him.

“Umm, Arson? I’m really sorry to bother you, but there is a girl here who is demanding to speak to you.”

“What girl?” Arson’s eyes widened in alarm. “Is it my girl?”

Killian’s brow lifted. “You have a girl?”

The dark angel looked strangely uncomfortable. “Not exactly...yet.”

That was intriguing.

“Don’t worry, it’s not your girl,” the demon assured quickly.

Arson cleared his throat, looking relieved. “Who is it, then?”

“She, ah, she said her name is Seneca Lee. Says you know her.”

Arson frowned. “I do. So do you. She’s one of the authors of your favorite graphic novels.”

The demon forgot his fear long enough to grin. “Holy shit! Really? It’s that Seneca Lee? I can’t believe you know—”

“You can fanboy later.” Arson waved his hand impatiently to cut him off. “What does she want?”

“I don’t know, but she says it’s urgent. Like life-or-death urgent.”

When Arson started to rise out of his seat, Killian shot him a glance that had him settling back down in his chair. The cane was vibrating against his leg, and the crystal skull was pulsing with light as if it were excited. He couldn’t deny that he felt his

own sense of anticipation stirring as well.

“Bring her up here.”

Arson cringed a little at the demand before he could mask his response. “Umm, really? I could just go down and...okay, fine. Just...try not to scare her to death, would you? She’s a good kid, and if she’s coming here to talk to me, she must be in serious trouble.”

Killian’s lips twitched in amusement. “I’m quite fond of dealing with trouble. And life-or-death situations happen to be my specialty.”

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Seneca frowned at the demon who was guiding her down the hallway into an area of The Manor she had never been in before. He gripped her bicep as he dragged her along with him, his large hand wrapping around her entire upper arm with ease. Although his grip was firm, it didn't hurt. While she didn't like him touching her, she didn't try to escape his hold.

There would be no point in that anyway.

Besides, she wanted to speak to his boss, so arguing with him would have been counterproductive. She was dripping rainwater all over the expensive carpet lining the hallway, but she considered that a fair trade for being manhandled by him, regardless of how gentle he was being with her.

It was petty as fuck of her, but she was all about embracing the revenge aspect of her rebirth, in every form.

When they came to a stop in front of a closed door, she realized her big escort was practically shaking in his biker boots. His strange reaction made her own nerves increase to a distressing level. Her luck had gotten her this far so she had to believe that everything would be okay.

She had prepared herself to talk her way into The Manor during the short drive over to the private club, but she hadn't expected them to turn her away before she even had a chance to get out of the car. Ignoring the guard's warnings, she had hopped out and begged him to let her speak to Arson.

When the guard insisted they were closed for a private event, she had been both

relieved and slightly baffled. Since Shadow had hosted her surprise birthday party at the nightclub during her last life, she knew The Manor hadn't been closed. That difference was confusing, but it meant there wouldn't be as many people to save this time around.

Acting on instinct, she had blurted out the raw truth to the guard. She had to speak to Arson about an urgent matter or people at The Manor would die. While that sounded like a wild statement, the shifter must have heard the ring of truth in her voice. He'd still been skeptical enough to send someone inside to verify that she wasn't just some crazy chick, though.

She couldn't really blame him for that.

Since she wasn't a member of the private club, she understood their reluctance to let her in. Having Arson confirm that he knew her had paved the way inside, but she still had to convince him to help her.

She just wasn't sure how much to tell him.

"This is it," the demon announced.

"Great. Thanks for..." Her words trailed off when he simply disappeared without another word.

She glanced down the hallway to make sure he had really teleported away without any further explanation and just left her there. Sure enough, she found herself alone in the hallway. The few times she'd been to The Manor as a guest, the staff had been exceptionally courteous.

That made this demon's behavior even more alarming.

Thankfully, there was only one doorway at the end of the hall so she assumed that was Arson's office. Feeling slightly embarrassed about her disheveled appearance, she tried to fix her hair as she moved to stand in front of the door. She wished she'd had time to stop in the bathroom to do some damage control before meeting with the owner, but there had been no chance for that.

She could try to find one now, but she didn't want to be accused of sneaking around where she didn't belong. Before she even had a chance to knock on the door, it slowly opened on its own in ominous welcome. Evidently, he already knew she was there. Taking a deep, calming breath, she stepped forward into the dark room. She froze when the door automatically slammed closed behind her.

Talk about a jump scare.

Or it would have been if she hadn't been raised on horror movies and scare tactics. If he'd been hoping to make her flee in terror, he really had the wrong girl. Even so, she had to grumble to herself about the dark angel's perverse sense of humor.

The room was dark compared to the well-lit hallway she'd just come from. It wasn't completely blacked out, but it was shadowed enough to make it an intimidating space to be in. The candlelight should have been soothing, but somehow it made the dark interior even more foreboding.

Like walking into the very pit of Hell itself.

That thought made her want to giggle. Obviously, that was an inappropriate response to the situation, but she couldn't help it.

Been there, done that already.

To her surprise, the reminder of her trip to the Hell Realm helped her relax a little.

Since she'd been to Hell and back, Seneca had already faced the worst outcome that could possibly happen. After the nightmare she'd experienced during her last life, she was sure she could handle a simple conversation with the dark angel. And if he didn't believe her or chose not to help her, the fallout that happened would be on him.

"Umm...hello? Arson?"

"Over here."

As she glanced toward the sound of his voice, she realized he wasn't the only one in the room. There was another dark presence that gave her an overwhelming urge to run in the opposite direction. No, that wasn't quite accurate. She actually felt conflicted. As much as she wanted to escape, she also wanted to stay. It was like she was being pulled by a magical tether that was tempting her deeper into the darkness, making it impossible for her to flee.

She might be a witch with her magic fully awakened, but she was still essentially human. Since her senses were nowhere as acute as other supernaturals, it was no surprise her eyes were taking a lot longer to adjust to the dim candlelight. She could use a charm to enhance her vision, but all of the spells she had learned during her previous life were a jumbled mess inside her head.

She really needed a refresher course before she started throwing magic around.

Squinting a little, all she could see were two dark silhouettes sitting in front of the stone fireplace. She tried to figure out which one was Arson, which was easy enough when he sent her a jaunty wave of greeting. As her gaze tracked over to the stranger next to him, her eyes widened.

Not in fear, but in fascination.

The male's eyes were dark, yet they glowed with an enchanting eclipse effect that she found strangely beautiful. Even from across the room, she felt the pull of his captivating gaze. She felt it drifting over her like a phantom caress, and she fought the urge to shiver under his intense scrutiny.

He was dangerous.

Even from a distance, there was no doubt about that. It would probably be best to stay away from him, but his very presence was magnetic, drawing her in with an irresistible allure like a moth to a flame.

Unfortunately for her, she'd only made it a few steps closer before she tripped on the edge of a throw rug she hadn't noticed. Talk about making a memorable first impression. Resignation and embarrassment swept through her when she started to fall, and she shut her eyes as she prepared for the inevitable hard impact with the floor.

Less than a heartbeat later, a pair of strong arms wrapped around her waist, and she was lifted off her feet and secured against a hard chest. Her eyes popped open in surprise, and her breath caught in her throat as she found herself staring up at the male with the glowing eclipse eyes.

Everything else in the room faded away as she lost herself in his dark gaze. Up close, his eclipse eyes were even more beautiful. Like deep, endless voids, with a ring of silver light around the dark irises that made them glow bright. The contrast between the black and silver was striking, giving him an otherworldly allure that was only enhanced by the undeniable power radiating from him.

He was a massive male, with broad shoulders and a strikingly handsome face that looked like it had been blessed by generous gods. His perfect features were sculpted with precision, each angle and curve contributing to a visage that was nothing short

of breathtaking. He had a strong, defined jawline, adding a touch of ruggedness to his otherwise refined appeal.

His masculine beauty was accentuated by his inky black hair and bronzed skin that looked like it had been brushed with shimmering gold dust. In truth, he looked like a dark prince from a fairy tale. However, the raw power radiating from him made him seem more like the villain than the hero.

Without thinking, she reached up and lightly brushed back the wavy strands of dark hair that had fallen in front of his face so they wouldn't obstruct her view. Her wayward fingers trailed down his smooth cheek, then along his jawline.

Touching him so freely clearly wasn't smart.

She knew she was taking liberties but simply couldn't bring herself to give a damn. An action like that could get her in serious trouble, yet her curiosity was a driving force that overpowered her sense of self-preservation.

When his arms tightened around her waist, she wasn't sure if it was in rebuke or an instinctive reaction to her touch. She started to apologize but choked on the words when he leaned down and inhaled deeply against her neck like she was a fine wine he was savoring. The brush of his nose against her skin made her heart skip a beat before going into overdrive, but she didn't try to pull away.

She had a feeling it wouldn't do any good if she tried anyway.

Besides, she was pretty damn comfortable where she was.

There was a connection between them that was undeniable. It was both thrilling and terrifying, but it was also difficult to trust. Especially after everything she had experienced during her last life.

“I scent death on you.”

The words were a low whisper of sound, but they were the equivalent of an ice-cold bucket of water to her senses. She wiggled in his arms a little in a silent demand for him to release her. Instead of completely letting go, he let her body slide down his until her feet were once again touching the ground. She was pretty tall for a human female and was often complimented on her long legs, but he towered over her with his much larger frame.

“I swear I showered before I came here.”

His low chuckle made her shiver, and goosebumps covered her flesh. When he lowered his head again, she instinctively tried to lean away from him. His hands braced on her back, holding her in place. When his lips brushed against the side of her neck near where her star-shaped birthmark was located, her heart began to race so fast it felt like she was going to have a heart attack.

Damn, he really was potent.

“No, lovely one. I mean you have been touched by death. As my mate, that is an affront to my senses. You are mine, which means nothing should ever harm you.”

His mate?

Shock tore through her at his possessive statements. He didn't seem like he was joking, but the idea of being mated to this powerful supernatural seemed utterly ridiculous. She wasn't sure who he was or even what he was yet, but she wanted it to be true. Wanted it as much as she'd wanted to live again.

That thought was a stark reminder of what he'd just said.

How the hell could he smell death on her?

The gods' warnings about attracting attention from the powerful supernaturals rang through her head. Not even a day into her rebirth, and she'd already fucking failed. Then again, maybe not. Since he claimed she was his mate, that hopefully meant he wouldn't turn her into the Supernatural Council or punish her for breaking whatever magical rules were in place regarding cheating death.

Unsure what to say, she hedged a bit. "That...is a long story."

He pulled back enough to stare down at her. Obviously, he didn't care for that response. In a placating gesture, she patted his chest. When she realized what she was doing, she tried to pull her hand away, but he covered it with his own, holding it in place over his heart.

He studied her in silence for several heartbeats, then he said, "You don't seem afraid of me."

"Oh, I am," she blurted out honestly. "But I don't react to scary things the way normal people do most of the time. Sorry, that was rude. I wasn't really calling you a thing. I just meant—"

"Don't worry. I don't offend easily, little one."

"That's good, considering I tend to blurt out whatever is in my head. You said I was your mate. Is that true?"

His lips curved into a small smile as he nodded.

She thought he was handsome before, but when he smiled, he was sheer perfection. Damn, she worried she might start drooling when twin dimples appeared on his

cheeks. They were as lethal as real weapons. It really wasn't fair for him to be so freaking good-looking. It was easy to get distracted staring at him, but his silent scrutiny was starting to get to her. There was no need for torture when all it took was an intimidating staring contest to get what he wanted.

Ready to break, she swallowed hard. "Hypothetically, does that mean you would protect me if something bad happens?"

His smile immediately shifted back to a fierce frown as he snarled, "I will destroy anyone who dares to harm you."

That vow should have frightened her.

Instead, it gave her immeasurable comfort. It was also a major turn-on. Even though he was scary as hell, she felt safe in his arms. She cherished it since that was something she hadn't felt in a really long time. She had always considered herself fortunate for having people in her life who cared about her, but she'd never understood how intense a bond with a mate could be.

She'd dreamed about what it would be like to have a mate. Had spent hours speculating with her friends about who they would all end up with. But she'd never actually believed she would find her mate. Not when she had been a witch with no magic, and certainly not when she was a prisoner.

Literally stumbling into her mate's arms after being reborn was nothing short of a stroke of pure luck. Not only was he devastatingly handsome, he also seemed to be the perfect person to help her on her revenge quest.

But that meant she had to trust him with the whole truth first.

The entire, sordid tale could wait, but she knew she had to give him something now.

Taking a deep breath, she blew it out slowly before confessing, “Basically, I died and my soul was sent to the Hell Realm. But the God of Souls and the Goddess of Revenge found a way to send me back. So, here I am.”

His brows furrowed. “There is no God of Souls or Goddess of Revenge.”

She winced, then sighed. “There will be...a year from now.”

