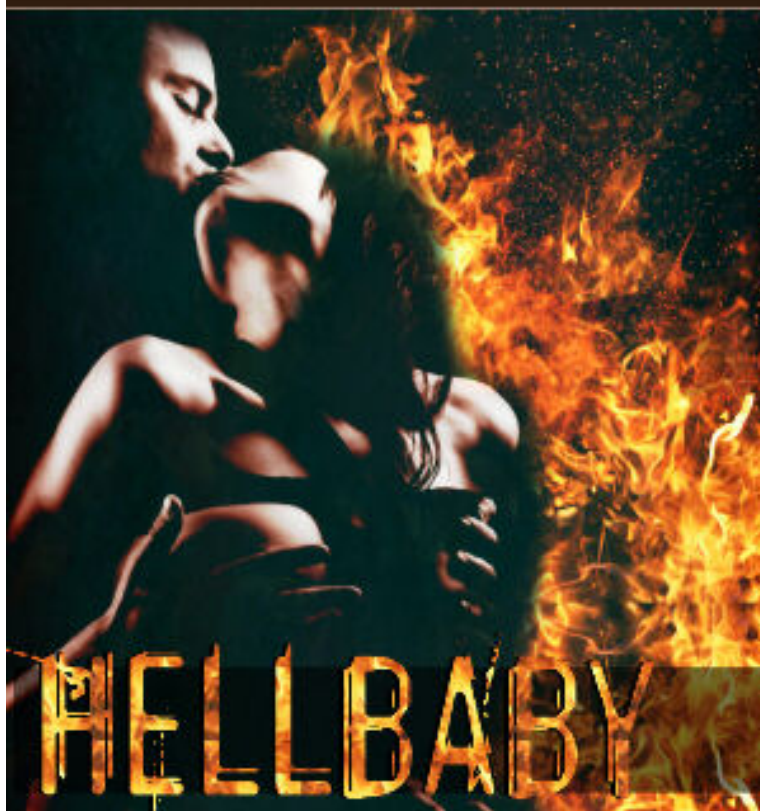


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HALLOWED

Minx Malone



Hellbaby by Minx Malone

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By

Minx Malone

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Dedication

To the indomitable, indescribable, indefinable Red Queen. You always make me smile.

Chapter One

"Who the hell is Donny?"

Helena grunted and rolled over. The neon lights of her alarm clock told her it was only two o'clock in the morning.

"What?" She flopped down on her back and smashed her face into her pillow. Hazy images floated through her mind like fog. *Such a good dream.* A second later, she heard a soft click and the room filled with light. She sighed.

"This is the third time you've said some guy's name in your sleep. Who is Donny?" The covers rustled as Jason turned in bed to face her.

Oh shit. She curled up into a ball. *Maybe if I don't say anything he'll think I'm asleep.*

There was a long silence before the mattress dipped. She turned over and watched silently as he rolled up the few clothes he kept in the bureau and stuffed them in a black duffel bag.

"Jason, wait."

He disappeared into her walk-in closet and reemerged a few minutes later with a ratty pair of jeans and his favorite sweatshirt.

"It's two o'clock in the morning. Can't we talk about this?" She wrapped the sheet around her body and hopped after him, tripping in the long linens. She caught up with him and grabbed his sleeve. He brushed her off with a vehemence that startled her.

"You know what? I'm over this. You forget to call, you're cold in bed, and by the way, you fake it badly."

Helena gasped and reached out for him, losing the grip on her sheet in the process. Her breasts popped out, and he glanced down. His nostrils flared before he turned away. She hastily dragged the sheet back up her body and wrapped it around her, toga style. "I'm not cheating on you, I swear. Donny is—"

"You know what? I don't even care. Whoever Donny is, I hope you two are very happy together." He slammed the door as he left, the force rattling the frame so hard that the pictures in the front hallway crashed to the ground. She knelt and picked up the pieces carefully but still managed to cut herself while carrying the jagged shards to the trash can in the kitchen. She held her finger under the faucet and watched dispassionately as her blood mixed with the water and slid down the drain. Within moments, the cut sealed itself and turned a garish shade of pink. Her demon blood was good for something, it seemed.

She picked up the cordless phone on the edge of the counter and dialed the only person she knew who'd be awake at this hour.

"Hey, hellbaby. Since when are you nocturnal?" Kendra's sultry voice was a perfect match for her take-no-prisoners body and kick-ass attitude. They'd both attended the same prestigious paranormal boarding school in the Virginian countryside as teenagers. Most of the other students at Saint Lilith's were descended from fairies or shape-shifters, not vampires and demons. The two had bonded mainly because they were both feared. One look at Kendra's fangs had most people shaking, and although Helena looked as innocent as her angel mother, her father's demon blood was easily apparent when she got emotional.

"Ugh, don't call me that. I had more than enough of that at school. Besides, my temper's much better. Well, a little better. I haven't blown anything up lately anyway."

"Is that how you tell if it's a good day?" Kendra chuckled.

"I do what I can. Sorry to call so late." She sighed and sank down on the chaise lounge in her living room. The room had floor-to-ceiling windows and custom-built skylights, which afforded her the best view of the sky money could buy. As the daughter of an angel, she found the sight of the heavens soothing, especially the intricate celestial designs of the

night sky. She'd bought this house mainly because of its incredible view, unobstructed by trees or buildings.

"The last time you called this late was when what's his name left. Wait, what *was* his name? Cybil?"

"Silven. He was very impressive. He was a lieutenant in the Angelic Guard."

"He was a wimp. So Jimmy finally bit the dust, huh? Are you ever going to tell me the real reason these guys keep leaving? Just tell me and maybe I can help."

"It was Jason, and no one can help. Remember how much trouble you had with men before you met Kane? You couldn't find a man strong enough to handle it when you...you know."

Kendra burst out laughing, and she held the phone away from her ear in annoyance. "Are you laughing at me?"

"Yes, I'm laughing at you. No one from school would ever believe me if I told them 'Give 'em hell baby' was too shy to say the word 'come'. Are you seriously telling me you haven't slept with any of these guys?"

"I'm not a virgin, you know that. But it's a little hard to let go when you're afraid you'll incinerate your partner if you orgasm."

"Whoa, whoa. You've slept with these guys but you're not having orgasms? Can't they tell? If they're that bad in bed, maybe it's a good thing they're leaving."

"He *could* tell. He even said I faked it badly. That actually hurt worse than anything else. I put a lot of thought into those fake-gasms. I thought they were pretty good."

"Okay. So you throw off a little fire between the sheets, big deal. Why don't you let me hook you up with one of my demon friends? Or actually, I know a guy who's part dragon shifter. His name is Cage. He's hot, literally. Plus he's *hot*. What do you think?"

"That's okay. Maybe I should just give up, get a cat. Okay wait, scratch the cat. I can barely keep this place clean as it is."

There was a long pause. "I have a better idea. Let's go get the no good son-of-a-demon who ruined you for all other men and kick his ass."

"I don't know where he is. After everything...he was just...gone." She rubbed a hand absently over the side of her neck as she looked out into the night. There was only a small bump there now, a faint reminder of how he'd branded her once.

"Do you think he's in Underworld with your father?"

"Probably. I doubt I'll run into him at my father's compound. He was never built like a soldier, that's why he got stuck guarding me."

"Whoa. When you said you were busy on Halloween, I thought you meant you had plans with Justin. You're going to try crossing over, aren't you?"

"Kendra, leave it alone. And his name was Jason."

"But it's dangerous. I don't think you should—"

"It'll be fine, don't worry. Goodnight, Kendra. I love you too." She hung up and looked out at the night sky. She curled up with a sigh and pulled a throw blanket over her legs. It soothed her to look out at the vast expanse of sky and stars, but it was humbling as well. She was so alone in this world, something of a stranger even to those who knew her. Once Kendra was married, she wouldn't be able to just call her friend whenever she got the urge.

"I miss you, Donny." She closed her eyes and was overwhelmed with memories of soft kisses on a warm summer afternoon, the scent of honeysuckle and the unique smell that was all his own. Her Donny, the shy, young man assigned to guard her, had been her first love, her only love. Now he was just a memory. A memory that haunted her dreams.

Her mother would be furious when she found out where she'd gone, but she could see no other option. As Regent over all Underworld, her father had the contacts necessary to locate any demon below ground. He'd been absent her entire life, and she'd never asked anything of him. Her father owed her. If Donny was there, he could find him. He could bring him back to her.

"I'll finally know what happened to you." She fell asleep where she was with only the dark cloak of night for company.

Chapter Two

"It's gotta be her. She fits the description perfectly. We should go tell him while she's still asleep."

"She almost bit my hand off before she went under. Maybe we should have a little fun with her first. Shame to waste all that fire."

Helena kept her eyes closed as the voices flowed over her. Skulking around at night on All Hallows Eve, when the veil between worlds was thinnest, probably wasn't the smartest idea she'd ever had. She was on what felt like a concrete slab.

"Our orders were specific. We have to notify the Commander right away. What are you doing?"

Helena cried out at the sudden sharp stab in the side of her neck. She opened her eyes and got a blurry impression of bulging muscles and searing red eyes. The long needle in his hand was clear, however.