“Now, this sounds like an intriguing story,” Arson called out from where he was still seated. When she glanced over at him, he gave her a friendly wave. “Hi, Seneca. What brings you out and about this rainy afternoon? I mean, besides meeting your mate. Then again, since he came here on business, you probably didn’t know he was here. You two are pretty lucky you found each other.”

She wheezed out a breathless laugh. “You don’t know the half of it.”

“Congratulations, anyway.” Arson grinned. “Never thought I’d see the big guy settle down. Killian might seem scary, but he...okay, he is pretty scary.”

“Watch it,” Killian growled in warning.

“As his mate, you shouldn’t have anything to worry about, though,” Arson hurried to explain. “I mean, besides the normal worries one might have being a reaper’s mate.”

Holy fuck, her mate was a reaper?

Seneca had no idea how to respond to that bit of information. As a reaper, he was one of the most formidable supernaturals in the six realms, while she was just a basic witch with a touch of luck. Talk about a magically mismatched couple. Perhaps her lucky curse really was a blessing, though. How else would fate have paired her with such a powerful mate?

“Arson?”

“Yes, Killian?”

“Leave.”

“Aww, come on, boss. Seneca came here to speak to me about something. I should probably find out what she needs before I leave.”

Killian savored the sound of her name while silently cursing the dark angel for interrupting them. He hated that Arson had stolen his mate’s attention away from him, even for a few seconds. He had realized she was his mate the moment she had stepped into the room and passed through the wards protecting the area. Her mere presence had been enough to stun him speechless.

That was something that hadn’t happened in...hell, ever.

After searching for his other half for over a millennia, he couldn’t believe she suddenly appeared on a random rainy afternoon. However, that is exactly what happened. While their meeting might have seemed like a coincidence, it felt like fate had stepped in to bring them together. Now, that hum of anticipation he’d been feeling made perfect sense, and her rebirth was probably the cause of the magical surge he detected.

He had felt her coming back to him.

Seneca was a beautiful female, with an enchanting heart-shaped face and shoulder-length blonde hair that shimmered white in the soft candlelight. Her flawless skin was smooth and unblemished, and she had a delicate nose and high cheekbones that added a touch of elegance to her features. Her gray eyes were framed by long, dark lashes, giving her a seductive appeal that contrasted with the innocent blush that stained her

cheeks.

It was clear she was human, but that didn't matter. The only thing he cared about was that she was his.

His mate.

The other half of his soul and his very reason for existing.

In an instant, his life had been irrevocably altered. It was as if a brilliant star had exploded in the center of his dark universe. He was no longer alone. He had someone to care for, to love, and to protect.

And he would fucking destroy worlds to keep her safe.

His mate hadn't seemed to notice that he'd dried her clothing and hair the moment he'd wrapped his arms around her, but he figured she must be feeling a little overwhelmed by everything. He could relate. Lust surged hot and heavy through his bloodstream, making it difficult to think. He wanted to teleport her back to his villa where he could make love to her over and over again until neither of them could move, but her words stopped him before he could.

"Holy crap! I almost forgot why I came here. There is going to be a massive mudslide in a few hours once the storm hits and a lot of people are going to get hurt when—"

Arson shook his head and interrupted by saying, "The buildings on the property are protected against stuff like that."

She huffed out an impatient breath. "The storm is going to get a lot worse than anyone predicted. Like crazy bad, and the mudslide is going to tear through here and cause a lot of damage. Especially when it hits the nightclub. That building will be

completely destroyed, and people are going to die in the collapse. I wouldn't joke about this. I lost my best friend when it happened the last time."

Arson's spine stiffened. "Shadow? Are you saying Shadow is going to die?"

"Not this time. I told her to forget about the surprise party she was planning for me and to stay home with her family. Now, I am trying to save as many people here as I can. But I can't do that without your help."

"This is crazy." Arson held up a hand. "I'm not saying I don't believe you. But it sounds totally crazy."

"I swear I'm telling the truth."

"I believe what he means is no ordinary storm could wipe out The Manor the way you are describing," Killian clarified. "This sounds like a magical attack."

Her eyes widened. "Well, shit. I hadn't thought of that."

When her stomach rumbled, it was an affront to his senses. Knowing his mate was hungry offended Killian to his core. She should never suffer from anything. When her cheeks turned pink and she slapped her hand over her stomach, he grabbed her hand and held it in his. He didn't like that she was embarrassed by such a simple thing as a need for sustenance.

From now on, he would provide whatever she required. He would give her everything she could ever want or desire and learn to anticipate her every need.

Trying for a coaxing tone, he said, "Let's have a meal, and we can discuss how we should proceed."

When she smiled up at him, he felt as if his heart were beating for the first time.

Damn, she really was beautiful.

“I could eat.”

Arson shot to his feet. “Hey, shouldn’t we consider storm-proofing this place first?”

Killian shot him a withering glare. “My mate is hungry.”

“Food first. Got it.” The dark angel put his hands up in surrender. “We still have time before the storm intensifies anyway.”

He started to speak, but his words were cut off when his cane flew across the room. Stepping in front of his mate to protect her, he frowned when the cane simply vanished. A light tap on his shoulder had him turning around, and his eyes widened when he saw that his mate was holding a delicate black lace umbrella with a crystal handle.

She glanced down at it in confusion. “Umm, I think I caught your parasol.”

Apparently, the magical artifact had chosen a new owner. He wasn’t mad about it, though. In fact, he felt relieved it had switched alliances to Seneca since it would help protect her.

“That is a powerful relic that changes form to suit its owner.”

She eyed it skeptically. “I’m not judging or anything, but this doesn’t really seem to suit your style.”

“It doesn’t,” he agreed. “It has just claimed you as its new owner.”

“What? That’s crazy,” she sputtered. “But crazy seems to be my new default these days.”

Killian smiled at that.

“So, shall we eat in the dining room or somewhere more private?” Arson cut in.

Sighing again, Killian considered their options. He desperately wanted time alone with his mate, but the current situation called for him to be patient. Even if he wanted to get rid of the dark angel, they required more information in order to stop the magical attack from occurring. To do that, they needed to hear the entire story of her rebirth.

And he especially needed to know how his mate had died.

If someone had hurt her, he would make them pay. Even if whatever had happened during her last life hadn’t occurred in this one, they would be punished for whatever they had done to her.

He would make damn sure of it.

Killian wouldn’t stop until everyone who hurt her faced the full wrath of his fury. His vengeance would be swift and merciless, leaving no room for forgiveness. And there was no doubt he would enjoy every bloody second of it.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

They decided to eat in one of the private rooms instead of the main dining hall. Although the club was officially closed for now, Killian wanted Seneca to be able to speak freely without worrying that people might overhear their conversation. Of course, he could easily use magic to ensure that didn't happen, but humans tended to trust enclosed spaces more than invisible magical wards.

The private room was an appealing space designed to host intimate gatherings and small celebrations. There was elegant décor and rich fabrics that complimented the walls that were painted a soft, neutral crème color. Pale gold damask curtains were partially drawn over the rain-splattered wall of windows, but enough was left clear to see the gray sky outside.

In the center of the room was a large circular table covered with layers of ivory and gold tablecloths that matched the upholstered chairs. The room was illuminated by the soft glow coming from the elaborate crystal and gold chandelier hanging overhead. The lights had been dimmed enough to create a warm, inviting atmosphere without being too hard on human eyes.

When they arrived at the private room, Dario and Anika were already waiting for them. The moment Killian informed them that he had met his mate, they had been excited to meet her. He hadn't told them much about the current situation, only that she was most likely the cause for the magical surge he'd sensed, and that she had news of an upcoming magical attack they needed to prevent.

Arson's two best friends who helped manage The Manor were also present. Since the dark angel, Celine, and wolf shifter, Gunner, were also Guardians, Killian understood why Arson had wanted them there. It was their duty to protect The Manor and the

surrounding community. In order to do that, they needed to know exactly how to prevent the magical attack.

He belatedly realized he should have asked Seneca before letting anyone else join them. She might not be comfortable telling her tale to strangers. Admittedly, he wasn't in the habit of discussing his decisions with anyone. He usually decided on an action, and people just did whatever he told them to do. As his mate, Seneca deserved far more respect and consideration than that.

She deserved to be treated like the goddess she was...or would become once they were fully mated.

Silently vowing to do better, he'd been ready to apologize to her, but it turned out that it wasn't necessary. Celine and Gunner greeted Seneca warmly as if they had known each other for years. Killian had tensed up when they had gotten too close to her for his comfort, but he relaxed again once they quickly backed away from her.

He assumed they had sensed his murderous intent.

When Arson shot him an amused grin, he'd wanted to punch the fucker in the face. He knew he was being an overbearing, territorial beast, but he had no problem with that. Not when it concerned his mate. He wasn't used to people laughing at his expense, though. Lifting a brow, he sent a smirk of his own back toward his friend.

He hadn't forgotten that little remark about Arson having a female of his own.

Killian would make sure he got that story out of him later.

After briefly introducing Dario and Anika, he was relieved when Seneca seemed to accept them simply because they were his. Dario bowed his head in greeting, while Anika had cozied up to his mate as if they were long-lost sisters. He'd been worried

that her abrasive personality might upset Seneca, but she seemed quite at ease with the talkative demon.

The only person who seemed to be having a problem was Killian.

He fully admitted that he didn't like sharing his mate with any of them, even though he knew it was necessary. He never realized he was capable of feeling something as basic and frivolous as jealousy until meeting her, but now he felt like a raging beast ready to toss a few fireballs at anyone who breathed the same air as her.

As a reaper, Killian had never felt so powerless.

Yet, there he was, grappling with a slew of unfamiliar emotions that defied his usually controlled demeanor. It was a completely foreign sensation to him. Added to that, it made him feel vulnerable and exposed in a way he'd never felt before. As much as he despised feeling out of control, he was forced to admit that he also found it a little exhilarating.

At least he wasn't bored anymore.

And he had a feeling with Seneca in his life, he never would be again.

She was a bright flame burning through his darkness. From the moment she had stumbled into his arms, her presence had awakened something fierce and primal within him. In an instant, she had become his entire universe. He'd wanted to experience something new and profound, and falling in love certainly fit that criteria.

The depth of his feelings for her was already soul-binding, and that was after only knowing her for a matter of minutes. He couldn't imagine how insanely obsessed with her he would be once they spent a few centuries together.

He watched the source of his turmoil fondly while she spoke to Anika and Celine. He wanted to remain by her side, but he forced himself to give her some space. He knew she still felt a little nervous around him, and he didn't want to make her uncomfortable by hovering over her. Leaning against the bar set up on the far side of the room where Arson and Gunner were pouring drinks, he simply let himself enjoy watching her.

As much as he hated anyone else being close to her, he liked seeing her looking so carefree and happy. He sensed that was something she needed after everything she had been through recently.

Dying couldn't have been easy for her.

Neither, he imagined, was being reborn.

Figuring out exactly what had happened to her would have been a lot easier if they were fully bonded. Once their mating bond was complete, they would not only share hearts and magic. They would also be able to read each other's minds and memories. Unfortunately, that was a step he didn't think she was ready for yet. Because she was human, she most likely didn't feel the mating pull between them as intensely as he did.

He could wait for her to be ready. Time was something they would have an abundance of since they would be spending the rest of eternity together. However, he would still do whatever he could to ease her into fully accepting their bond.

For now, he needed to concentrate on the task at hand.

The faster they stopped the upcoming attack, the sooner he could focus on courting his mate properly.

“So, there is going to be an attack tonight?” Dario asked from where he was watching the rain fall through the opening in the curtains. “How exactly does your mate know about this?”

“Because she was just reborn and has already lived through the attack.”

That caught Dario’s complete attention. Turning away from the window, he met Killian’s gaze directly. “How is that possible?”

He sighed. “I haven’t heard the full story yet. That’s what we are all here to find out. But first, my mate needs to eat. If I hear her stomach growl again, I may have to murder someone.”

Dario snorted in amusement. “I suppose the rumors about the mating pull are true. Even a ruthless bastard like you can be affected by love.”

Killian didn’t bother denying it. “Tell anyone, and I will shave you bald in your sleep.”

“Now, that’s just mean. Besides, I won’t have to tell anyone if you don’t figure out how to control yourself around her. Why don’t you just put a protection sphere around her to stop everyone from getting close?”

That sounded like a damn good idea. Unfortunately, he had a feeling she wouldn’t like it if he did that. “Or people could just learn to stay the fuck away from her.”

“There is that.” Dario paused before asking, “Is that umbrella she’s holding what I think it is?”

“Yes, it is the relic,” he confirmed. “It chose her right after we met.”

“Well, at least it will protect her whenever you aren’t with her.”

“I will always be with her.”

Dario sighed. “Unless you want her to think you are a total psycho, there will be times when you are not together.”

Killian didn’t like hearing that, but he realized his friend did have a point. “This mating stuff is hard.”

“It seems so.”