"I knew that bitch was faking." He leaned down and licked the seam of her lips. She shuddered and wrenched her head away. His tongue was black. "If my partner here wasn't such a chicken shit, you and me, we'd have some real fun."

Helena angled her body away as he trailed his tongue down her neck. He bit her collarbone hard enough to leave a mark, and she cried out. He grabbed her right wrist and tied her to the table.

"Payne! Stop playing around. She's locked in anyway, so even if she gets up, she's not going anywhere." Their rough laughter was

followed by the grate of metal against metal. The echo of their footsteps faded away.

Okay. This is bad.

Helena looked around the room she was in. The walls were a dark gray stone that gave off a faint odor of mildew. Her head swam from the drugs in her system, and she closed her eyes to stop the sick spin of the room. She had no idea how long she lay there before she regained consciousness. The skin where her wrist rubbed against the restraint burned, and her mouth was dry. She turned her head to the side and retched, but nothing came up. She was dying.

The dark shape of a ghoul appeared next to her. She threw up her hands and screamed. All that came out was a soft whimper. The creature knelt next to her, and her wrist was abruptly released. He cradled her against him and squeezed her when she fought him. His scent wrapped around her, somehow familiar.

"Stop fighting. Just hold on to me."

They moved so quickly she could feel the skin on her body stretch tight against the bone. He materialized to some kind of chamber. Everything was hazy, but she got the impression of opulence. Everything was a different shade of red, and when he settled her on the bed, the sheets were as soft as down. He clasped her to his chest, and the room swam in a sickening swirl of color and light. A moment later, her senses cleared. He had drawn the drugs out of her system somehow.

"How did you do that?" She gulped when she got her first look at her savior. It was no wonder she'd thought him a ghoul. He wore black head to toe, and his face was covered with a black mask. He was built like a warrior, and his hand carried the red brand of an Enforcer, a member of the Regent's guard. She'd never seen one, but she'd heard of them, their power, their cruelty. Everyone had heard about what they could do.

And now I'm alone with one in his bedroom.

"I'm here to see my father." She pointed at the mark on the back of his hand, careful not to touch his skin. "If you're an Enforcer, you could take me to him. I'm Helena De'Vale. The Regent's daughter."

"I know who you are." He held up a hand, and she fell silent. He pulled the black mask off, and a surprising mass of long black hair fell from the back. His skin was the deep tan of a man who worked in the heat, and his nose was slightly crooked, like it had been broken multiple times. It was a harsh face, the face of a warrior, except for the eyes. Most demons had fiery eyes, but his were an intriguing shade of brown. Only the pupils were red, and she watched in fascination as they expanded until they looked like hot coals. She felt it between her legs, a fire that burned everywhere his eyes touched.

"Be careful how you look at me. Your eyes ask for things your body may not be able to handle." He brought a hand to her face tentatively, his touch feather light against her cheek. She gasped at the intimate touch, and her eyes shot up to his. He looked down at her, his burning eyes intent on her face.

There was a sudden knock before the door burst open. Another warrior strode in, the weapons strapped across his chest clinking. "Lord Destroyer."

Her captor didn't turn. He kept his eyes on Helena, and she gulped when his gaze fell to the sharp points of her breasts beneath her shirt. Everyone had heard of the infamous "Lord Destroyer". He was the most feared of her father's elite guard. Relentless, cunning, vicious and his skills in the bedroom were legendary. But for all the stories about him, he was something of an enigma, having just appeared in the regiment from thin air one day. Few could claim to know him personally, and little of his background was known.

"Abaddon?" The warrior at the door stood waiting, his foot rapping the floor impatiently.

Her captor turned finally, his face twisted into a sneer. "Lord Phear. What is it?"

"Sir, I understand we had a security breach—" He stopped abruptly when he noticed her. "Forgive me, my lord."

"It's fine. I'm off duty as of now, so all further status updates should go to Lord Venom." Her captor removed a small black box from

his belt and threw it to the newcomer. The warrior nodded and left, the door slamming shut behind him.

Her world stilled, and Helena clasped a hand over her racing heart. How strange that one word could turn her entire world inside out.

Abaddon.

The rapid bass of her pulse was so loud, she was sure he could hear it in the quiet of the room. Could it be true? Surely the name wasn't so uncommon...

She stared at her captor, afraid to believe what her heart wanted so desperately to be true.

"Donny?"

He sucked in a hard breath. "Don't call me that. That's not who I am anymore. I made a mistake, and I've paid for it many times over."

She squared her shoulders and looked away. "I suppose my father didn't like the idea of you deflowering his little girl, huh?"

Abaddon laughed bitterly. "Your father didn't like the idea of us together, but not for the reasons you think. He could care less about your virtue. Protecting you was a training ground for me, and I allowed myself to be distracted, leaving us both vulnerable. All it takes is a moment of weakness for your enemies to find the opportunity to attack. It's a lesson I never forgot again."

He turned to her and surveyed her from head to toe with an arrogant smirk. His eyes finally traveled back up to her face. "What are you doing here?"

She lifted her chin defiantly. "I have every right to be here. I want to see my father."

"Well, you picked the right way to do it. By Hell's Law, any trespassers are held below ground for three days before being brought before the Regent for trial. So you've gotten yourself a one way ticket to see daddy dearest."

"Held? What do you mean held? You're going to put me in jail?" She looked around helplessly. The only exit was the door directly behind him. Even if she could make it off the massive bed, she'd never make it to the door.

He continued as if he hadn't heard her. "Most don't really live that long, but he doesn't mind. He finds it lightens his workload considerably." He glanced at her, and his expression softened. "I don't know why you even want to meet the son of a bitch. Then again, I'm not real big on the warm, fuzzy family thing anyway. But I'll take you if..."

"Why do I feel like I'm about to make a deal with Lucifer himself? Never mind, the devil would probably be safer," she muttered. Louder, she said, "If what?"

"I can't just take you to him, by law there's a three day holding period. But I can keep you out of the main prisoners' population, keep you safe. The only way I can do that is if you spend the three days with me. Here with me." He gestured around the sumptuous room with a wicked smile. "Shouldn't be too hard, right?"

"Three days alone with you is not my idea of safe. I know you're angry..."

He moved so quickly he was a blur of light. "Do you? Do you understand the things I suffered after that night? I won't enlighten you because it would turn your stomach, little girl. There were many nights I cursed that I ever met you." He wiped a large hand down the side of his face then whispered, "And just as many nights I dreamed of doing it all over again."

"What do you want me to say?" she sobbed when he pulled away from her. She wrapped her arms around her knees to calm her shaking and bit her lip to stifle her cries. He was on edge, even she could see it. Once she would have had no fear that he would hurt her. Once she would've been confident he would rip out his own throat before laying a hand to her. She couldn't claim that confidence now. This was clearly not the boy she knew.

There's nothing boyish about him now.

He had grown several extra inches in the past eight years, standing about six foot six in his military boots, and man was he ripped. His arms were easily bigger around than one of her thighs, and his legs looked like tree trunks. The veins in his neck and forehead bulged as he paced, his

movements taut with the energy of a caged animal. It was like he'd been reborn.

And the boy I loved is gone.

"I'll give you a few hours to decide." He grasped her chin and turned her head so she looked into his eyes. His grip was firm but not hard enough to hurt her. She scanned his features, looking for some semblance of the boy she'd known. All she saw was an emptiness that frightened her.

"Tell me why." Her voice came out a rough croak. He looked away, but this time she put her hands on his face to force him to look at her. He flinched when she touched his skin, and his eyes locked on hers. "Why would you do this? Surely you have no trouble with women, so it's obviously not just about sex. What do you get out of this?"

His pupils expanded as he looked down at her, his eyes moving from her face down to her legs tangled in the linens. His nostrils flared, and she gulped when his breathing abruptly got faster. He pulled away from her and strode to the door, his boots striking the floor so hard she could feel the vibrations. He stopped when he reached the door and threw an angry glance over his shoulder. "You. Any way I can have you."

He left and the door slammed behind him, the loud click of the lock shocking her from her languid position on the bed. She stood and paced. Had he thought of her over the years? Did she haunt his dreams the way he did hers, or was his desire borne of his need for revenge?

He was giving her the choice, but really she was only choosing the time and place. If he didn't take her now, he would later. The Destroyer was ruthless in battle, determined, persistent. Donny had always been that way. Intent. Committed. Unstoppable. Now that she was back on his radar, he wouldn't rest until he got what he ultimately wanted from her, whatever that was.

You. Any way I can have you.

Chapter Three

Abaddon strode down the hallway, his heels striking the stone like gunshots. *Three day holding period?* It was bullshit, and he was surprised she hadn't called him on it. Then again, she didn't know how long her father had been searching for her. The Regent would be furious when he found out Abaddon hadn't brought her to him immediately. He was deliberately breaking an order from a superior officer, and damned if he knew why.

He threw open the doors to the training center and stood in front of the two sided mirror overlooking the sparring room. Two squadrons were in formation below practicing drills. The familiar routines, moves he'd done himself so many times, were a balm to his frayed nerves.

My woman.

He closed his eyes against the memory of her warm weight in his arms and her unique fragrance overwhelming him. Her father, Orion, had finally grown a conscience where his only child was concerned and had been searching for her for quite some time.

He'd hoped she would never come.

Years of working under Orion had convinced him she must have been playing him, part of her father's twisted plan to see him fail. She was of the same tainted blood as the sick bastard, so she couldn't truly be as he remembered. A beautiful angel with the temper of a devil. He'd alternately anticipated and dreaded the day they would find her, when he could finally get payback for the things he'd suffered.

Then he'd seen her lying so still.

He'd stood over that concrete slab in the holding cell, and the eight years between them had ceased to exist. All the longing, lust and obsession he'd thought buried had swept back in a breathtaking rush. She was just as he'd remembered. And for the first time in a long time, he wanted something more than revenge.

"No. Don't. Don't touch me." She'd thrashed at his first tentative touch and wiped her face with her hands. That was when he'd seen the bite on her neck. It stood out from her creamy skin like a brand

"Son of a..." He'd cradled her protectively in his arms and materialized into his personal chambers. He'd rubbed the tender skin where her wrist had been rubbed raw and touched the red mark on her neck. Another man's mark on her delicate skin. A mark similar to the one he'd given her the night he'd taken her under the trees.

"No one's going to hurt you." He'd run a hand over her face and drawn the drugs from her blood and into his skin. Her eyes had latched onto him, and his heart had crashed against his chest again. *My woman.*

Abaddon tracked the movement of the men in the group below until his eyes zeroed in on the one he wanted. The one he'd come for.

He motioned to the guard in the control booth. "I need to see Payne. Ask Lord Venom to excuse him from the rest of the afternoon's drill. I plan to train him myself today."

Abaddon didn't miss the guard's shudder as he turned to his microphone and relayed the message. On the floor below, Lord Venom received the signal and lifted his head in acknowledgement. He gestured for Payne to leave the lineup and report back to the control tower. Abaddon backed away from the window as the soldier passed. He'd meet Payne in the locker room.

He'd prefer their private training session to be a surprise.

* * * * *

Helena woke disoriented, her perception coming back to her in an assault of light and sound. She rubbed her eyes and looked around, taking

in the mounds of pillows, the antique furniture and the rich red paint on the walls. She was in Donny's room.

There were patterns on the ceiling, strange curlicues that looked sort of like angels, the last thing she'd expected to see in a bedroom in Underworld. She swung her legs over the edge of the massive bed and carefully hopped down, her toes sinking into the luxurious pile of the Persian carpet. She followed the sound of splashing water to the door of the adjoining bath. Abaddon stood just inside rinsing off his arms. She swayed and collapsed against the doorframe.

"Is that blood? You're hurt—"

"You needn't be concerned about me. It's not mine." He glanced at her over his shoulder, amused. "Go back to bed. You'll need your strength whether you accept my offer or not."

She ignored his comment and stepped closer. "Well, I need to be concerned about someone. That's a lot of blood."

"Would you waste your tears for the one who marked your neck? If I wouldn't have to answer to the Regent for it, he'd have lost more than just his life's blood." His lips curled back in a growl. He snapped back the shower curtain and flicked the water on. "Now you really need to go, unless you're trying to tell me something?" He pulled his black shirt over his head, and she caught a flash of golden skin before she whipped around to face the door.

His suggestive chuckle followed her into the bedroom as she fled. The slide of the shower curtain brought to mind images of them naked, wrapped around each other under the cascading water. She squeezed her eyes shut, tried to block the tantalizing thought of hard muscle and damp golden skin. Tried and failed. The Donny she loved had died, to be replaced with this frightening, virile man. Could she give herself to him this way, her body in exchange for her safety? She cringed inwardly at the thought. She'd been many things in her life but never a whore. How ironic that she'd come here hoping for help to find him, only to find him and realize how much he'd changed.

By the time Abaddon emerged fully dressed from the bathroom a few minutes later, she'd made her decision.

"I've decided to stay with you."

His eyes stayed on the carpet, but she didn't miss the sudden tension in his neck and shoulders.

She forced herself to step closer. If she was going to do this, she had to do it with no fear. "I *want* to stay with you."

His head whipped up, and Helena backed away from the intensity of his stare. He was suddenly behind her, the heat coming off his body scorching her back. He wrapped his massive arms around her, locking her in a cage of steely muscle.

"Complete submission, Lena. I will accept nothing less." He sipped at the sensitive skin between her neck and shoulder, his deep inhale loud to her ears. He stayed like that for a moment, just breathing in her scent before he gently bit her on the delicate curve of her neck. "I've waited so long to have you under me."

"Will you give yourself to me? Completely?" His red pupils expanded, and the flames dancing in his pupils were beautiful to her. His passion for her was in his eyes, and when she answered him, it was without hesitation. He had changed, but somewhere inside this warrior was the boy she loved. Perhaps her love could bring him back.

"Yes. To everything. Just yes." She bit her lip when he gripped her mound suddenly, his big hand covering her hot core completely. He pressed harder, rubbing two thick fingers against her lips, and the thin cotton of her sweatpants dampened immediately. She gasped at the exquisite friction and gripped his arm to steady herself. He growled his approval in her ear, the rough sound tumbling over her shaken nerves and causing her pussy to release another wave of cream. She whimpered with frustration when he removed his hand.

"Shit, you're so hot. You're flooding my hand. Should I give this hot little pussy what it wants?" Suddenly there was a sharp click. He chuckled when she shivered at the sight of his three inch long razor sharp nails.

"Abaddon?" She reached back and gripped his hair.

"You have nothing to worry about, my beautiful little hellion. The only pain you'll experience at my hands will be coupled with pleasure."

I'm just making you more comfortable." With a couple of lightning fast swipes, her tank top and sweatpants lay in shreds, leaving her in just a lacy black bra and thong.

She gasped when the cool air hit her, and again when she thought of how close those wicked nails had just been to her skin. "More comfortable? How will I be comfortable later without my clothes?" She glanced over her shoulder at him. He was staring down at the tiny black triangle of cloth nestled in the vee of her thighs. The muscle in his jaw worked furiously as he swallowed. Hard. When he looked up at her, the heat of his gaze was palpable.

"I couldn't give a shit about later. And I meant more comfortable for *me*." He slid his nails beneath the tiny strings holding her thong together at the sides and ripped. With a sharp click, he retracted his nails and ran his hands down her stomach to brush the remnants of cloth away. As the smooth, bare skin of her pussy was revealed, he closed his eyes briefly.

"Oh, *fuck*. You're perfect." He stood suddenly and scooped her up. He strode to the bed and dropped her on the covers unceremoniously. He placed his large hands on her thighs and spread her legs until she lay open before him.

"Abaddon?" She looked up at him uncertainly. Self conscious, she turned her head away and drew her legs up to her body, concealing herself from his view. Her breath hitched as she watched him undress.

He was silent as he stripped off his clothes, the black shirt giving way to a thickly ridged chest crisscrossed with scars. The sheer masculine perfection of his form was only enhanced by the thin white slashes, a testament to his ferocity and tenacity as a warrior. Heaven or hell help her if he ever decided he wanted her for more than three days. There would be no escape. This was a man who never gave up, not even when he was obviously being attacked with a knife.

"Open your legs." When Helena winced and backed up against the headboard, he growled in warning. "Too late for second thoughts. Complete submission." He crawled over the comforter, shoving pillows

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out of his way. His muscles shifted with the sleek grace of the predator he was. He nailed her with his gaze, his eyes intense, probing.

“Show me.”

Chapter Four

Her legs fell open, and the sweet scent of her arousal filled the air. Abaddon lowered himself between her legs and breathed deeply. *Mine.*

"Damn, you smell good. I've dreamed of this so many times." At the first lick, she arched off the bed, so Abaddon gripped her slim hips to hold her down. He delved inside her, her cream flooding his taste buds, overwhelming his senses. She was perfect, her slit wet with arousal and the delicate blush pink of coral. He swept his tongue through her juices and groaned as her woman's musk hit the back of his throat. His darkly tanned hand on her stomach made an erotic picture, a startling reminder of how different they were. She was so small, so fragile. Too good for a nasty bastard like him.

Helena purred as he increased his suction. Once he discovered a particularly sensitive spot, he was relentless, driving her harder, forcing her to take the pleasure. Her scent grew stronger as she neared orgasm. Her small hands clutched the sheets frantically, and her throaty purrs increased. She cried his name and grabbed his hair so hard he felt pinpricks of pain where each of her nails dug into his scalp. He welcomed the pain, used it to distract himself from his own growing arousal. He wanted to hear her scream first.

"Oh no. I can't stop it...oh shit." Her reply was cut off abruptly. Her face flushed crimson and her eyes slowly changed, the brown bleeding out to be replaced by a brighter hazel tone. She sobbed silently, her body clenching against his face. The heat from her body was so intense he could see steam rising from her skin. He gentled his tongue, allowing her time to recover, enjoying her soft sighs of satisfaction.

As soon as her breathing slowed, he rededicated himself to his task, enjoying her breathy little moans and the tiny hitch in her breath when his tongue dipped into her anus. *Mine*. He wouldn't be satisfied until she had screamed her way through at least another orgasm. Only then could he be sure her body was ready to take him.