“Neely is going to send the food up soon,” Arson announced. “We weren’t sure what you were in the mood for, so she decided to cook a little of everything.”

Seneca smiled. “That’s so sweet of her. She didn’t have to do that.”

Anika snorted in derision. “I don’t think you understand who your mate is. Everyone here at The Manor would bend over backwards to please Killian, and you, since you are his mate.”

Seneca shot him a covert glance. “Why?”

He met her gaze and grinned, not bothering to hide the fact he had been listening to their conversation. “Because I am Killian Black.”

Her lips twitched in amusement as she teased, “And that is enough to make people want to please you?”

“Of course, it is.”

She blinked in surprise, then burst out laughing. Delighted with the sound of her mirth, Killian strode toward her. When he came to a stop directly in front of her, he cupped her face with one large hand.

“I love the sound of your laughter.”

She looked startled for a moment, then her cheeks flushed. “I can’t remember the last time I laughed like that. I guess I’m out of practice.”

“I shall endeavor to make you laugh a lot over the next several centuries.”

“Centuries? I forgot about that part of things,” she wheezed out. Sobering, she said, “Actually, I might not have that long considering I have to effectively change my fate in order to remain in this new timeline.”

His brows furrowed. “Is that what the gods you met told you?”

She nodded.

“Haven’t you already done that?”

“I don’t think so. Not yet. I mean, I just woke up in the past a few hours ago. I think there is still a lot I have to do before I can stay in this reality.”

“Then, we won’t stop until we’ve accomplished everything we need to. But first, you need to eat.”

As if responding to his words, the large table in the center of the room was suddenly covered with large platters of food, and the aroma of roasted meats, freshly baked bread, and a variety of spices wafted through the air and filled the room with their delicious scents. Killian gently led his mate over to the table and pulled a chair out

for her.

When she removed her coat, he took it from her before she could hang it on the back of the chair. Using his magic, he sent the coat across the room to hang it on the decorative rack by the door. He smiled when she shyly thanked him, then he took his seat next to her.

Noticing she still had a death grip on the parasol, he reached out and pried it from her hands. “Don’t worry. You won’t lose it,” he assured her as he propped it against the side of her chair. “Even if you forget it somewhere, it will find its way back to you.”

“Oh, wow. That’s a neat trick.”

“It’s just part of being chosen.” He glanced down at her shirt. The knife stabbing into the heart was an interesting choice. “I like your shirt.”

While true, that was probably not the best compliment he could have come up with.

She chuckled. “Thanks. My mom and dad make horror movies. I get a lot of shirts and other free stuff each time they film a new one. You should see our house around Halloween. It’s totally crazy.”

“Fascinating,” he murmured. “I can’t wait.”

She flushed a little. “As a reaper, you are probably used to that kind of stuff.”

He barely held back a smile. Oh, she had no idea. Not wanting to sound like a psycho, he simply said, “I am looking forward to meeting your parents.”

As everyone hurried to join them at the table, Killian surveyed the platters of food. He didn’t like the idea of her eating something he hadn’t provided for her, not that he

would admit that out loud. Neely and the kitchen staff had obviously put a lot of effort into providing the meal for them, so he would try to curb his obsessive tendencies.

“What would you like to eat?”

“I can’t decide. Everything looks so good. I really love seafood, but there are so many options.”

“Try a little of everything.”

Rather than wait for her to pick and choose, he began serving a small portion of food from each platter onto the plate in front of her. He noticed that no one else made a move to serve themselves until he was done selecting food for his mate, and he was grateful for their patience.

She held her hand up and laughed. “Thank you. I think that’s enough. Seriously, there’s no more room left on the plate.”

He didn’t think that was an issue since he could just get her another plate, but he acquiesced with her decision. He dished some food onto his own plate, not really caring what he selected. He just didn’t want to make her feel awkward by eating alone.

A few seconds later, he realized he didn’t have to worry about that when the others descended on the food as if they hadn’t eaten for days. He felt relieved once Seneca started eating, but after a few bites, she stopped again.

“Before I tell you everything, I have to say that I was warned that I wasn’t supposed to let a lot of people know about me being reborn and all. I was also told I couldn’t alter too many things or I might draw attention to my...unique situation.”

“Don’t worry. We will keep the details about your rebirth a secret,” he assured. “As for the rest, let me worry about that.”

She nodded, accepting his word.

While everyone ate, she began telling them her extraordinary story, starting with what had happened during the original night of the storm. He could hear the pain in her voice as she spoke of losing her parents and the car accident she had been in. Then, she told them about what she’d learned in the aftermath, including the destruction of The Manor and the death of her friends.

“There is no way a simple mudslide should be able to break through the protection wards around the property,” Celine stated. “Something more is at play here.”

Arson nodded. “I agree.”

“It doesn’t just hit The Manor. Flash floods and mudslides destroy a lot of the surrounding area as well,” Seneca explained. “I would have died in a car accident that night if it wasn’t for my...unique ability.”

Anika frowned. “What does that mean?”

“The accident I was in triggered my awakening, and my magic protected me.”

“How?” Gunner asked. “I don’t mean to be rude, but I don’t sense a lot of power coming from you. Are you indestructible or something? Because that would be pretty fucking cool.”

“That would be pretty cool, but no. Actually, my unique ability is more like an extra sense rather than an active skill. I guess the best way to describe it is that I was born lucky.”

As she explained how her luck worked, Killian felt a wave of foreboding. Being lucky sounded like an awesome gift, but he had no doubt it could also be a curse. That was confirmed once she started telling them what her life had been like once her aunt and uncle discovered she could pass her luck onto others.

Fury swept through him like a raging wildfire. The way her aunt and uncle had used and abused her made him want to rip them apart with his bare hands. He would lock them away in his dungeon where he could bleed them out slowly, over and over again, making sure they suffered the pain she had gone through each time they had demanded a blood sacrifice from her.

But he wouldn't stop there.

He would use the various torture methods he'd learned over the long centuries on them, stripping them of everything they had been until they were nothing more than empty meat husks. Then, he would obliterate their souls to ensure they would never be born again within the six realms.

Okay, that was probably overkill, but he didn't care. He would destroy anyone who tried to hurt her. And he swore that no one would ever steal her luck again.

He'd make damn sure of it.

Her story seemed fantastical, but he believed every word of it. And not just because she was his mate. He could hear the ring of truth in her words. Their connection also explained why he had sensed the magical surge of her rebirth from halfway across the world. That made him curious about whether or not he had also sensed her death.

Killian fought hard to remain calm while he continued to listen to her story, but when she got to the part about being killed by the witch who had kidnapped her, pure madness consumed him. Discovering that Whitley Dalkis sold items made of dark

magic on the black market would have been enough for the Guardians to go after her, but knowing she had been the cause of his mate's death made him lose his fucking mind.

He knew that wasn't the end of Seneca's story. There was more she had to tell them, including what had happened when she had met with the gods who had sent her back in time. However, he needed a break before he could listen to more.

No, what he needed to do was to go hunting.

Killian abruptly stood up. "Why don't we pause here? You've been speaking for a while and haven't had a chance to finish your meal. Dario? How about you make some of that special juice blend to soothe her throat?"

Dario stood up and glared at him. "Fuck that. I am going with you."

Of course, his friend had already guessed what he was planning to do.

"That's okay. He doesn't need to make me anything. I could use a glass of wine or something, instead." She tried to put on a brave face, but when Seneca smiled, her lower lip trembled. "I did turn twenty-one today...again."

"Right! Happy Birthday! How about we have some champagne instead?" Arson sounded cheerful, but his gaze was serious as he sent Killian a slight nod.

Good. They would guard his mate until he returned.

"I'll get it," Gunner offered as he popped to his feet and hurried toward the bar. "We've got some of the good stuff stocked up here."

"Make sure you eat more," Killian said gently as he stroked his hand over Seneca's

pale hair. He desperately wanted to touch her, needed that connection after hearing what she had been through over the past year.

But it wasn't enough.

When she tilted her head back to look up at him, he wanted to groan. As much as he tried, he simply couldn't resist leaning down. He wanted to brush his lips against hers and taste the sweetness of her kiss. However, he didn't want their first intimate act to be witnessed by so many people.

That should be a sacred moment only the two of them would share.

He also wasn't sure he would be able to stop if he did that. Instead, he settled for pressing his lips against her forehead, needing to show her affection without asking for anything in return.

"I will be right back, mate."

"We. We will be right back," Anika corrected in a low voice devoid of all emotion.

"What? Where are you—?"

Before Seneca could finish what she was saying, Killian, Anika, and Dario disappeared, leaving an eerie silence in their wake.

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Seneca sat there feeling shocked that her new mate and his friends had left, while the others in the room didn't seem to care. They just kept eating as if nothing had happened. She couldn't help feeling like Killian had just abandoned her, though he probably had a good reason for leaving.

Recounting the last year of her life hadn't been easy for her. It was even more difficult than it had been when she'd told Shadow everything earlier. Despite Killian being her mate, most of the people in the room were virtually strangers. Telling them the sordid details of what had happened to her was embarrassing since it was like putting her weaknesses on full display.

It was also pretty painful.

Being reborn might have wiped the slate clean for her, but the mental anguish of the events she had lived through was still with her like invisible scars. As she recounted the events that had occurred, she had tried to detach herself from the sorrow of the past. She hadn't wanted to go into too much detail, but she'd felt an overwhelming need to be open and honest with Killian.

An omission wasn't an outright lie, but it wasn't the full truth either. Perhaps it was the influence of the mating bond that had made her want to spill her guts to him. That compulsion had made her blurt out far more than she had initially been prepared to tell them.

Retelling her story made parts of her previous life flash in front of her eyes. It was a bizarre feeling, the two timelines colliding and intertwining in her head until she had a hard time deciphering what was real. Memories surged through her mind, vivid and

haunting, each one a fragment saturated in agony and despair. In contrast, her new reality was brighter and filled with hope, but that made it harder to believe.

It almost felt like she was still stuck in a strange dream. The boundaries between past and present blurred, leaving her feeling confused as she tried to separate the two. But it was a dream she was willing to indulge in, especially since it had brought Killian to her.

Amidst the chaos of being reborn, she had found her mate.

Out of everything that had happened over the past few days, meeting Killian had to be the most unexpected. Despite the undeniable connection she felt with him, a part of her still didn't fully believe that he was really hers. She knew she had to trust his declaration, though. He wasn't just any supernatural being. As a reaper, he was immensely powerful and perceptive. That meant there was no way he would claim someone as his mate if he wasn't sure it was true.

"Don't worry. I'm sure they will be back soon. Just eat. You've barely touched your food." Celine scooped some of the creamy pasta with giant pieces of lobster onto her plate. "Try this. It's really good."

Still unwilling to let it go, Seneca turned toward Arson. "Do you know where they went?"

"If I had to guess, I would say your badass mate went to kill the witch who murdered you," Arson said bluntly.

"Bro, you could have eased her into that a little," Gunner chided as he carried over an enormous magnum bottle of champagne and stemless crystal flutes. With expertise, he opened the bottle and filled the glasses before handing them out. "Here, have some champagne."

“But...but...he can’t just kill her,” she sputtered.

“Sure he can,” Arson countered cheerfully raising his glass in salute. “And after what you told us, she definitely deserves it.”

Seneca had been hoping it would be easy to convince Killian to help her strike back at the people who had hurt her during her last life, but she hadn’t considered he would just go out and kill them for her. She knew she should have been horrified by that thought, but she couldn’t help feeling a little flattered that he would do something so extreme for her.

“But she didn’t do anything to me in this timeline,” she pointed out, more as a reminder for herself. “Not yet, anyway. How can he just—?”

“Don’t worry about that,” Gunner said dismissively before shoving a forkful of brisket into his mouth. “He’s kind of a pro at this sort of thing.”

Her brows winged up at that. “What does that mean?”

Gunner sighed and shot her a sympathetic look. “You really don’t understand exactly who your mate is, do you?”

“He’s not a serial killer or anything like that,” Celine assured as she patted her shoulder. “But Killian Black isn’t just a powerful supernatural. He is a dark god, one of the very last remaining ancient reapers, and the boss of the Guardians of the Underworld.”

“Oh, and he also used to be some sort of royalty, but he doesn’t really care much about that title these days,” Arson added breezily.

Seneca felt like her head was going to explode. That was a whole lot to digest. She

had never attended a magical academy during her previous life so she didn't know much about the supernatural hierarchy beyond what she'd learned from her friends. She knew reapers were the most powerful beings in the Hell Realm, but hearing her mate being called a dark god put a whole new spin on things.

She really was mated to a magical badass.

Unconsciously, she reached for the relic she had gotten from her mate. She liked thinking of it as his first gift to her, although the way he had spoken about it made it seem like the magical parasol had chosen her. As soon as she touched the crystal handle, she was instantly flooded with a sense of warmth and comfort. That startled her enough that she let go of it. She wasn't used to inanimate objects being able to do something like that.

Taking a big gulp of champagne, she tried to calm her nerves a bit. "What are the Guardians of the Underworld? Is that like the supernatural mafia or something?"

"Sort of, but we mostly use our power and influence to make sure supernaturals don't cause problems here in the Human Realm," Arson explained.

"You're one of these Guardians as well?"

"We all are," Celine confirmed. "It's why Arson set up The Manor in the first place. To make it easier for us to monitor the supernatural community in this area."

"So, are you guys sort of like the Supernatural Council?"

Arson snorted. "Hell, no. Those assholes are almost as useless as human politicians. We, on the other hand, maintain balance and order so the majority of the human population remain unaware of the supernatural world."

“The Supernatural Council only deals with bigger issues that affect the six realms, while we strictly handle things here in the Human Realm,” Celine explained.

“The Council is totally useless,” Gunner muttered before shoving more food in his mouth.

“Well, if it makes you feel any better, a year from now most of the Council is going to be replaced with better people, or so I heard.”

“What else can you tell us about the future?” Arson asked, leaning forward.

Gunner grinned. “Do you remember any lotto numbers?”

Seneca chuckled and shook her head. “Sorry, no.”

“Damn. How about who won the World Series? Super Bowl?”

“Didn’t really pay attention to that either.”

She wanted to laugh at the disappointed look on his face, but a wave of apprehension swept through her. She really didn’t pay attention to most sports, but she had always been a big supporter of Thane and his snowboarding career. She really hoped Shadow and her brother were now safe at home, and pulled her cell phone out of her pocket, hoping that she might have a text from them.

Unfortunately, the phone wouldn’t even turn on.

“That won’t work here,” Arson confirmed. “We’ve got a landline if you need to make a call out.”

“I just wanted to make sure Shadow and Thane were okay.”

“I can go check on them for you,” Celine offered.

Before she could respond, the dark angel disappeared from her seat. Teleporting really did come in handy. That was definitely a skill she wished she had, but it wasn’t something most witches were capable of. Since Celine was good friends with Thane, Seneca had no doubt she would track them down to make sure they were okay.

Even though she wasn’t full yet, Seneca had lost her appetite worrying about her friends. She was also feeling a little anxious waiting for her mate to return. Not that he couldn’t handle himself. Safety wasn’t really an issue for him, but she was pretty damn curious about what he was doing.

She got to her feet, earning the males’ full attention. “Could you tell me where the restroom is?”

“Across the hall to the left,” Gunner answered around a mouthful of food.

Arson gave her a speculative look that made her ask, “Why are you looking at me like that? Are you afraid I’m going to run away or something?”

He sighed. “No, I’m just trying not to think of how many different ways Killian would torture me if something were to happen to you while he left you in my care.”

She snorted out a laugh. “I think I can manage to go to the bathroom by myself without getting lost or injured.”

“Let’s hope so.”

Leaving the private dining room, she followed their directions to the restroom. She hadn’t realized it until she’d left the room, but she desperately needed a few moments to herself. Unlike her old self, she was out of practice being social, and putting on a

brave face in front of everyone was utterly exhausting.

Like everything else in the private club, the black and gold bathroom was a well-appointed space with individual rooms instead of stalls. A pleasant scent drifted from a colorful arrangement of fresh flowers sitting on a high table in the small vestibule near the entrance. She paused to study the flowers and noticed a few that she'd never seen before. When she leaned forward to sniff at their alluring fragrance, she immediately felt lightheaded like she had downed half the bottle of champagne instead of only taking a few sips. Quickly stepping back, she shook her head to try to clear it.

Leave it to The Manor to use magical flowers from other realms as decorations.

After she took care of her pressing needs, she made her way over to one of the sinks to wash her hands and frowned when she got a good look at herself in the mirror. She had been expecting to find herself looking like a hot mess since she had arrived at The Manor soaking wet, but she looked the same as she had when she'd left the house.

Actually, she looked better.

Her icy blonde hair had a new glossy sheen to it, and her dewy skin looked like it was airbrushed with makeup to look completely flawless. Her dark lashes seemed even longer than usual, making her gray eyes look even brighter. As she dried her hands with one of the hand towels that had been laid out for guests, she noticed that her clothes were completely dry. That must have been Killian's doing. It made her smile that he had seen to her comfort without mentioning it.

"I'll have to thank my new mate later," she murmured.

"Thank me for what?"

Seneca gasped as her gaze shot back up to the mirror. Killian was standing behind her, his taller frame allowing her to see him clearly. Still impeccably dressed in his black suit, he looked no different than he had a few minutes ago. He certainly didn't look like he had just gone out and committed murder.

Strangely, she realized it wouldn't really bother her if he had.

Perhaps dying had screwed with her sense of morality. Or maybe she'd always been that way due to her unique upbringing. Either way, she figured that was probably a good thing considering she was now mated to a reaper.

Smiling at him through the mirror, she said, "I don't think you are supposed to be in here."

His eclipse eyes seemed to glow brighter as he took a step closer to her. "I don't think anyone is going to stop me."

His deep voice made her want to shiver. Not only was it mesmerizing, it was also addicting. She wanted to close her eyes and savor every word he spoke to her, but she didn't want to lose the view of his ridiculously handsome face either. Even though they weren't touching, she felt the heat of his body against her back.

"You're probably right about that," she teased with a laugh. Sobering, she met his steady gaze through the mirror. "Did you kill Whitley Dalkis?"

"Not yet," he answered easily. "But I bet she wishes I had. She is spending some quality time with Anika right now. There are answers about the magical black market we want from her before she meets her end."

"But she didn't do anything to me in this life."

“I still would have killed her for what she did to you in your past life,” he admitted. “However, there were two other people she was holding captive on her estate. We also discovered several bodies buried in her garden, so there is no question she must pay for those crimes.”

Seneca vaguely remembered her captor mentioning there were others like her, but the memory was hazy since she’d been dying at that point. She wasn’t the least bit surprised that other people had been buried in the backyard either. Any guilt she’d been feeling evaporated like smoke.

The crazy witch deserved to die.

“What happened to the captives?” she asked. “Are they okay?”

“Dario took them somewhere safe so they can begin to heal and contact their families.”

Satisfied with the way everything was handled, she couldn’t really ask for more. “What about Clara and Mark? Did you visit them as well?”

“Their time will come,” he said ominously. “We can talk about how you want to handle them later.”

She nodded. “Thank you for drying my clothes earlier.”

“It was my pleasure, mate.”

“Did you give me a magical glow-up while you were at it?”

“What does that mean?”

“It means my hair and skin look better than it did a few hours ago.”

He placed his hands on her shoulders and gently turned her until she was facing him. “I used magic on you earlier, but I didn’t do anything to alter your appearance. Perhaps you are sensitive to my magic because we are mates.” He traced a finger down her cheek. “But you are right. You were beautiful before, but now, you look luminous.”

When their eyes met and held, she lost the ability to speak. Her pulse began to race as the air between them seemed to thicken with their lust. She let out a loud gasp when he surprised her by lifting her so she was sitting on the edge of the counter between two of the sinks.

“Killian...”

“I love hearing my name on your lips,” he murmured. “Are you afraid of me, Seneca?”

“No, but I probably should be,” she blurted out. “You make me nervous, though. And I say stupid things when I’m nervous.”

“Nothing you say is stupid,” he countered.

Stepping between her parted thighs, he spread her legs wider to accommodate his large body. His movements were slow as if he were testing her reactions to him. She had been honest about being nervous. Even though he was her mate, he was an intimidating male who was still essentially a stranger to her.

But that didn’t stop her from wanting him.

It was as if every cell in her body was calling out to him, needing him closer.

Excitement and longing were drowning out her nerves, making her body hum with anticipation. He slowly leaned closer until they were mere inches apart, and she shivered as she felt the warmth of his breath across her lips. She heard a strange creaking sound but couldn't pull her gaze away from his to figure out where the noise had come from.

Time seemed to stand still as they continued to simply stare at one another. He was as still as a statue, but she could sense the tension radiating from his frozen frame. She appreciated his restraint almost as much as she cursed it. She instinctively understood he was waiting for her to make the next move, but it would have been a whole lot easier to let him take the lead.

The choice was hers to make.

It felt like she was standing on the edge of a cliff, waiting to dive into the unknown. But she was ready for it. Not just ready, she was eager to take that dive with him.

She wanted to be his mate.

Leaning closer, she brushed her lips against his in a soft, tentative kiss. When she started to pull back, he pressed his lips firmly against hers. Taking her hand in his, he gently intertwined his fingers with hers so their palms were pressed together. That gesture might have seemed innocent, but the intimacy of skin-to-skin contact formed a connection between them that was electric.

His other arm wrapped around her waist, and he jerked her against him as he took the kiss deeper. She gasped when she felt his hard shaft, hidden beneath the layers of clothing between them, rub against her core. Taking advantage, his tongue swept into her mouth to twine with hers. The taste of him was even more potent than the champagne she'd had earlier, and her head swirled as if she was already drunk on him.

The kiss was a clash of passion and tenderness, an endless fusion of raw desire and growing affection. Their tongues moved in harmony, his coaxing hers into a dance of passionate exploration. She gasped again, this time in pain from a burning sensation on her palm. She tried to pull her hand away from his, but his fingers tightened around hers, holding her in place in silent refusal.

The burn on her palm intensified until she could barely stand it, then the pain vanished leaving behind a tolerable warmth. The pain wasn't gone, though. It was being blocked by Killian. She wasn't sure how she knew that until she realized exactly what was happening. He was marking her with his magic, creating a bond between them that would never be broken.

As she felt his magic surging into her, she tried to figure out how to do the same to him. She knew they both had to share their magic to complete the bond, but she'd never learned exactly how it was done. Even as she considered it, he let out a low growl of pleasure as her own magic began flowing into him.

Apparently, all it took to complete the mating bond was the desire to do so.

That realization clarified the situation, but it didn't mean the process was simple. Her head began to spin as she was suddenly bombarded by a complex jumble of emotions. What she felt wasn't just coming from her. She was also feeling Killian's emotions. Their minds, souls, and magic were merging together until even their hearts began to beat in unison.

She wrapped her arm around his neck and clung to him like an anchor against the onslaught of emotions. Killian's need for her was overwhelming. It felt truly incredible to be wanted like that. To have such a powerful male desire her that way was both humbling and exhilarating.

She sensed Killian's satisfaction and pleasure from claiming her, but he was also

angry with himself for doing it without discussing it with her first. She couldn't blame him, though. It had been an intuitive action. An instinctive response from them being so close. It was as if fate was making sure they would never again be separated.

Powerful supernaturals had a much more difficult time resisting the mating bond than beings with less magic. Even with that added pressure, he had still attempted to give her a choice. She appreciated that even if it wasn't necessary. Since their bond had started to form the moment she had kissed him, if anyone was at fault, it would be her.

"No, mate," he growled through their bond. "There is no fault between us."

Hearing his voice inside her head startled her. She knew that was part of the mating bond, but she hadn't been prepared to actually experience it.

Then, in a flash, their mating bond was complete.

Not letting go, Killian continued to kiss her with a fervor that heated her blood. Pleasure surged through her as he rubbed against her core, and she couldn't help moving her hips against him in a desperate plea for more.

She didn't realize she had started tugging at his clothes until a loud pounding on the bathroom door jerked her back to reality. When she tried to pull away, he held firm and refused to release her.

"Hey, Seneca! Why is this damn door locked? Are you in there? Did you fall in the toilet or something? Can you hear me? Answer me, damn it!"

Seneca wasn't sure if she wanted to laugh or cry at the sound of her best friend's loud voice coming through the thick wooden door. It was a relief to know that Shadow was alive and well, but her timing left a lot to be desired. Killian finally broke the

kiss and rested his forehead against hers with a sigh.

“I locked the door as soon as I entered,” he explained. “I should have soundproofed the room as well. Clearly, that is an oversight I will not make again.”

“She won’t stop until I answer.”

“I already told her to go back and wait for us in the dining room.”

Seneca couldn’t help but frown at that. “You can speak to other people telepathically?”

“Anyone I choose to, yes. But it is not the same as our connection.” He smiled as he rubbed his thumb along her lower lip. “Are you jealous?”

She was, but she wasn’t about to admit that out loud.

“You don’t have to say it out loud.”

Oh, god. She was fucking doomed.

Groaning, she closed her eyes. Now that they were bonded, he was going to be able to hear all the weird stuff inside her head. She wasn’t ready for him to figure out just how crazy she could be when she was talking to herself. Especially when she was planning out a storyline for one of her graphic novels. When she was plotting, she could sound like a fucking serial killer or someone with multiple personalities.

“I find you utterly adorable, mate.” He brushed his lips against her forehead, then grabbed hold of her waist and lifted her off the counter. Once her feet were touching the ground again, he said, “Don’t worry, I can refrain from being inside your head all the time until you get used to our bond.”