Her hands twisted in the linens at her sides, and her hips arched off the bed to meet each thrust of his tongue. Her eyes were closed and her mouth was open. She looked like heaven. She tasted like sin.

"The fire's coming, I can't stop it." She tried to pull away from him but stopped when Abaddon growled deep in his throat.

"A little fire won't hurt me. Have you forgotten who you're with?" He dipped his head again and swiped her burning core with his tongue. She jerked and cried out. "Perhaps I need to remind you."

He slid his hands under her bottom and lifted her to his face. He stretched his tongue as far as it could go and used it to tongue fuck her. She grabbed his head again and held him against her, her inner muscles rippling. The temperature amped up, the air in the entire room charged with the heat she generated.

"Please. Abaddon." Her body bucked and clenched around his tongue. As she wailed his name, her skin ignited and bright orange flames danced around them. He closed his eyes, savoring the burn. Her fire wrapped around him, seeped through his pores and sprinted through his veins. Her fire was in every cell of his body, even the tips of his fingers and toes.

"Hell, I can't wait. I have to be inside you." He reared up and thrust inside her. Gliding through her silken walls was like pushing into a wet fist. She screamed and wrapped her legs around him, hanging on as he pulled back and hammered into her. Every thrust into her body was like coming home, the muscles of her pussy grabbing him, holding him to her. He savored the burn as he pulled out until the tip of his cock rested at her entrance and then tunneled his way back in.

Every stroke, every thrust enveloped him in her cream, and her scent was all over him. He looked down to the place where their bodies joined. God *damn*. The sight of his dick stretching her open, her delicate

slit being stuffed full of his hungry cock, was enough to send him over the edge. The flames on her skin licked at him, igniting the passion he kept buried deep. He was like a man possessed, slamming into her tiny drenched hole, as the force of his orgasm ripped through him like a tornado.

"Oh no, Abaddon. I'm coming." She sobbed as her body bucked beneath his, her long, smooth legs wrapped around him, her heels digging into the curve of his ass. Her scream cut off, her voice hoarse as she hung on to his shoulders and rode out the waves of her release. He didn't stop thrusting, the muscles of her pussy milking his cock long after his initial release. Finally he collapsed on top of her with a groan and rolled to the side.

He went to the bathroom and brought back a warm washcloth. He gently wiped the inside of her thighs before cleaning his shaft. He threw the damp cloth carelessly on the bedside table and climbed back into bed. She settled her head in the curve of his shoulder. Her sighs were a wash of warm breath on his chest.

Her body was a living blanket, covering him with her warmth and her light honeysuckle scent. As she shifted next to him, her lower body brushed against his. In a rush of blood, his cock filled and stood away from his body slightly, aching every time she moved. He swallowed, willing his cock to stand down, as if it was a soldier that would respond to orders. She was a small woman and wouldn't be able to handle the force of his needs. Despite his initial anger at her, he didn't want to hurt her. He heard the soft whisper of skin against skin as she moved over him. Then he barked out a cry of surprise when her soft hand gripped him at the base of his cock.

"I just thought I should introduce myself. It seemed only polite." Her husky voice washed over him and she laughed, warm and low, when his cock jerked in her hand. "He seems pleased to meet me, but just in case, perhaps I should kiss him hello."

His moan as her mouth covered him was strangled. His shock that she would take him this way dissolved into an intense want unlike anything he'd ever experienced. She took him all the way to the back of

her throat, humming in pleasure as she swallowed around him. The vibration from her mouth skittered across the tip of his cock, and he was rock hard in seconds, his shaft aching as she pulled back, her lips clinging to the head before releasing him with a pop.

As she leaned over him, the wild strands of her auburn hair tumbled down, teasing the skin on his stomach and thighs. She used it to torture him, dragging the tips over his cock as she played around the head with her tongue, exploring the veins pulsing in the shaft, licking into the shallow indentation at the tip.

"Fuck. Do that again," he ordered. She looked up at him, her eyes dark with desire as she dipped her tongue into his tip. His hips wrenched off the bed and he fought to control his urge to pump his hips. Her lips were already stretched taut at the edges as she swallowed down his length. He clenched his fists to keep from grabbing her hair and holding her still as he fucked her face. She looked up at him with laughing eyes as she tormented him.

"Damn. I'm coming." He growled when she didn't pull back, just sucked harder, going wild on his length, her tiny fingers caressing his balls as she swallowed him. His spine seized as he came, and he couldn't stop the motion of his hips as he reared up, his cock ramming into her mouth. She moaned around him and swallowed the thick streams of cum. A thin trickle escaped and slid down his shaft.

"I thought it would get easier." His voice was strangled as she gave a final lick to his shaft before kissing the tip gently. She rolled over and propped herself up on her arm so she could look at him. He stayed on his back, his eyes on the ceiling.

"You thought what would be easier?" Helena inched closer until she was pressed against his side from breast to thigh.

"The burn. The ache for you. I thought it would be easier after the first time, for me to be around you, to look at you. But it's never enough." He rolled over until she was beneath him again and buried his face in her neck. She sighed and arched under him, touching the tips of her breasts to his chest. He captured a taut pink nipple between his teeth and nipped gently, tugging at the tight point until she squirmed beneath him.

"It's never been like this with anyone else. I've never been able to just feel." She ran her hands over his broad shoulders and reveled in the feel of his muscles bunching beneath the skin.

"You're talking about the fire?" His body tensed as he watched a range of expressions cross her face. Of course she was. She was only half demon, but she'd been born with more passion than most and had struggled to keep her energy under control since she was a child. No doubt she had to hold back, keep some part of her energy in reserve when she made love. A human male wouldn't be able to withstand the kind of heat their kind could generate. An image of Helena on her back with some unknown male between her thighs popped into his mind. He clenched his jaw against a sudden irrational urge to hunt down every one of her previous lovers.

"Abaddon? What is it?" Helena drew back and looked at him quizzically. When he shook his head, she poked him in the shoulder. "If it's nothing, why are you growling like that?"

He snapped his mouth closed, and the rumbling sound stopped abruptly. He looked down at her body splayed beneath him. The tips of her breasts were an aching pink, still wet from his mouth. He pressed his face in the valley between her breasts and inhaled, her warmth, her unique scent both comforting and arousing. Her smell, her eyes, her skin, it all turned him on. He wanted her.

For so much more than just one night.

"I am insane." He gripped her beneath her bottom and lifted her until she was at the perfect angle. He entered her to the hilt in one thick thrust, pressing until his balls were tight against her bottom. Her mouth was open on a pant, her beautiful breasts thrust upward as she arched against him.

She was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen.

She bit his shoulder and twisted in his arms, her hips tilted up to take every stroke, to force him deeper. Suddenly she stopped moving and bit her lip. Her eyes flashed between honey and brown and her chest heaved with the force of her breathing.

"Talk to me, baby. Tell me what you need." He propped himself up on his arms so he could look down at her. She avoided his gaze. He flexed so his cock moved inside her, and she groaned. "Just let go, baby. Don't hold back."

"It's so much. I can't control it this time. I don't want to hurt you." She shook her head back and forth and looked up at him, tears in her eyes.

Overwhelmed, he buried his face in the fragrant hair fanned across the pillow. How long since someone had cared about him, worried about him? Not since, *oh damn*, not since *her*.

"You can't hurt me, Lena. I can handle it. The fire you give me just heightens my desire, my ache for you. It feels like heaven and hell at the same time."

Her eyes widened, the color flashing a brighter honey. She moaned and buried her face in his shoulder. He plunged into her over and over, no longer holding back, his inner animal in control. He needed her cream coating his dick, her breath in his lungs, his name on her lips.

"Come for me. Give me all that fire."

She screamed as she came. Her fire exploded from her skin with such force he was lifted away from her body for a moment. The intense heat kicked up his own response, and he clenched his teeth to hold back the orgasm threatening to shoot up from his balls.

"Say my name. I want you to know who you're with, who gives you what you need."

"Abaddon, please." The tips of her nails raked his back, and Abaddon roared at the sting of pain.

"Again."

"Abaddon!"

"*Again.*" He forced her to say his name over and over until his own release hit. He groaned as her pussy clamped down once more, wringing a final shudder of pleasure from his body, before she finally collapsed against the bed. Her final whisper was so soft he almost missed it.

He wished he had.

Chapter Five

Helena turned her face into her pillow. *Maybe he didn't hear me.* He'd made it perfectly clear what he wanted from her in these three days. Sex with her in any way he could get it. "I love you's" had nothing to do with it, especially since she was in love with someone who no longer existed.

"I'm not too heavy?" He looked down at her, his expression neutral. When she shook her head, he buried his face in the pillow next to hers, his breathing still heavy. It should have been awkward, lying quietly with him after the intimate things they had just done. Instead it felt peaceful. Calm.

"If I get called away in the night, I won't wake you. If you need anything, the staff will help you, show you where things are. Just don't go *too far.*" He pinned her with his stare. As the pupils of his eyes expanded into glowing red orbs, she nodded quickly. Escape was definitely not an option.