“So, we really are fully bonded? Just like that?”

“We shared magic and branded one another with our mating marks, so, yes.”

She glanced down at her hand and saw a circular mark with an ancient symbol made of silvery iridescent light in the center of her palm. The mating mark was beautiful, but it was more than just a pretty adornment.

It was proof of their magical bond.

“But I thought we had to...you know.”

His lips curved into a seductive smile. “A lot of mates bond while having sex, but it isn’t necessary. We can mark each other again while we—”

“Okay, we can talk about that later,” she said, cutting him off. “Our friends are waiting, and we have a not-so-natural disaster to stop. We don’t have time for any of that.”

“Any of what?”

He chuckled as she stepped away from him. She immediately missed the heat of his body pressed against her, but it was better to avoid temptation...for now. They really did have more pressing things to deal with.

That reminder was enough to counteract her lust.

When she turned back toward the mirror, she blinked at the sight of the two holes in the marble countertop near where she’d been sitting. She quickly realized that had been the sound she’d heard while he had waited for her to kiss him. He had literally pulverized the marble with his bare hands to hold himself back.

Again, that should have been scary, but she found it extremely flattering.

“I’m glad you think so,” he said in response to her inner thoughts.

She shot him some serious side-eye. “I thought you said you could stay out of my head.”

He sighed as he used his magic to fix the damaged countertop. “I will try, but I can’t help hearing when you shout your thoughts at me.”

Okay, she was really going to have to stop doing that if she wanted to keep an ounce of her dignity intact. Then again, perhaps she should just embrace the inevitable and get used to embarrassing herself in front of her mate since it was bound to happen often.

But it was a trade-off to have a mate who could fix things at will.

“You will be able to as well,” he pointed out. “It might take a little longer for our connection to fully settle into place, but you now have access to some of my magic.”

She wanted to groan at that. Not only would she have to get used to having a powerful mate, she now possessed some of his magic. Considering she could barely handle her own measly witch powers, learning how to handle reaper magic was going to be a bitch.

“It won’t be that difficult once you scan my mind. You will be able to learn whatever you need to simply by accessing my memories. I have centuries of knowledge to share with you.”

“Finishing college should be a breeze, then,” she quipped, then her eyes widened. “I also gave you some of my magic when we bonded. I know it’s nothing compared to

yours, but does that mean you got some of my luck?”

He opened his mouth to speak, then closed it again as he considered the possibility. “I wonder if the six realms will be able to handle a lucky reaper on a revenge quest for his beloved mate.”

That thought was enough to make her shiver.

“I guess we will have to wait and see.”

Page 9

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

As Killian watched his mate speaking with her best friend several feet away, he felt relieved that his sense of possessiveness had dimmed down a little. At least enough that he didn't actively want to obliterate Shadow simply for being so close to his mate.

He considered that progress.

The two females were very close. That was obvious enough by the way they had laughed, cried, and hugged the moment they had seen each other. Shadow Warcloud was stronger than he had given her credit for. Instead of waiting for them in the private dining room like he had ordered her to, the demon-witch hybrid had remained in the hallway waiting for Seneca to appear.

By the worried glance she'd shot his way, she knew exactly who and what he was. But that hadn't stopped her from standing her ground to make sure Seneca was okay. Because of that, she had earned his approval as his mate's best friend. Of course, he still needed to do his own analysis of her in order to decide just how much she could be trusted, but it was a good start.

The sight of his mate in tears made Killian feel absolutely feral, but he hadn't interrupted them. He understood their need to reconnect. The trauma Seneca had faced during her last life when her friends had been killed was still haunting her, and he would never interfere in anything she needed to reconcile her past. She needed to heal, and he would do whatever it took to ensure she could do that.

After all, nothing was more important than his mate's health and happiness.

Time travel wasn't a simple process. It took seriously powerful magic to even attempt such a thing. In fact, he'd only heard of a few people succeeding before. Even then, those people had still been alive at the time, and they hadn't been able to travel back very far.

Sending someone's soul back was unheard of.

Until now.

He wasn't sure what he could do to make the transition between two lifetimes a little easier on her. It had to be confusing as fuck for her at times, but she was handling it pretty well. She hadn't told them much about her meeting with the gods who had sent her back yet, but Killian wasn't really worried about that. The most important factor was they had succeeded in giving her a second chance at life.

The rest could wait.

Leaving Seneca and Shadow huddled together in the corner, Killian sat back down at the table in the private room where a new male was doing his best to consume all the remaining food. When Arson introduced the newcomer as Thane Warcloud, it wasn't a surprise. Killian could have guessed that by his resemblance to his sister, Shadow.

He was impressed by the way Thane didn't seem afraid of him. Well, that wasn't quite true. The male was intimidated, but he did a good job of masking it. Thane was an Olympic gold medalist and well known throughout the sports world, so he was used to being around powerful and famous humans but dealing with someone of Killian's caliber was quite different.

As if guessing what he was thinking, Thane said, "So, you are Seneca's new mate. Since she is like a sister to me, I should warn you not to hurt her. Of course, that's not much of a threat since I know you are a powerful reaper who could crush me like an

ant with a thought. However, there are a lot of people who love and care about her, so you won't be dealing with just me if something happens to her."

Killian had to commend his courage and loyalty, but the warning wasn't necessary. In fact, he would have been insulted if he didn't understand the sentiment behind those words.

Some people didn't believe in love at first sight, nor did they fully trust the concept of fated mates. He wasn't one of those people. Seneca belonged to him. She was more than just his mate or someone destiny had chosen for him. She was his heart and soul, his very reason for existing, and he would love and cherish her until the end of days.

If anyone tried to hurt her, he would kill them. If she wanted revenge? No problem. It would be his pleasure to take care of it for her. Whatever she wanted, he would provide. There was absolutely nothing that he wouldn't do for her. Hell, he would fucking burn the world to ash just to keep her warm.

"That seems a little extreme," she teased through their bond. "But also very sweet."

"That is the first time I have ever been accused of being sweet."

She chuckled. "It wasn't an accusation. It was a compliment."

"Compliment me again, mate. I like it when you do."

"Later...mate."

He was so pleased she had finally called him her mate that he practically felt his chest swell with pride. He would definitely hold her to her promise later.

"Seneca is my everything. As long as I have life in me, she will always be safe and

protected,” Killian said out loud, his voice ringing with a hint of power that added to his conviction.

Thane smiled. “Well, then. Welcome to the family.”

Killian wasn’t sure how to respond to that so he just said, “Glad to see you still have all your limbs attached.”

Thane cringed. “So am I.” Lowering his voice, he asked, “I know Seneca wanted me and my sister to stay home with our parents, but Shadow has been freaking out ever since Seneca explained what had happened to her.”

“Seneca was also worried about them, so I went to make sure Shadow found Thane in time to save him,” Celine explained.

“I still don’t really understand what the fuck is going on,” Thane admitted. “I mean, I heard the recap, but it sounds like some crazy plot to one of their graphic novels.”

“Actually, it would make an awesome story,” Gunner said. “They really should write it.”

“Wouldn’t that be dangerous?” Celine asked.

Arson snorted. “Who the fuck would believe this is real?”

“What do you mean you bonded already?” Shadow shouted from across the room, but Seneca quickly slapped a hand over her friend’s mouth.

“Does your friend have a problem with me?” Killian asked through their bond.

“No, she was just freaking out a little because she thought we did it in the bathroom,”

Seneca explained.

Since he could practically feel her blush through their bond, he couldn't help teasing her again. "We did do it in the bathroom."

"I didn't mean...not that."

Killian heard her thinking about how her friend had been worried about her losing her virginity in a bathroom instead of a romantic setting as she deserved. While he couldn't fault her for what happened before they met, satisfaction swept through him knowing she was untouched by another male. He felt ashamed that he hadn't waited for her as well. His only excuse was that he had been alive a lot longer than she had, but he wasn't sure how to tell her that without upsetting her.

"Don't worry. I'm not mad," she assured him, amusement clear in her voice. "If you had waited, that would have made you the oldest virgin alive."

She had apparently learned how to read his thoughts as well, and he was proud that she was adapting to their bond so quickly. He had nothing to hide from her and freely gave her complete access to his thoughts and memories.

"I will make sure our first time together is special," he vowed.

"I don't need anything special. I just need you," she whispered back shyly.

Lust surged through him, making it difficult to breathe. Her declaration made him want to teleport her the hell out of there so he could make good on his promise, but there wasn't time for that now.

A strange sensation had begun settling in the pit of his stomach, making him feel extremely uneasy. At first, he wasn't sure what the uncomfortable feeling was. He'd

never felt nervous before, but that was the closest thing he could describe it as.

He started to reach out to comfort his mate, then was surprised when he realized that strange feeling wasn't coming from her. He was the one experiencing that sense of foreboding.

"What is it?" Arson leaned forward, picking up on his growing tension. "What's wrong?"

"You don't feel anything?" Killian asked.

Celine frowned. "Feel what?"

"I do," Seneca announced as she dragged Shadow with her over to the table. "This is what it feels like when my luck is warning me about something."

That immediately put him on guard. If her lucky warning system had also been transferred to him through their bond, he had to pay attention to it. Stretching his senses out, he tried to decipher what he was feeling. It was like having a premonition that something big was about to happen, but he just didn't know what it was yet.

He noticed the moment the air pressure changed, but it wasn't just a little variation from the storm strengthening. The shockwave of magic that struck him a moment later was strong enough to make him jump to his feet. His first instinct was to protect his mate, and he wrapped his arms around her, even as he threw up a magical shield around the entire building.

It was a magical surge, similar to what he'd felt when Seneca had been reborn, only not as intense. Still, it was enough to explain why the storm had caused so much damage during her previous life.

“Okay, I felt that,” Arson said also getting to his feet. “What the hell was it?”

“The awakening of a powerful supernatural,” Killian declared.

It all made sense to him now.

Since he had experienced it before, he knew what that type of magical surge was. A powerful supernatural had just gone through their awakening, and now they were leaking magic that was feeding the strength of the storm. That meant until they learned how to control their new powers, they were a serious danger to everyone around them.

In an instant, the rain outside had shifted into a torrential downpour with the wind force of a hurricane. A sense of urgency swept through the room, and he knew they had to act fast to save the people in the area.

“That’s why so many people died during my previous life. Whoever is causing the storm is literally flooding the entire area with magic. That’s why there is going to be more than one flash flood. Disasters are going to happen all over the place. But I never heard of this during my last life.” Seneca glanced over at Killian with wide eyes. “How do I know about it now?”

“Since this was caused by magic, peoples’ memories of the storm were probably altered or wiped. Maybe even by the Guardians here.”

“That would be ironic,” she said dryly.

“And you are scanning the area using your new magic and merging it with the information you acquired during your last life. I’m helping you a little, but you figured out how to do it on your own,” he said proudly.

“Go, me,” she quipped. “So, how should we deal with this?”

“We’ll have to split up. You guys focus on doing damage control and saving people, while Seneca and I go find the source to the north where the magical surge originated from,” Killian ordered. “Once we have the supernatural contained, the storm should quickly die down.”

“I’ll take Thane and Shadow with me to the west toward the town,” Arson said. “Celine, you and Gunner lead some of our people to patrol this area.”

“We’re on it,” Gunner assured.

“Boss, we have a problem,” Dario announced as soon as he and Anika stalked back into the room. Instead of the clothes they had been wearing earlier, they were decked out in the black leather armor warriors from the Hell Realm preferred to wear when going into battle.

“What is it?”

In response, he hurried toward the windows and threw open the curtains. Rain slammed against the windows, and the wind howled as the storm raged outside. Thunder boomed overhead, and lightning slashed across the sky, but it was almost impossible to see because it was pitch black outside. Even the lights coming from the surrounding buildings were being blocked out by the strange dense fog.

Clearly, it wasn’t normal darkness.

“What’s wrong?” Thane asked after everyone walked over to glance outside. “I don’t see anything.”

“I think that’s the point,” Shadow said dryly. “It’s like there is nothing out there.”

“That’s exactly right,” Anika stated. “We had a little trouble teleporting in, so we arrived through the portal on the top floor and saw this. When we went out on the roof to check it out, I couldn’t even see my fucking hand a few inches from my face.”

“It’s like some sort of dark cloud has settled over the entire area,” Dario said. “I flew up, and the darkness is being contained by the storm clouds. Above that, the sky is clear. So, it’s only happening in this area.”

“Interesting,” Killian murmured.

“That’s not interesting, it’s fucking terrifying,” Seneca countered.

Hearing the tremor in her voice made him want to leave her behind where she would be safe, but something told him that she had to go with him to find the supernatural causing the storm. If helping whoever was doing it was one of the things she needed to accomplish to stay in the new timeline, then that’s exactly what they would do.

Killian would make damn sure she was safe, though.

He would never risk losing her again.