She woke a little later and sat up to stretch. Her right arm had fallen asleep, and she was hungry. The left side of the bed was empty, the linens still bearing the imprint of Abaddon's body as if he'd just risen. She thought of his powerful physique, somehow even more imposing when he was naked, flashing all that golden skin.

She found a long robe in the closet and pulled it on. She had to roll up the sleeves three times, and the material pooled at her feet in a soft cloud of navy cotton. She opened the door to the room and peeked out

into the darkened hallway. She had no idea what time it was, but the corridor was deserted and the only sound was the soft shuffle of her feet on the stone floor. Abaddon had mentioned staff, but where were they? Was she supposed to go and find them? As she proceeded down the hall, torches lit automatically, lighting her way until she came to the end of the hallway. She walked to the left for a few feet and paused to listen. The faint smell of baked goods hung in the air, and her mouth watered.

"Why are you standing in the hallway, my dear? Are you lost?" A plump older woman stood in the doorway to a bright room, the spatula in her hand waving wildly with her words. Her curly gray hair was pulled into a tight bun atop her head, and her blue eyes watched Helena warily.

"I was just looking for the kitchen. Abaddon, well, he didn't bring me any food earlier..." She trailed off miserably. Even though it was just sex between them, somehow she hated the thought of being lumped together with Abaddon's other women. She'd rather the kindly older woman think her a common prisoner. "Actually, I'm Helena De'Vale. The Regent's daughter."

"Oh gracious! Come in, come in. We can't have you going hungry, now can we?" She bustled around the kitchen, pulling platters from a massive sub-zero refrigerator. "My name's Mary, by the way. I'm the head cook."

"Nice to meet you, Mary." She watched as the cook sliced large hunks of meat from the remains of a turkey. "I know this is an odd question, but what time is it?"

"It's about four o'clock in the a.m. That's why I thought you were lost. Usually I'm the only one up so early, and that's only so I can get a head start baking my tarts for breakfast."

Mary hummed as she scooped large portions of potatoes and vegetables on several plates. She arranged all the food on a tray and slid the entire thing into a long black box. She waved her hand before the screen. When she pulled the tray back out, steam rose from the food in wisps.

Helena looked at the machine in awe. "Wow. I wish I had one of those. You could reheat food for an army in there."

Mary winked at her. "That's the whole idea." She put the tray on a rolling cart and pushed it over to the door. "Now roll this carefully, my dear. I gave you plenty, but you don't want to lose any over the side. That Abaddon has quite an appetite."

Helena looked at her sharply, suddenly sure the older woman spoke of more than food. "Is that so?"

"Yes, and like most men, he often doesn't know what's really good for him, so he just gorges on what's most readily available. I'd hate to see him finally find what he's always needed and lose it."

She hung her head and gripped the handle of the cart until her knuckles turned white. "It's not like that between us. He doesn't really even like me very much. He just wants to get back at me for something that happened when we were younger."

Mary's eyes lit up. "You're the one?" She opened her mouth then quickly closed it again. Finally she leaned in and gave Helena a hard hug. "I know he can be difficult to understand, but he's worth it. Be patient with him."

She swallowed tears and pushed the cart slowly down the short hallway until she came to the fork. She glanced back to see Mary standing in the hall watching her. When she saw Helena pause, she waved her on. "Go on now, before the food gets cold."

Abaddon stood at the window with his back to the door, barking commands into some kind of walkie talkie. He turned at the rattle of the cart as it crossed the doorjamb, and dropped the communicator mid-sentence. He was at her side in seconds.

"What are you...?" Her words were cut off by his kiss. He threaded his fingers through her hair, pulling her up until she stood on her toes. His kiss was all consuming, all lips and tongue and teeth. He ate at her mouth, his tongue stroking hers like a starving man tasting chocolate after a famine. Like she was all he would ever want or need.

"You're mine." He walked them backward until her back hit the wall next to the door. He pushed a strong leg between her thighs, and the robe fell to the side easily. She moaned at the contact and clawed his shoulders. The rough feel of his leather pants against her bare sex was

explosive, and she sobbed with the need for him to fill her, to feel his skin against hers. He was the only man who'd ever made her crave.

"Touch me. Anywhere, please touch me." She grabbed at him frantically and cried out when he sank a long finger into her heat. She rode his finger as he worked her, whispering dark, erotic promises in her ear. The low rumble of his voice coupled with the slick pulse of his thick finger inside her was an overwhelming duo, and she shivered on the edge of climax.

"You're so wet and open. You need my cock, baby?" He slid a third finger inside her, massaging her G spot as she sobbed open mouthed against his shoulder. He withdrew and chuckled when she punched him on the shoulder.

"No, no, no." She writhed in his arms, a living ball of flame, her fingers itching to touch him. She reached between their bodies and cupped him, his length swelling behind the leather of his pants.

"Shh, don't worry, baby. I'm gonna give it back." He unzipped and pushed his pants down just enough so his cock popped free. He hissed when she grabbed him and stroked him from root to tip. When he finally, *finally* thrust inside her, she screamed and bit him on the shoulder.

The tip of his cock dragged over her sensitive inner walls, teasing and tickling her into a blinding frenzy. He supported her weight with his body, using his hands at her hips to work her. The sensitive tips of her breasts brushed against his chest with every thrust, and still it wasn't enough.

"I need more. More of you." She moaned when he lifted her and carried her to the bed. He placed her on all fours and entered her from behind, his cock sliding deeper than before. She was filled, surrounded, stretched to her limit and it was perfect.

"One day when I have more time, I'll take you properly. You'll be mine in every way." His thumb dipped between their bodies and rubbed her clit, gathering her cream. Then he pressed gently against her ass.

"Oh my..." She shuddered with the stunning pleasure of it, the fiery burn making her ache.

"You've never been taken here, I can tell. You're so tight around me. But you will take me, Lena. All of me. Every inch." He sank his finger in further until his knuckle met her skin. "Fucking perfect."

She couldn't see, hear or comprehend anymore, she could only feel. All her senses focused on the finger working its way so sweetly up her ass and the thick cock filling her completely. Another finger joined the first in her ass and she shattered. Rolling waves of ecstasy shook her as he continued his slow, achingly slow rhythm in and out of her body. Her body clamped down on his finger and his cock with each dazzling burst of energy. He gripped her tightly, his fingers digging into her hips, and growled out his own release, his thrusts harder and more urgent. Finally he pulled out and collapsed next to her.

She rolled to the side and snuggled against the warmth of his chest, needing to be close to him. "What was that all about? Not that I'm complaining."

"I thought you were... I thought you'd left me." He cleared his throat abruptly and ran a hand roughly over his face. "I mean, I thought you were trying to escape."

Helena wrinkled her nose, leaned over and kissed him. It was a kiss of comfort, though desire simmered just beneath the surface. He accepted her lips with a murmur of approval before looking over at the cart that sat forgotten by the door.

"What did you bring?"

She climbed from the bed and padded naked over to the cart. When she lifted the lid, the fragrant aroma of spicy potatoes wafted to her nose, so rich she could almost taste it. "I just went to the kitchen to get something to eat. Mary, the cook, seems rather fond of you." She turned and jumped in surprise to see Abaddon standing directly behind her. She hadn't heard him leave the bed.

He leaned closer and surveyed the contents of the cart before plucking off a plate of mashed potatoes. "She's an angel, and her potatoes will make you wish you could die so you could go back to Heaven with her."

He picked up one of the silver forks nestled in a pile of napkins on the side and scooped up a brick load of potatoes. He shoveled them in his mouth and moaned as he swallowed. "She's the only person here who has ever been kind to me. I would forfeit my life for her." He placed a hand over his heart and closed his eyes. It was a familiar pose in Underworld, the universal sign for one who embraced death with honor.

"Wow. Hearing you talk about another woman that way is making me jealous." Helena winked when he looked up and reached over with her fork to steal a bite of his potatoes.

He fed her a bit before handing the entire plate to her. "I actually have to go. Apparently your father wants to meet with you right away. He's asked that I bring you to his chambers this afternoon."

"Well, that's good news, isn't it? It means he's happy that I've come." Helena watched, puzzled as he strode to the door and stood with his hand on the doorknob. He whirled around suddenly and strode over to her, lifting her by the elbows until they were face to face.

"If I asked you not to meet with him, to just leave and never come back, would you? Could you live with never knowing him?" His eyes searched her face, stopping at her mouth for a few moments.

"Abaddon? Why wouldn't you want me to see him? What's going on?" She wrapped her legs around his waist and settled herself comfortably against his big body. His chest was rigid, and his hands clenched and unclenched at his sides. Finally he lifted one hand to her hair and reverently smoothed the wild curls back.

"I will make this right. I swear it." He brought a curl to his face and closed his eyes as he inhaled. He slid her down his body until her toes touched the floor. "I have to take care of something, but when I get back, you and I are leaving. It's not safe here. Not any longer."

"But my father..." Helena pushed back until she could look into his eyes. He was behaving so strangely, shifting from foot to foot, and he couldn't meet her eyes. *What the hell is going on?*

"You can see him another time. I promise." His voice softened. "By the way, I found you some more clothes. I hung them in the closet." He

kissed her soundly on the forehead and left, pulling the door closed behind him as he left.