When Seneca let out a little squeak of surprise, he glanced down to see her holding the magical umbrella in her hand. Clearly, the ancient relic didn’t want to be left behind. Since that was another layer of protection for her, he was grateful to have it tag along.

She yelped again when he used his magic to change them both into their own set of black armor. It would protect their bodies as well as keep them from getting wet. Even if he could dry their clothes with a thought, there was no use ruining a good suit. He had to take a few brief seconds to admire her in the form-fitting armor since she looked absolutely divine in it but knew he couldn’t obsess over her for too long.

“We have to go.” He held out a hand to Seneca. “Are you ready?”

“No, but let’s do it anyway,” she said as she slipped her hand into his.

“That’s the spirit.”

“We’re going with you,” Anika said as Dario moved to stand beside her.

Since Killian had expected that, he just nodded. With that, he teleported them away from The Manor, and into the heart of the storm.

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

The moment they arrived at their destination, Seneca barely held back a scream as she was lifted off her feet by the vicious windstorm. Killian held firm to her hand and wrapped his other arm around her waist to secure her against him.

The entire area was devoid of light, and it was unnerving not being able to see anything. She risked glancing up and swallowed hard when she couldn't even see her mate's handsome face.

Fucking hell, how were they supposed to do anything when they couldn't even see?

Suddenly, the black lace parasol in her hand jerked as it sprang open. She was worried it would get carried away in the windstorm and held onto the handle with a desperate grip. A blast of light shot out of the tip of the parasol, and it cascaded around them until they were surrounded by a protection bubble made of bright glowing silver runes.

Everything went quiet as the wind disappeared.

Safe inside the protection bubble, she made a vow then and there to never leave home without the pretty little parasol from now on. As if pleased by her thoughts, the crystal handle in her hand began to pulse and twinkle with light. That was a strange yet comforting response to get from a magical object. She really was becoming quite fond of the ancient relic, even if it did make her feel a little Mary Poppins-Esque.

The bright light coming from the magical shield barely made a dent against the dense darkness surrounding them. As she glanced around, she started to panic when she didn't see Killian's friends. "Oh, shit. Where are Anika and Dario? Did we lose them

in the storm?”

“Relax, mate. We got separated, but they are fine.”

His calm tone helped soothe some of her anxiety, but she still clung to him as the storm continued to rage outside of their safe zone. Instead of a cloud, the darkness that surrounded them looked like a tornado made of thick black smoke that was being swirled around by the intense wind.

“How are we supposed to find anyone in that?”

“You are still using your human eyes.”

She pointed a finger toward her face. “These are the only ones I have.”

He smiled down at her. “You have the magic of a dark god now. Use it, mate.”

“I can use your magic to—”

“No. You can use your god magic.”

“But I’m not a god.” She blinked up at him. “Am I?”

“You are.”

“I...don’t know how to process that.” She took a deep, shuddering breath. “Okay, let me just think of it as your magic for now. I can use your god powers. Like a magical borrowing system between mates. Yeah, that seems a little less panic-inducing.”

“Do I even need to be here for this part of the conversation?” he teased.

Before she could think about what she was doing, she punched him on the arm, making him laugh. He seemed surprised by the sound of his own laughter, and she made a silent vow to try to coax it out of him more often.

“This doesn’t mean I have to, like, reap souls, or whatever now, does it?”

“No. That is definitely something you do not have to worry about.”

That was a relief. “You can really see through all this darkness?”

He just nodded and waited, seeming to have all the patience in the world. Knowing they were on the clock, she bit her lower lip and concentrated on using her new magical powers to allow her to see in the dark. Suddenly, her vision became clear, and she was able to view the entire area. It almost seemed unfair. Using her new god powers was as simple as breathing, whereas, using her witch magic had always been a struggle.

“I did it!”

“That you did.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead. “Well done.”

Now that she could see through the darkness, she had a clear view of the storm raging outside of their protection bubble. They were standing in a clearing behind a small house that had already been partially destroyed by the pounding rain and wind. Several trees within the vicinity had lost large branches, and pieces of siding and roof tiles from other houses whirled through the air like deadly projectiles.

Killian flung out an arm, releasing a strong blast of magic that passed through the protection bubble and out into the storm. “Stay here where you are safe. I’ll be right back.”

“What? Wait! Where are you going?”

“To collect the supernatural. The storm seemed to be radiating out of that kid. See? It’s already weakening now that he’s down.”

Alarmed, she glanced around and saw a young man lying in the center of the small crater of dirt wearing nothing but a tattered shirt and ripped jeans.

“Oh my god, did you kill him? We need to hide the body.”

Seneca considered burying his body in the crater on the ground but thought that would be too tragic. Being buried in his own backyard would be a really shitty way to go. That was if the guy even lived there. He might have just been some poor dude that had been walking by. Besides that, burying him there reminded her too much of the makeshift graveyard in Whitley Dalkis’ garden.

“You can just use your magic to poof his body away, right? Let’s just do that. Or should we call the police and let them take the body away? No, no, no, we can’t get the humans involved, or there will be a shit ton of questions we can’t answer.”

“He’s not dead, mate. I just put him to sleep so his powers would stop causing this mess.”

She slapped his arm playfully. “Why didn’t you say so sooner?”

Wrapping his arm around her waist, he pulled her closer. “I was too mesmerized by your beauty to speak.”

He lowered his head to kiss her, but Anika distracted them with a loud groan.

“Can’t you two wait until we are done here to do that?” During the chaos, Anika had

wound up across the street from them, partially buried under a pile of debris. She cursed as she shoved a large piece of a broken fence out of her way. “Where is the bastard who caused all this?”

“Over here.”

Now that the magical storm had died down to an average downpour, Seneca slowly lowered the parasol. It immediately snapped shut and the protection bubble disappeared. She absently wished she had a way to transport the parasol with her while keeping her hands free. The parasol immediately vanished, then reappeared secured to her back with a crossbody strap.

Sweet.

Who needed a familiar when she had an ancient relic that could read her mind?

Even though the shield was gone, she still wasn't getting wet. When Killian winked at her, she realized he was using his magic to protect them from the rain. As he approached the male sprawled out on the ground, Dario flew over to join them. Seneca was impressed as she watched him land lightly on his feet. He retracted his massive black wings so they disappeared into his back. His wings were beautiful, and she wondered what it felt like to fly.

“Enough of that,” Killian growled. “Stop admiring his wings, or I will cut them the fuck off.”

“Ouch. That's just mean,” she said, trying not to laugh. “I'm not admiring him. I've just never seen a dark angel's wings before.”

He grunted in response, then moved to stand over the prone male with Dario by his side. Seneca wanted to join them, but before she could move, Killian commanded her

to, “Stay there.”

“Why?”

“He’s not dressed properly.”

She wanted to roll her eyes. “You can’t possibly be jealous. The dude is lying there like a corpse. That’s just ick. And that’s coming from the girl who just returned from Hell.”

“Fine. You may join us but be careful. The ground is slippery.”

Even as he muttered the warning, a clear, dry path appeared before her. Her powerful mate might have sounded gruff, but he really was a total sweetheart. She bit her lip to hide her amusement when Killian scowled and used his magic to repair the sleeping male’s clothes.

Seneca was about to tease him again but forgot what she was going to say when she heard another male’s voice inside her head.

“Is he a new god?”

“That was Dario. He prefers to speak to us telepathically,” Killian told her, then he switched to speaking out loud. “I don’t think so. He definitely has god powers, but I don’t think he’s a full god. He might be a demi-god, though. No matter what he is, he needs to stay the fuck away from people until he learns how to control his magic.”

“Looks like he had one hell of a rude awakening,” Anika quipped as she finally joined them. She gave the guy a hard nudge with her foot. “What do you want to do with him?”

“Mason!” a woman screamed as she kicked open the broken backdoor of the small house and raced out of the house. “Get away from him!”

They turned in unison to watch her running toward them, and Killian sighed when he saw the knife in her hand. She was trying to protect the boy, and he couldn’t fault her for that. But he would not let her come near his mate with a weapon in her hand. Instead of physically stopping her, he simply dissolved the blade in her hand, leaving her grasping nothing but air.

That made her freeze.

Tears streamed down her face as she yelled, “Did Christos send you? Tell that bastard to leave us alone! Please don’t hurt Mason. Don’t hurt my son!”

She obviously knew what they were, or else that little display of magic would have totally freaked her out. Dressed in jeans and a pink T-shirt with her wet black hair plastered against her head, she didn’t look old enough to have a son Mason’s age, but he didn’t pay attention to females enough to accurately guess how old someone was.

Besides, after a few centuries, age didn’t matter much.

He wasn’t a male swayed by sentiment, so her tears meant little to him. However, he could sense Seneca felt differently about the situation. She was moved by the woman’s desperate pleas for her son. For his mate, he took pity on the crying woman and extended his magical shield so she was also protected from the rain.

“We’re not here to hurt him,” Seneca tried to assure her. “He’s fine. We just had to knock him out to stop him from hurting people with the storm he created.”

The woman’s pale green eyes widened with fear. “But he can’t do that. He doesn’t have magic.”

“He does now,” Anika said dryly.

“You know about supernaturals,” Killian stated.

“Yes, I’m a stylist at the spa at The Manor.” Making an effort to stop crying, she took several deep breaths to calm herself down. “Although I’m human, I’ve worked for Arson for a long time so I’ve seen and heard enough to know about the supernatural community.”

Killian immediately reached out to Arson to request his presence. The woman was being honest, or at least she was being truthful based on her own knowledge. He sensed no magic emanating from her, but his internal alarm system warned him that there was something different about her. He just wasn’t sure what it was yet.

Perhaps she had a supernatural ancestor that she wasn’t aware of. When he used his magic to do a deeper scan on her, she shook her head as if it pained her. She looked confused for a moment, then went back to glancing at them warily.

That made him extremely curious.

A few seconds later, Arson teleported into the clearing. “We were able to stop the flash floods before they reached the populated areas and...Daphne? What are you doing here?” He frowned as he glanced at the others. “What is going on?”

“Her son just had his awakening,” Killian explained.

“Mason? But he’s human.”

“Not anymore. He has god powers.”

“Well, shit.”

“That isn’t possible. My son can’t be a god. I’m telling you, he has never had a speck of magic, and he’s twenty-four now. Past the age to manifest any powers.”

Anika started to snap at the woman, but Seneca interrupted her. “Who is Christos? And why did you think he sent someone to hurt your son?”

Daphne swallowed hard before answering. “He is Mason’s biological father. No, that’s too nice a description for him. He’s an asshole who took advantage of me and now shows up every few years to check to see if Mason has developed any magic. My son has always had medical issues and doesn’t leave the house much, but he’s never had any magical abilities. When he turned twenty-four last week, Christos showed up and said it was the last time he would come because it was clear Mason was useless.”

“He was lying,” Arson growled. “Awakenings usually happen in their teens, but they can still happen after someone turns twenty-four. We even have someone on staff who didn’t have his awakening until he was in his forties.”

“Killian, it sounds like that bastard was trying to breed a child to inherit his magic. If he did that to Daphne, he probably did it to other women, too,” Seneca pointed out.

“I agree.”

“I want him punished,” she bit out, her voice harsh with anger. “The permanent kind.”

“Don’t worry, mate. I will see to it.”

He had a feeling Christos was either a god or was related to one. That would explain why he was monitoring his offspring. Killian knew better than anyone that the gods could be fickle, cruel creatures. Some used their powers to do good and help people,

while others used their magic for personal gain and to harm people. Those individuals didn't deserve the magic they had been gifted. Whoever this Christos was, he certainly belonged in the latter category.

Killian would find him and make him pay for what he'd done. However, this situation might be a whole lot more complicated than it seemed, so he would have to do some digging first.

Considering the specific abilities Mason had displayed, Killian wouldn't be surprised if he discovered he had some sort of connection to Zeus. Once known as the God of the Sky and Emperor of the Gods in the Celestial Realm, Zeus had hurt a lot of people and fathered countless bastards before someone had finally killed him. Killian wasn't sure who had done that particular honor, but it had been well deserved.

"Hold up a second. Zeus is real?" Seneca asked, her surprise clear in her voice.

"Yes, and he was really an unlikable prick."

She snorted out a delicate laugh. "So, the myths about him are true. Do you really think Mason is related to Zeus?"

"Perhaps. It would explain why Christos was monitoring him. He might be seeking someone with a specific ability."

There had to be a reason Christos had specifically chosen Daphne, and her reaction to Killian's magical probe told him there was probably more to her past than even she was aware of. Sometimes magical abilities skipped a generation, and if Mason turned out to be some sort of hybrid god, that would make him even more dangerous.

Delving into their lineages wouldn't be easy since most of the gods were secretive fucks who liked their privacy. Fortunately, they would have time to search for

answers since it would take a while to train Mason properly. Learning how to use new god powers was tricky, especially without a powerful anchor like a mate or blood relative. They would have to make sure that Mason was prepared before they released him back into the general public.