Huh.

"What am I, a dog? I don't sit and stay." She stomped over to the bed and flopped down on her back. It was insane for him to treat her like a child who had to be protected. Besides, what was he protecting her from? If her father wanted to hurt her, he could have done so at any time. She had been far more vulnerable to attack when she was on the surface.

"Men are morons." She rolled over to her stomach and lay her head down on the comforter. She had plenty of time to convince Abaddon to change his mind. She yawned. *I'll just take a quick nap.* She rested her forehead against her arm and fell into a deep sleep.

* * * * *

I didn't get to be Regent by being stupid. Orion swallowed a chuckle as he watched the Destroyer pace around the interior of his office. His chambers were designed to intimidate, to provoke and even to arouse. They were not intended to calm.

"Have a seat, Lord Destroyer. Take a rest. Word is you deserve it." He sat back in his large, leather wingchair and watched as the other man sat nervously. He withdrew a cigar from the left drawer of his desk and twirled it between his fingers. He'd never seen his commander in such a state before. The Destroyer was always calm, committed and completely ruthless. The perfect chieftain for any Lord of War.

But even the strongest of men could be felled by a woman.

"So she's here. Excellent work, Commander. I knew you could do it." He watched through narrowed eyes as Destroyer looked everywhere but at him. "I trust you'll bring her to me as we've agreed. I've taken the liberty of inviting a few guests, to celebrate her homecoming."

Destroyer looked up at him, the pupils of his eyes flashing red. Orion chuckled. His entire regiment despised him, and he expected nothing less. After years of training at his knee, they had all been initiated to the kind of pain and suffering most beings could only imagine. Trained

to hold up under various methods of torture, they were excellent assassins and cunning liars. But for a member of his elite force to betray his emotions this way was inexcusable. A weakness he could not tolerate.

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about, Sir. I wasn't aware you had arranged a gathering. I need more time to screen the guests, to ensure her safety. *Your* safety." Abaddon leaned back, his lids lowered, his expression neutral.

"Not necessary. Your assignment wasn't to guard her, Lord Destroyer. Your assignment was to bring her to me. Which you will do at two o'clock this afternoon. Are we clear?"

"Yes sir." Abaddon shot out of the chair and bowed. He pulled the door partially shut behind him as he left.

Orion exhaled heavily. He rapidly keyed a set of numbers into the phone on his desk. The phone rang three times before a scratchy voice picked up.

"I understand you had a private session with Lord Destroyer today."

Orion rolled his eyes at the spineless, weak voice at the other end. *Does this idiot really think I care about his spinal dislocation?*

"Well, I have an assignment that you'll be interested in. How would you like to escort my daughter to a small gathering this afternoon?" He rolled his eyes as the voice on the other end blabbered on about some nonsense. "Leave Lord Destroyer to me. I assure you he will be...otherwise occupied at that time."

As the voice continued to chatter, Orion sighed. The tinny sound echoed in his head until he dropped the receiver back into its cradle abruptly. The door to the office was still open a crack, so he stood and walked over to close it. He noticed the food cart was sitting abandoned directly in front of his office door. He lifted the dome on one of the trays and smiled. Mary's potatoes were to die for.

Chapter Six

Helena woke suddenly. She couldn't figure out what had woken her until the door vibrated again. Someone was knocking.

"Just a second." She dragged her arm against the side of her mouth, hoping she hadn't drooled too much. She threw open the closet doors and smiled when she saw the neatly lined row of dresses, skirts and silk blouses. She pulled out a long white dress with a flirty hem and pulled it on along with her shoes. It probably looked a little strange with her white sneakers, but it was long enough that you could barely tell. As she passed the large mirror on the way to the door, she wet her fingertips and smoothed down her eyebrows and the top of her hair. When she looked decent, she pulled open the heavy door a crack.

"You must be Helena. Your father is ready for you now." The man at the door had the heavy musculature of a soldier and stood a few inches short of six feet. His skin was very pale, like snow, and his dark shock of hair was a startling contrast to his coloring. When she met his eyes, he smiled.

"Abaddon's going to take me. He'll be here any minute." She pushed the door closed another inch. He hadn't moved any closer or done anything threatening, but she found herself uneasy.

"Actually, Lord Destroyer sent me to come get you. He's in a meeting with your father now and didn't have time to come back for you." When she made no move to open the door further, he shifted impatiently from foot to foot.

"He sent you? He told me he was going to set up a meeting for us at another time." She eyed him suspiciously.

"He wanted more time to conduct a full security sweep to ensure your safety. But that's all taken care of now. He's actually in your father's room finishing up now, that's why he sent me." He chuckled, and the sound was strange coming from his lips. "He said you'd be difficult."

"He said that?" Helena opened the door. "That bastard." She didn't realize she spoke aloud until he laughed again.

"Come on. We don't want to keep your father waiting." When he licked his lips, she saw that his tongue was black. Something flickered at the edge of her memory, but just that quickly it was gone. She shuddered and for a moment considered slamming the door and refusing to come out. But if Abaddon had sent him...

"There are security cameras in the entire compound. If you feel unsafe at any time, just scream. You don't think your father would take any chances with his only child, do you? He's missed you all these years."

Helena followed him into the hall. They turned left and right and left again until she gave up trying to keep track. She hoped he hadn't been lying about the security cameras. They finally stopped before a large oak door.

"What's your name?" If she was going to trust him, she should at least know something about him.

"Payne. I'm a soldier in your father's regiment." He glanced behind them before he opened the door for her, his eyes shifting left and right.

Maybe I'm reading way too much into this. Obviously he'll be on guard. He is a soldier after all.

Once the heavy door slammed shut behind them, he breathed a visible sigh of relief. He smiled at her, and when the tip of his black tongue poked out, she choked back the bile that rose in her throat.

Something is very wrong here.

* * * * *

"Abaddon! Slow down." Mary raced around the corner.

"I can't stop now, Mary. I just got word of a security breach on the east wing that I have to investigate. Then I have to get back to Helena."

"They're going after her. Your woman. I heard the Regent making a call." She stopped in the middle of the hall and bent over, hands on her knees as she struggled to catch her breath. She collapsed against the wall, her chest heaving.

Abaddon rubbed her back in slow circles. "Easy. Take your time. You heard the Regent making a call about a woman. What exactly did he say?"

After a few gasping breaths, she managed to speak. "I was delivering his lunch tray and I overheard him making a call. He's sent someone to bring Helena to him and he said he would make sure you were 'otherwise occupied'. It didn't sound right to me, so I thought you'd want to know. Is Helena in danger?"

"I don't know, but I'm going to go get her." Abaddon lifted her by her plump arms and kissed her soundly on the mouth. "You know, if I wasn't already in love, you'd have my heart."

Mary blushed prettily and waved a hand in his direction. "Get on with you, you devil. Go get your woman. Keep her safe."

His communicator beeped at his side. "Security breach...I can't believe I almost fell for that." He ripped his walkie talkie from his belt and used his pen knife to pry open the top panel. He adjusted a few wires so it was stuck in call mode. Like most walkie talkies, only one unit could send communication at a time. As long as his unit was 'on' and keeping the line open, no one else could send messages through. If it came down to a fight, he didn't want The Regent to be able to radio for backup. He was going to need all the help he could get as it was.

* * * * *

The grandeur of the room was overwhelming. Helena gaped at the twenty foot ceilings, silk draperies, Aubusson carpets and priceless antiques all arranged in that carelessly elegant fashion that was a sign of true wealth. The walls were a high gloss cream, and the gold of the

fixtures had the subtle sheen of the real thing. Even the people in attendance wore glittering shades of gray and cream. The women were ethereal in their floor length sheaths, and the men wore crisp suits in a dark gray. The only vibrant color in the room was the red walkway across the room leading up to the throne. Her father's throne.

"Who are all these people? I thought I'd be meeting with my father in private. If he doesn't like me, I'd rather not have an audience for it." She looked at Payne and smiled nervously before standing on tiptoe to see over the throng. Most of the people were tall, lithe and beautiful. Or at least they appeared to be beautiful. You could never tell with demons, *if* all these people were demons. Surely some of them were of other species as well. She smoothed down the front of her dress, glad she'd opted for the longer, more formal gown. Hopefully no one would look down past her ankles.

"You're nothing like what I expected." Payne's voice over her shoulder was amused.

"What do you mean?" He ran a finger lightly over her arm, and she shuddered and stepped to the right slightly.

"I thought you'd be an ice queen, but you've spread those pretty thighs easily enough for our commander, it seems." When she recoiled, he jerked her back against him by the arm. "Did you think no one would know? I can smell him all over you."

"You speak of things you know nothing about." She scanned the room frantically, her eyes running over every man in the room. *Where is Abaddon?*

"I know enough. I know you shudder in revulsion at my touch, so it must be power that turns you on. It doesn't matter anyway. Once he tires of you, he'll just give you to us as a plaything anyway."

"You are sick. Abaddon would never give me to anyone, and I won't be here long enough for you to try anything. He'll be taking me back to the surface after this. After I meet my father."

They stopped before the crimson carpet that led up to her father's throne. Her father wore a blood red robe, the hood pulled up to conceal his face. When he looked up at her, all she could see were a pair of

burning amber eyes. Eyes like hers. She didn't realize she was grabbing Payne's arm until he pried her nails out of his skin. He brushed the blood off his arm like it was no more than lint. His red eyes fixed on her with a mixture of lust and hatred.

"Would you think so highly of him if you knew how he's maneuvered you tonight, I wonder? I have to salute him. Our commander is known for his cunning, but getting you here is beyond what anyone thought even the Destroyer could do."

She stiffened but kept her eyes trained ahead of her. "What are you talking about?"

"Your father has been searching for you the past three years, but we couldn't locate you because you'd been shielded somehow. That's why I was so excited when I found you. I thought I'd be rewarded. But of course, somehow the Destroyer ends up with all the credit. As usual."

Helena couldn't hear him anymore, could barely see the colors of the brightly lit room or smell the scent of the food lining the long banquet tables. "That was you. You drugged me." She struggled in his hold, the chill of panic like ice water on her skin.

Her mind flashed with images of her mother on her knees praying to the Mother Goddess. Praying for Helena's safety. Never her own. She gasped as he roughly jerked her arm behind her back, pain lancing up her arm and exploding through her back. He muscled her up the runner and shoved her down in a chair next to her father's. A flurry of hands held her as he strapped her down. She felt a sharp sting in her arm and looked down to see an IV being inserted into her skin. When he pulled out another set of needles, she screamed.

"Daddy!" She turned to the silent figure on her right. He had pulled up his sleeve to reveal a sickly white arm. Payne inserted an IV in his inner elbow before turning back to her.

"I'm sorry." The voice coming from the hood was scratchy like he'd been chewing on sandpaper. He turned to her, and when their eyes met, she was captivated by the color, so similar to her own. She jumped when something touched her face, only to realize it was his hand. He smoothed

back her hair gently before his face seemed to harden. He turned to Payne and nodded. "Do it."

"What? No, please." She pulled at the needle in her arm savagely.

"Shit, she's yanking it out. Stop that."

She cried out when Payne backhanded her across the face. Her mouth filled with the metallic taste of copper, and her breath sounded like a hurricane to her own ears. She was on the verge of hysteria; she could feel it rising, threatening to choke her. "Abaddon." His name was a desperate plea.

"Abaddon. Abaddon." Payne mocked her. "You still want him?" He laughed cruelly. "I have to give it to him. He really is brilliant. When the Regent put out the call for his daughter's capture, it was assumed she would be brought against her will. The commander actually got you to walk in here willingly with no idea what's really in store. Genius." Helena latched on to the tail end of what Payne was saying, the words ricocheting inside her mind like bullets. The world stood still for a moment, yet everything was the same...the room was just as breathtaking, and the crowd sashayed around them, their glittering costumes a haze of sparkling light.

Payne looked down at the needle in her arm. She winced when he pressed a small vial in place and angled it. A few drops of blood came out and then...nothing.

"Sire, the blood isn't flowing." He withdrew the needle and inserted it into another vein. The same thing happened, a few drops of blood and then the flow stopped.

"At this rate, boy, I'll die before you get the blood out. Figure it out!" The scratchy voice emerged from the hood again, enraging Helena.

"The wounds are healing, you idiots. I thought all demons healed quickly." She cut off mid sentence when Payne withdrew a long knife. "What are you doing?"

"It seems your daughter has inherited more of you than we realized. I'll have to cut her deep."

"Wait," the scratchy voice ordered. A flash of motion across the room caught their attention. "Commander, how nice of you to join us."

Abaddon skidded to a halt in the doorway across the room, his chest heaving like he'd been running.

She looked up and blinked back tears. Her gaze settled on the chandelier above her, its crystalline leaves sparkling like dew. She imagined her heart was just like the shimmering glass, the delicate shards so easily shattered. She could feel the pieces poking around in her chest, the pain of betrayal so much worse than the pain she'd experienced when she'd lost Donny eight years ago. She'd been devastated, a young girl scarred by her first love affair. It hadn't occurred to her then to fight back. She wouldn't have even known how.

But eight years was a long time.

A towering, mountainous wave of rage rose from her gut like a tornado. She was powerless to stop it, and in her mind's eye she could see everything that was about to happen, unlike any of the attacks she'd had before.

She was pure fury.

The beautiful assemblage hovered around them, their faces eager, their lust for violence palpable. They were all waiting to see what her father would do to her. "What the hell are they all looking at?"

"They're here to witness our Regent's return to power. He's been sick for so long, and now your blood is going to give him new life. At least you can die knowing you were useful."

"Well, by all means let's give them something worth watching." Her voice deepened, the texture as raw as the hurt boiling inside her.

Time seemed to slow as she turned to look over the crowd. The heat from her skin floated around her in a thin mist, a chill cloak obscuring her vision. Abaddon moved strangely, and she noticed, as if from a distance, that he was being held back by three guards. His mouth formed words she couldn't comprehend and didn't care to. He'd touched her, brought her pleasure and made her love him again. But he'd done it all to curry favor with her father. She'd hoped her love could bring back the boy she'd known, the boy who'd loved her, but he was gone. Years of working for her father had changed him. The only thing that had ever been constant in her life was the rage.

It's time to embrace it.

She closed her eyes briefly and placed her free hand palm down over her heart in an unspoken farewell. His eyes tracked the movement of her hand and his eyes widened.

"Lena, no!" Abaddon broke free from the men struggling to hold him back and jumped the banquet table, dishes shattering on the floor, food flying.

For the first time, Helena gave her rage free rein, the power sprinting through her veins electrifying, frightening. The hairs on her arms singed and fell out and the smell of smoke was a tang in the air. The pop, pop, pop of tendon and bone as her body stretched to accommodate the flames was both pain and release from the incredible storm building inside her. The bindings on her arm and legs fell away easily as she stood. She threw back her head and roared as the first explosion hit her like an orgasm, every nerve in her body singing in response.

"It's so good. I never knew, the power..." She gasped as the fire seeped through her pores, catching on the edge of the curtains behind her, the entire wall of drapery going up in flames, a glorious conflagration. She was pushed to the left and turned to see Payne's fist plow past her face so closely she could feel the breeze from his swing.

"Lena, watch out!" Abaddon shoved her again, putting her behind him, facing Payne with a sneer. "Run. They'll kill you if you don't." When she didn't move, he turned to her, gritted his teeth and growled. "I said move!"

As angry as she was, Helena hesitated. Why would he help her if it was his intention to bring her here all along? She looked behind her frantically, but her father was gone, his throne empty. "Why should I trust you? How do I know there isn't another group of soldiers waiting outside to kill me?" She looked around frantically and roared out a hiss of flame in frustration. Even if she burnt the place to the ground, she'd never be safe with her father on the loose.

Abaddon turned and struck a soldier in the face who'd come up behind her. She winced and turned away as the body crashed at her feet. "You don't know that. I don't know that either. But once I realized what

your father had planned, I took out the communicators. We're close to an exit. If you go now, you have a chance to make it to the surface before anyone has time to run for help. But I can only hold these guys off for so long."

She watched him for a long moment before she ran for the door. When she hesitated and looked back at him, he cursed. "Go! I'll hold them off and then I'll come for you."

"You don't know where I live."

Another soldier jumped on his back and hooked an arm under his neck to cut off his air. Abaddon leaned over and threw him on the ground, stabbing him through the abdomen. He panted heavily as he looked up at her. "I know. I've always known." He winced at the revelation and looked away.

Of course he knew where I was. How dramatic she was, imagining herself some tragic heroine all these years, separated from true love by the cruel hands of fate. He hadn't been corrupted by her father. He'd been like this all along. He had known where she was for the past eight years.

He hadn't come for her because he hadn't wanted to.

"Destroyer." She snorted angrily. "Now I know why they call you that. You ruin everything you touch." She touched her wet face carefully, her fingers trailing over her cheeks. Her hot tears were acid on her cheeks.

She watched a moment longer as he raged, destroying the soldiers who attacked him, a fiery menace. The room burned, the heat from the flames melting the paint off the walls and lacing the air with the stench of ash.

"I am utterly destroyed."

Chapter Seven

Helena dragged herself up the front steps of her house and collapsed in the doorway. Her cheek hit the flagstone with a jarring crunch, and there was gravel in her eye. None of it mattered. She was home.

With Mary's help, she'd escaped out the servant's entrance. She'd had to hike for over three miles to reach the entrance to the surface. The veil between worlds was thickening steadily since All Hallow's Eve, and the trail was rough and strewn with bracken. She'd given up twice before remembering that she had to keep going. Likely the entire Regiment of Underworld was after her now, and if she was going to die, she didn't want to do it on the forest floor.

She heaved herself up from the concrete and flipped the security panel. It took three tries before she could get her fingers to cooperate long enough to key in her code. Finally the light flashed green and she was in.

She stumbled through the foyer and dropped in a heap as soon as she entered the living room. She lay her cheek against the soft carpet and wept until she was depleted. Sleep came quickly.