For now, at least they had stopped him from wiping out the town.

“Your son is a danger to anyone who is around him right now,” Killian said bluntly. “Until he learns how to control his magic, he cannot be around people.”

“I can move them into The Manor,” Arson offered.

Killian shook his head. “And if he accidentally destroys The Manor and everyone in it? Would you be able to contain his magic if he loses control again? It would be best if he stays with us for now.”

Daphne started to speak but shut her mouth when Arson held up a hand. “He’s right. He is a dark god. One of the last remaining ancient reapers,” he told her. “Your son will be safer with him. Besides, he is the only one who can train Mason.”

“I still think you should consider staying at The Manor,” Seneca told Daphne. “If this Christos guy comes looking for you or your son, the people at The Manor can protect you. Arson can also arrange for you to come visit Mason if you need to.”

Arson nodded. “That’s a good idea. Pack your things, Daphne. You are moving to The Manor.”

“I can’t ask you to—”

“Not asking. I’m also telling you this is what we should do. Your house is basically destroyed anyway. This really would be best for you and for Mason.”

She hesitated briefly, then nodded. Then, she shot Killian a serious look. “Can you really protect my son if Christos comes looking for him?”

Killian would have been insulted if he didn’t understand she was terrified of losing her son. “I look forward to him trying.”

“What he means is, yes, we will protect your son,” Seneca clarified. “And I can promise you that it won’t end well for Christos if he does coming looking for Mason.”

Satisfied with that, Daphne whispered a heartfelt, “Thank you.”

Killian turned toward Dario and Anika. “Take the boy back to the villa and get him set up in the containment room. We’ll be back once we settle things here.”

Less than a heartbeat later, the three of them disappeared.

Daphne let out a small cry of alarm, then she collected herself and sighed. “I’m going to go pack some of my things.”

“I’ll wait for you and take you back to The Manor since your car is toast.”

“Damn,” she said on a sigh. “I don’t think insurance covers this kind of damage.”

That made him chuckle. “Don’t worry about that. We’ll get it replaced for you.”

Once she disappeared into the house, Arson turned toward them, and his eyes widened. “Oh, wow. That was quick. Your eyes are glowing.”

“What? Me?” Seneca pointed to herself. “My eyes are glowing?”

Arson nodded. “Yep, they are glowing silver now, so you might want to remember to tame that down when you are around humans.”

She groaned. “So, I really am becoming a god. I was just getting used to being reborn, now I have to deal with being a god.”

Killian stroked her hair. “My poor little mate. You’ve had a lot to deal with today.”

“I really have,” she moaned, leaning her full weight against him as she rested her cheek against his chest.

He wanted to laugh at her antics, but he was far too content holding her and didn’t want to interrupt her ploys for sympathy.

“On that note, I’m going to go check on Daphne,” Arson said, looking everywhere but at them.

“We’ll be leaving soon,” Killian told him.

“Okay, contact us at The Manor if you need us,” he said before vanishing.

After he was gone, Seneca continued leaning against Killian. She really did need a moment or two to process everything. “What’s the containment room?”

“Don’t worry, mate. It isn’t the cage you are imagining. The containment room is actually a suite of rooms that are specially warded against magic. So, while he is staying there, he won’t have to worry about losing control of his magic.”

“You’ve dealt with this kind of thing before?”

“Several times.”

“Good,” she said, feeling relieved. “Don’t we need to be there in case he wakes up?”

“I hit him with a spell that will keep him out for a few days,” Killian explained. “It’s best that he sleeps through the worst part of the awakening so his magic has time to settle.” After she sighed again, he demanded, “Tell me what’s wrong.”

“I don’t know,” she said honestly. “Something just feels...off. Did I really get sent back to get revenge, or was it to meet you? Or am I just being used to save this new god we found?”

“I’m not sure, but it could be all of the above. Perhaps you were given the chance to be reborn because you could accomplish everything at once.”

“Perhaps.”

“Come, mate. Let’s go home,” he said softly.

“To your villa?”

“Our villa on the Amalfi coast,” he corrected.

“Nice. I’ve never been there. I don’t know, though. You seem more like a castle kind of guy than a villa guy.”

He chuckled. “I’ve adapted with age.”

Leaning her chin on his chest, she glanced up at him. “Am I going to be able to finish school if we live in Italy?”

“Yes, if that is what you want. I will purchase a property near the university and create a portal that leads directly to our home.”

“That’s genius.”

“I’m glad you think so. Now, are you ready to see the villa for yourself? I think you will love it. The view outside is spectacular, and the interior is very comfortable. Naturally, you can change anything in our home if it is not to your liking.”

Our home. She really liked the sound of that.

“Don’t we need to do some repairs or something before we leave?”

“Already done.”

When she pulled away from him to glance around, she saw that the entire area had been put back the way it had looked before the storm. With a grin, she took his hand and said, “I’m ready. Take me home, mate.”

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 8:01 am

Although Killian had warned her, Seneca was still completely blown away by her first glimpse of the villa on the Amalfi coast.

He teleported them directly to the circular driveway in front of the villa just in time to see the stunning view of the sun rising over the vibrant blue water of the Tyrrhenian Sea. As the first light of dawn broke over the horizon, a brilliant array of pink, orange, and pale gold hues chased away the dark shadows of night.

The calm sea glittered like tiny diamonds where the sun's rays touched the surface, and gentle waves lapped along the shoreline. Lush greenery covered the tall cliffs that hovered like watchful sentinels over the stacked tiers of houses, and the vibrant colors of the buildings added to the picturesque scenery.

The villa's exterior was pristine white, with large balconies and wide glass windows. On the ground level was an enclosed terrace that extended out of the building that was covered with citrus laden trellises and there was a small area that was overflowing with fresh herbs and lemon trees that perfumed the air. Off to the side was a large pool that was lined with Mediterranean cypress trees for privacy and several lounge chairs were laid with a clear view of the sea.

As the sea breeze caressed her face and she breathed in the salty air, Seneca felt the tension she'd been carrying slowly drain from her body. For the first time in what felt like forever, she actually felt like she was truly alive again. But what made that moment a million times better was having Killian by her side.

Experiencing the pleasures of life with someone who mattered was a gift. She had never really dated before, but she didn't need experience to understand what they had

together was special. Killian was the one person who could help make sense of the madness that had become her life, and feeling the warmth of his hand against hers was a reminder that she was no longer alone in the universe.

That was the real beauty of having a mate. It was knowing she had a partner who would be with her through the good times and the bad. There was no need for vows between them. They didn't need to make promises or assure each other with words. Everything between them was clear through their mating bond. Their bond was unbreakable, impervious to any force. No one would ever come between them, and their connection would only grow stronger with time.

"It's so beautiful here," she whispered.

The idyllic setting seemed suited for soft words rather than loud voices. The streets would soon be busy with sound and movement once people began to wake and prepare for the day ahead. But for now, it seemed like the dawn belonged to just the two of them.

"I am pleased you like it. I can take you through the town once I give you the tour of the villa and grounds and introduce you to—" Killian's smile shifted into a fierce scowl. "What in hellfire is that?"

Seneca followed his gaze toward the side of the wide driveway leading up to the villa's entrance. Sitting on one of the stone benches was a beautiful arrangement of glowing flowers in a black vase with a pretty silver ribbon wrapped around the base.

"Your name is on the card," he growled.

"Could they be from Arson or someone at The Manor?" she asked.

"Only a few people from The Manor could get past the protection wards surrounding

the property, but they wouldn't dare to come here without permission. Who the fuck is sending flowers to my mate?" Killian roared.

Dario appeared a few feet away still dressed in his armor. "What's wrong, boss?"

When Killian gestured toward the flowers, Dario turned toward them with a scowl.

"Those definitely weren't here when I brought the car back."

"Someone was on the property. Take Anika, Tatum, Callum, and Jaylen to scan for a point of entry. I want to know how someone got in here without us knowing."

Dario bowed his head, then disappeared.

Seneca knew from her mate that those were the other Guardians who currently lived at the villa. With so many people on the premises, she couldn't fathom how someone had managed to bypass them as well as sneak through Killian's protection wards. That seemed like an impossible feat, which meant whoever managed it had to be a very powerful supernatural.

"At least they didn't make it into the villa," she pointed out.

"They couldn't get in even if they tried. The property is protected, but we kept it light since we often have deliveries and visitors dropping by. As long as someone doesn't have bad intentions, they won't be harmed. The villa is different. There are countless layers of spells, runes, and wards guarding the villa that I've added to over the years. It would take years for even the strongest of the gods to get through. And the moment they tried to break in, I would know. Whoever was here probably sensed that and didn't even attempt it."

That helped her relax. She understood why he was so upset about the security breach,

but he had stated that no one with bad intentions could enter the property. That meant whoever had visited them hadn't meant to cause them harm. Still, after this, she had a feeling the entire property was going to be locked down just like the villa. There would be no safer place in the Human Realm once he was finished.

For now, she was curious about who had sent the flowers to her. Stepping forward, she reached for the card, but Killian put his hand over hers to stop her.

"Don't touch it. Let me."

Giving in, she nodded and waited while he lifted the card out of the bouquet. Her name had been written in calligraphy on the front, and he turned it over so they could read the message on the back.

Congratulations on finding your mate and for successfully earning the right to remain in the current timeline. Try not to die again and enjoy your rebirth!

"What the actual fuck?" Seneca stared at the card in disbelief. "Someone knows that I was reborn? But how? How could they know I had to earn the right to remain here?"

"It has to be another god."

Anika appeared a few feet away from them. "We found no break in the wards. Dario and the others have already begun reinforcing the wards around the property with new safeguards."

"Good. And the boy?"

"He is settled in the containment room." When Anika smiled, there was a wicked gleam in her eyes. "I'm going back down to the dungeon to spend some more time with our guest. I'm still not convinced she gave us all the information she has on the

black market.”

“Have fun,” Killian said.

With a nod, she disappeared.

“We have a dungeon?” Seneca asked.

“We do. Would you like to see it?”

“I think I’ll pass on that for now.”

Killian launched a fireball of black flames at the bouquet of flowers, immediately turning it into a pile of ash. The total destruction of the flowers made her want to laugh, but she didn’t think he would appreciate that at the moment. The sight of the black flames did make her curious, though.

“I saw black flames like that when I was in the Hell Realm with those gods.”

That made him pause. “With the new God of Souls and Goddess of Revenge? We haven’t discussed that part of your story yet. Perhaps we should pay them a visit.”

“We can’t. In this timeline, they aren’t even gods yet. They warned me only to contact them as a last resort since reaching out to them now might disrupt when they meet their mates.” She placed a hand on his arm to stop him from arguing. “I wouldn’t want someone to come between us.”

He sighed. “You’re right. But you said they have devil fire? I must know them, then.”

“Probably not the Goddess of Revenge. She was a low-level witch before she was chosen to become a god. But the God of Souls...is Braxton Lightbringer.”

“Lucifer’s son?” Killian laughed. “Well, fuck. It all makes sense now. I helped train that little asshole when he was younger. He also comes here to the villa whenever he needs a break away from his father. Does Luc know about them sending you back in time?”

“I don’t know. Considering they had to shove my soul into a cat to even speak to me, I didn’t get a chance to meet him during my brief visit.”

“They did what to your soul? You know what? Never mind. I think I need to wait until I’m a little calmer before I hear the rest of this story.”

Since he was still upset about the intruder, she said, “At least whoever sent the flowers doesn’t seem to be hostile.”

“They still got through my protection wards. For that alone, they need to be punished,” Killian said darkly.

“I’m sure that will be fun for you.” She smiled as she patted his chest, then she slid her hands up and wound her arms around his neck. “The good news is I get to stay. I guess that means you really are stuck with me now.”

She let out a loud gasp as he swept her into his arms. He leaned down and brushed his lips against her forehead. “Being stuck with you is exactly where I want to be.”

Instead of going up the steps to the entrance, he immediately teleported them directly into the villa. She glanced around the bedroom they arrived in and smiled when she realized how well it suited her. The room had a definite gothic feel to it, with dark wooden furniture, ornate carvings, and rich fabrics. Gossamer curtains danced in the sea breeze that drifted in from the open double balcony doors, and the pale morning sunlight filtered in, filling the room with warm and a soft, ethereal glow.

In the center of the room was an enormous four-poster bed draped with dark curtains that would completely block out the light. The frame was intricately carved with elaborate designs, and a mountain of plush pillows was piled onto the burgundy comforter that covered the bed. He didn't seem like a pillow stacker, and the thought of watching him manually doing it made her want to grin.

Staring at the bed gave her other ideas that replaced any thought of humor with something far darker. She wondered what he slept in at night, then imagined him sprawled out on the bed with nothing but a silk sheet draped over his body.