"Angel. Wake up, my angel." She stirred at the lilting voice calling out to her. *Just a little more sleep.* The voice called again. It was such a nice voice, soft and lilting, like a harp. The voice of someone who loved her.

"Mommy?" She dragged one eye open and whimpered in relief when her mother Angelique's face came into view.

"I'm here, little one. " Angelique wrapped her up in her arms and helped her sit up. "Easy, sweet pea. Come on, let's sit you down." They hobbled over to the deep cushions of the couch, and Helena crawled up gratefully. When her mother lay down next to her, she looked up in surprise. Her mother's arms came around her and squeezed her with surprising strength. Until her arms began to shake.

"Momma?" Helena turned her head, but her mother's grip abruptly tightened so she couldn't turn all the way. "Momma, are you crying?"

"I should have told you about your father. Instead you walked right into his clutches because I kept you in the dark. I thought I was protecting you. "

"Mom. Please don't cry. I got away. Abaddon...he helped me. I'm not sure why, but he helped me escape."

Angelique squeezed her tighter. "That boy loves you. No doubt your father was behind his sudden disappearance all those years ago."

"I'm not so sure he didn't leave because he wanted to. I'm not sure about much of anything. I thought my father wanted to meet me. I was so excited. But all he wanted was my blood. I just don't know why?"

"If he's been poisoned, he needs blood from a relative to heal him. Demons regenerate quickly from most illnesses, but if his blood is poisoned, he'll need help." Angelique sighed and sat up. "This isn't over. Your father won't give up. You are his only blooded child. He'll come for you."

She shrieked when a shattering crash resounded outside the French doors to their right. Angelique jumped up and pulled Helena to her chest. Two dark shapes flashed past the window. The two women ran to the doors and looked out. Abaddon stood on the back patio, chest heaving with his boot planted squarely in the chest of a middle aged man.

A man with Helena's eyes.

"Orion?" Angelique whispered. She fumbled with the clasp on the door, making sure it was locked before pushing Helena behind her. "What do we do now? And who is that holding him down?"

"Mom, that's Abaddon."

"That's Donny? That little, scrawny, shy boy turned into...that?" She was silent for a moment. "Darling, if that man is chasing you...let him catch you. I would."

"Mom!" Helena shook her head in amazement as her mother giggled and waved two fingers at Abaddon through the glass. He blushed and looked away.

Helena flipped the lock on the doors and pulled them open.

"Helena, no. Stay inside. He's dangerous." Angelique grabbed her arm and tried to drag her back inside.

She gently pried her mother's fingers from her wrist. "I finally figured something out, Mom. So am I."

She walked out to the porch and stood over her father's pale form, taking in his honey brown eyes and cinnamon streaked hair. She had her mother's grace, but she had definitely inherited her father's nature. It was time she started acting like it.

"I don't know what you thought to accomplish by coming here. I won't help you willingly, and I promise you, if it comes down to a battle, I'll be the last one standing. I inherited more of you than you think." She blew him a kiss, a long stream of fire blowing across the air to lick at his cheeks. He laughed and met her eyes for the first time.

"After that impressive display in my chambers yesterday, I'd be a fool to believe otherwise. I actually didn't come here just to see you." He sat up, ignoring Abaddon's growl of warning. "Can you call off your bodyguard? I know when I'm outnumbered."

"Why would I call him off? Doesn't he work for you?" Helena glanced between them, bewildered.

"Not anymore. Not only did he quit, but he took out half the regiment to prevent them from coming after you. If I wasn't so pissed off, I'd be proud."

"Abaddon?" He wouldn't meet her eyes but backed away slightly from her father. Orion moved a little closer and held out a hand to Angelique.

"Don't. I don't want to hear anything you have to say. Please, just leave." Angelique turned away, her eyes damp.

"Brute strength is the only thing I've ever understood. Kindness, patience and love aren't things I deal with well." He shifted awkwardly and looked at Helena. "You have my eyes. I guess I didn't think you would look like me."

"Well, DNA has a way of doing that." Helena rolled her eyes.

"I didn't mean...I'm really bad at this. I'm trying to say I'm sorry. For...everything. I've caused you nothing but pain. I know I'm a selfish son of a bitch, but...I'm going to try to work on that. For you, for me and for your mother's sake."

"Don't do me any favors, Orion," Angelique said. "Our time is over and gone. I thought I saw something in you once, something worth saving, but I was wrong. I could never regret meeting you. You've given me my most precious possession. My beautiful daughter." She ran a gentle hand over Helena's hair. "But I couldn't take the chance that you would hurt her the way you hurt me. Shielding her from you was the only protection I could give her."

"Angelique, you are the only woman who makes me wish I could be different." Orion took in Helena's tense stance, her body partially blocking Angelique from his view. "You'll take care of her for me?" He nodded at Angelique.

"I'll take care of her because I love her. Someday, I hope you'll understand what that feels like." Helena watched in silence as he walked across the yard toward the side gate. He stopped with his hand on the clasp and looked back. His lips pulled hesitantly into a smile when he looked at her before moving on to Angelique. The look in his eyes was tender, almost reverent, the look a man gave a woman he loved but felt he wasn't worthy of. Then a second later the look was gone.

"Wait." Helena ran and skidded to a stop right in front of him. She reached over, pulled his dagger from his belt and sliced a shallow cut on the inside of her wrist.

"What are you doing?" His voice was alarmed. The blood wasn't flowing fast enough, so she tried again, hitting the vein this time. Her blood ran in a steady stream down her inner arm.

"If I want you to learn about unconditional love, then I guess I have to be the example. Hold out your arm." He stared unmoving for a moment before slowly extending his hand. She sliced a long cut down his thick forearm and held her wound above it. Her blood dripped and mingled with his.

"You'd save me anyway?" He looked at her with wonder. He laid a hand over his heart and blinked rapidly. Helena sniffed and turned away slightly, giving him time to wipe away the tears that fell. Then she leaned over and hugged him hard.

"All right. I've done my good deed. Just don't forget about me, okay?" She pulled away and wiped her own eyes with the back of her hand.

"Never." He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wrapped the wound at her wrist. "Hold this tight."

"What about yours?" She looked at his arm and was astonished to see his cut was half healed already.

"I'll be fine. Everything will be fine now." He looked back to where Abaddon and Angelique watched them. "He would die before he hurt you. The only reason he left all those years ago is because he was afraid of what I would do to you if he didn't. I wanted a warrior, and I was willing to take out any obstacle that got in the way of that. They should call me 'The Destroyer', not him."

As he left, she called after him, "Thank you."

"What did you do? Oh baby, did he hurt you?" Angelique cradled her wrist, the gentle warmth of her healing presence a balm to the tender skin.

"No, he didn't hurt me. I gave him some of my blood because I wanted to. I believe there's still some good in him."

Angelique watched her, her quiet gray eyes shining. "You, my child, are a true gift." She hugged Helena quickly. "Now go and get your man, before I do." She chuckled softly and walked back to the house. She gave Helena a pointed look before closing the glass door behind her.

Helena and Abaddon stared at each other in silence for a few moments.

"What are you...?"

"I'm sorry..."

They laughed awkwardly. Just like that, the tension was broken and it was just...comfortable.

"What are you doing here?" She stuck her hands in her pockets to keep from grabbing him. He looked at her shyly, his large shoulders slumped.

"I had to make sure you were safe. I didn't know what your father had planned, but I should have known he was dangerous. He's been searching for you for years."

"Abaddon, stop. I know you weren't trying to hurt me. He told me...my father told me you weren't aware of his plans, that you didn't know he only wanted me for my blood. Thank you for helping me get out. You didn't have to do that."

"No, I didn't. I realized something before I came here today. I've lost everything to protect you, my job, and my life in Underworld."

Helena rolled her eyes and crossed her arms defiantly. "Go to hell."

"I've been there. It's nothing without you." He moved closer, until they were standing chest to chest.

"Abaddon. Don't..."

"Don't what? Want you? Need you? Love you?"

Helena gasped and closed her eyes. The words she'd longed to hear for years seemed hollow. Was it because she didn't believe he was sincere, or was it her? *Have I changed so much?*

"Things are so different now. I'm not sure how to react to you when you're..."

"Being a wuss?"

"I was going to say being sincere." She smiled and rolled her eyes.

"Well, here's sincere for you. I'm in love with you. What do you say about that?"

Helena crossed her arms and looked him over from head to toe. "All I know is that you still owe me two more days."

Abaddon smiled, and it was so unexpected, Helena instantly smiled back. She shivered at the erotic promises she could see in his eyes.

Hellbaby by Minx Malone

“I’ve never been known to back down from a deal.” He ran a hand lightly down the side of her face. “But I’ll do you one better. Instead of two days, how’s forever sound? For starters.”

Helena kissed him softly. “I suppose that’ll do. For starters.”

The End

Author Bio

Minx Malone lives in the Washington, DC metro area with her husband and son. She enjoys classic novels, Sudoku and considers herself an amateur Egyptologist. Most of her novel ideas come to her at the strangest times, such as when waiting in line at the bank or while on the metro. She also gives some of the credit to her incredibly vivid dreams. No black and white dreams for Minx! She's the only person she knows who dreams in HDTV with surround sound!

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