He let out a growl as he tossed her onto the bed, his larger body coming down on top of her so that she was completely caged in. "Those are dangerous thoughts, mate."

She smiled up at him, not the least bit afraid. Now that she didn't have to worry about being sent back to the Hell Realm for her soul to be recycled, she could focus on fully enjoying her life with Killian. Things were moving fast between them, but why wait? She was ready to experience everything she had missed out on during her last life.

Starting with loving her mate.

Killian remained still as she lifted her head and pressed her lips against his. He kept his eyes open, unwilling to tear his gaze away from hers. He'd been fascinated ever since her gray eyes had started glowing silver. Watching the physical changes his magic was manifesting in her filled him with pride. It was proof of their mating bond and his claim on her.

The simple kiss was enough to ignite a firestorm of need within him. He knew he should take things slow even though the need to have her was like a compulsion, pushing him closer toward madness with every beat of his heart.

He wanted her.

No, want was too simple a word to describe what he felt for her.

What he felt for her was a desperate hunger for her that he would never be free of. It was an endless yearning that could never be sated and would only grow stronger with each passing day.

But he didn't want to be free.

He wanted to be chained to her, bound for all eternity so they would never be separated.

The mating bond between them was all-consuming. Fate might have brought them together, but it wasn't what made him love her. All it had taken for that to happen was for him to catch a glimpse inside her mind and heart. He loved who she was, not what she was to him.

And he would continue loving her until the end of everything.

"That's a long time," she tried to say lightly, but her voice was thick with emotion.

"It is the truth. I will love you until the six realms no longer exist. And even then, I will follow you into the great unknown."

She swallowed hard before saying, "I love you, too. My mind is telling me that it's too fast for that, but my heart already knows it's true. You are my mate, the other half of my soul. No more waiting. Make me yours, Killian."

"You already are, as I am yours."

If she was ready, there was no point in holding back. Gone were the restrictions he had placed on himself. With a hungry growl, he bent down and claimed her mouth in

a scorching kiss that was filled with all the passion and longing he felt for her.

When she wrapped her arms around his neck and clung to him, he settled himself more firmly on top of her. Unable to tolerate anything between them, he used his magic to remove their clothing. He captured her gasp of surprise, then swept his tongue inside her mouth to taste her laughter.

“You cheated. Removing our clothes with magic is like using a cheat code,” she said through their bond.

He broke the kiss to look down at her. “Is that a bad thing?”

“No. It’s good. Really, really good. Magic is awesome.”

Claiming her mouth in another possessive kiss, he took what he wanted and gave her everything he had in return. As he continued to kiss her, he stroked his hands over her silky smooth skin. He wanted to touch every inch of her but couldn’t bear to break the kiss long enough for that to happen.

When she arched up and rubbed her bare breasts against his chest, he felt his cock swell to the point of pain. He wanted her with an intensity that stole his breath and bewildered his senses. He felt like his body was on fire, burning from the inside out, but it was an agony he would gladly endure if it meant having her.

Tearing his lips away from hers, he dragged his mouth down the long column of her throat, kissing and licking at the side of her neck. She panted softly as he continued his gentle assault, and when he nipped her with his teeth, she let out a loud moan. Her hands fisted in his hair as she writhed beneath him. She tugged at the strands hard enough to sting, but the sharp bite of pain only added to his pleasure.

“Killian!”

“Yes, mate? Tell me what you need.”

“You. I need you.”

“You have me,” he swore.

Despite the urgent demands of his own body, he wanted to drive her crazy with need before he finally claimed her. His shaft was large, and didn't want to risk hurting her. Moving lower, he swirled his tongue around one of her nipples as he palmed her other breast. The globe fit perfectly in his large hand, and he used his thumb and forefinger to send streaks of pleasure surging through her body that he felt reverberate through his own.

The echoes of pleasure he felt through their bond made his body stiffen. His skin felt too tight stretched over his tense muscles and his thick shaft throbbed with need. He ruthlessly held onto his last ounce of control, wanting to push her over the edge before he finally gave in.

Using his teeth and tongue, he teased her nipple as he moved his other hand down between her thighs. When she tried to close her legs, he used his own to push them wider. She let out a strangled cry when he stroked his fingers over her center, and he growled with satisfaction when he found her slick with her desire for him.

She arched against him as he slowly slid a finger into her. Shifting back up, he claimed her mouth again in a hot, wet kiss. She moaned as he stroked his finger in and out of her clenching pussy, working her open for him. She pushed at his shoulders, then switched to clinging to him as he started rubbing her clit between two of his fingers. He worked her to a quick, hard climax, making her shake with her release.

But that was only the beginning.

Seneca could barely think past the pleasure coursing through her body. Her pussy throbbed and clenched with aftershocks of her climax, but she was far from sated. Instead, that little taste of gratification only made her want more. Lifting her legs, she locked them around his hips and ground herself against his hard shaft in blatant invitation.

Accepting it without hesitation, he shifted his hips and surged deep, thrusting his thick cock into her tight pussy. She let out a strangled cry at his rough penetration and tightened her legs around him to pull him even deeper. Out of control now, Killian began pounding into her with fast, hard strokes. The combination of their mutual pleasure flashed between them, amplifying the sensations until they were completely lost in one another.

His thick cock rubbed against the sensitive nerve endings inside her pussy, driving her closer to another climax with every thrust. Her body tightened from the building pressure within her. Lost in a sea of sensation, she began chanting his name out loud and in her head.

As he continued to thrust inside her, he took her hand in his, pressing their mating marks together. Magic flared between them, and the firestorm of need ignited into a white-hot inferno as she came again. This time, she was completely overwhelmed by the pleasure coursing through her. When her vision began to blur, she realized the force of her climax had made her forget to breathe.

Killian let out a loud roar as he came, filling her over and over again with hot, hard spurts of his semen. He ground his hips against her, prolonging both of their releases with his movements. When he collapsed on top of her, she wrapped her arms around him, holding him close.

Since his thick shaft was still buried deep inside of her, she clenched her muscles around him. She smiled when she felt his hips flex. He nipped at her neck with his

teeth in silent admonishment, but she wasn't sorry for her actions. If anything, she wanted to do it again.

"You are mine now."

His husky declaration filled her with happiness, but she couldn't help teasing him. "I wasn't aware you were such a caveman."

He grunted in response, making her chuckle.

"But you're my caveman." She sighed playfully as she stroked her hands over his back. "I guess I must have a thing for ancient artifacts."

He lifted his head and opened his eyes to glare at her. "Did you just call me old?"

"Older than me." She laughed, then sucked in a surprised breath when she felt him harden inside of her. "Oh, wow. At least age hasn't affected your stamina."

He let out a vicious curse that only made her laugh again. And when he captured her mouth again in a brutal kiss, she welcomed him with equal fervor.

She couldn't decide whether it was purely fate or her magical luck that had brought Killian into her life. Whatever it may be, she was eternally grateful for the second chance she had been given to live a happy life with her mate. Together, they had defied the odds, and now they were bonded by a love that even death couldn't deny.

Life didn't get much better than this.

Or Seneca should have said that her second chance at life couldn't get much better.

From her view from the balcony of their bedroom, she watched the chaos unfolding below her with a fond smile. All the people she loved had gathered at the villa today to attend her wedding to Killian.

Although they were already bonded mates, he'd wanted to exchange vows with her in the traditional human ceremony after her mother had mentioned how much she had been looking forward to it. Her dad had been sad about not being able to walk her down the aisle, though he had stated he understood there wasn't a need for a wedding between mates.

Through their bond, Killian knew that Seneca had also been looking forward to having a wedding one day. Because of that, he had decided to throw an extravagant one for her on their estate in Italy.

In the month since they had met, Seneca had realized that there was nothing he wouldn't do for her. Being mated to a dark god certainly did have its perks. At first, she had been a little freaked out about how he always seemed to know what she wanted before she even had a chance to think about it, but she had gotten used to him reading her mind.

Sharing their minds was as easy as breathing since they had bonded, but she still wasn't used to exploring his memories. He'd been alive a lot longer than her, so it would take time to sort through all of his past experiences. He helped her by sharing

any information she needed, which made her training process a whole lot easier.

Learning magic had become a bigger priority for her since they had completed their mating bond. Killian was teaching her how to use her new god powers, but he couldn't help her understand a lot of the fundamentals since he simply did them without thinking about it. She wanted to properly learn some of the basics to make sure she didn't accidentally hurt anyone so they had arranged for her to take some classes at the magical academy at Trifecta University.

Killian had been true to his word, purchasing a property in Mystic, Colorado close to Trifecta University so Seneca could continue her studies. The large condo he had bought them was modern and stylish, but it was nothing compared to their villa. They didn't spend much time there anyway. They merely used the condo as a stopping point since the double doors to one of the closets was actually a portal back to their real home.

Seneca had decided to wait until her parents had visited her at school the weekend after her birthday to tell them the whole extraordinary tale of her rebirth. She had been nervous about introducing Killian to her parents, but they had loved him as soon as they met him. In fact, she had been a little taken aback by how easily they had accepted him until she remembered her parents loved the unusual and strange.

They had taken the news about her rebirth well at first, but they had exploded into a fit of rage once she had told them about Clara and Mark's involvement. Her father had wanted Killian to go find them and kill them then and there, while her mother had asked him to torture them for a few decades first.

Their responses made Seneca laugh and filled her heart with joy. She had always known her parents loved her, but their fierce reactions proved that they would always choose to protect her above anything else.

After a long debate, they decided on another plan of action to deal with Clara and

Mark. Killian had searched up an ancient spell of misfortune that had ensured they would have nothing but bad luck for the rest of their days. Seneca had thought that was quite fitting considering their obsession with her lucky magic.

An arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her back against a hard body she knew as well as her own. Killian leaned down to press his lips against the base of her throat, then he whispered, “You look absolutely delicious, mate.”

Dressed in a beautiful strapless gown made of black lace and champagne tulle and satin, she felt like a gothic fairy princess. The tight corset emphasized her small waist and full breasts, and the layered skirt had tiny gems that had been added to it that shimmered in the light. She had included black lace gloves to the ensemble and had swept her long silver blonde hair partially up with a black cocktail hat with netting instead of a traditional veil.

Since her godhood upgrade, her hair had turned a shimmering silver that matched her glowing silver eyes. She had to use her magic to dim the glow whenever she was around humans. She also had to use her magic to cut her hair since every time she woke up, the long locks were back to being waist-length.

“You’re not supposed to see me before the ceremony,” she teased.

“Nothing could keep me away.” He kissed her bare shoulder, then straightened with a sigh. “I am already wishing I could toss all of these people back through the portal.”

That made her laugh.

Since almost all of the guests were supernaturals, it had been easy enough to create a portal for everyone to join them. She had wanted to keep the guest list small, but that had been impossible. Once word had spread that Killian was marrying his mate, people from all over the six realms had sent their congratulations.

Killian had explained that as one of the last remaining reapers, many of the supernaturals wanted to pay their respects. He had been completely shocked when she had told him that the other reapers who had been missing for centuries had been found right before she'd died. She hadn't been able to give him any more details she since didn't know exactly when and where they had been found, but the news had given him hope.

Almost all of the most powerful dark gods and demons had come to their wedding, as well as a few celestials. There were several shifters, fairies, fae, and a number of witches and mages in attendance. The pixies who lived on the villa property had done a fabulous job decorating the grounds and preparing a feast for everyone to enjoy after the ceremony.

"Do you know who I just ran into?" Killian asked.

She turned toward him and wrapped her arms around his waist. Her mate looked devastatingly handsome in his black suit. One of the dark lapels had been adorned with champagne-colored lace accents that complimented her dress.

"Who?"

"Lucifer and Braxton. Luc is looking forward to meeting you."

"Now, that's something I never thought I would hear."

He chuckled. "Don't worry. He's not as bad as the rumors make him out to be."

She wasn't so sure about that. "It's going to be weird seeing Braxton again."

"About that...while I was talking to him, he told me he was considering transferring to Trifecta University next year since we would be living close by."

“Oh, no! He can’t do that!”

He rubbed her arms in a soothing gesture. “I know that, my love. I told him that he needed to stay at Aegis Academy. I didn’t explain why, but he seemed to understand what I was telling him was important.”

Seneca was relieved to hear that. She didn’t want to think about how many things would be changed in the future if Braxton didn’t end up meeting his mate at the right time. He might not ever become the God of Souls, then he would never end up sending Seneca back to the past. Her head began to throb as she considered what a clusterfuck that would be.

Killian touched her temple lightly and her headache immediately disappeared. “Don’t worry about that. We have plenty of time to preserve our future. Now, let’s go get married. Today, nothing matters but us.”

“Wait!” She held her arm out, and her magical parasol immediately appeared in her hand. “Okay, now, I’m ready.”

As he led her out of the bedroom, she gripped her beloved’s hand firmly in hers. She was more than happy to walk into the future with her mate and leave the past behind where it belonged.