

A photograph of a man from the chest up, wearing a white button-down shirt. He is leaning against a dark blue, vertically-ribbed metal door. His head is tilted back, and his eyes are closed. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side, highlighting his face and the texture of the door. The shirt is slightly open at the collar.

Hellbourne

Bound and Determined

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Chapter One

After leaving Nikkolai's club, Luc leased a small Victorian house. It was just temporary, but it was home. One of the wolves stopped by almost every day to chat, check on his welfare, ask advice, and give him an update on Bran. So far there was no change in his former lover.

The message was always the same. Bran was permanently in wolf form.

It was interesting when flowers arrived the Monday after Luc moved in. Nikko must have spies watching his every move. The writing on the card said Love, Nikkolai.

Luc snorted. He didn't want Nikko's version of love.

Tuesday's delivery was a box of chocolates so heavy he could have used it for weight lifting. Wednesday was an mp3 player with a kick-ass collection of songs. Thursday he got a new cell phone with only one number programmed into it. And today is Friday.

"I think he's sorry." Jerrod said coming into the room, licking a dab of blood off his lips. Good thing the demon tribe of Katos owed him a shit load of favors.

Luc spent a moment admiring his vampire.

After only a few days the shattered boy he'd taken from the club glowed with the power of demon blood rushing through him. Now that he wasn't starved, Jerrod was leaving behind his boyish frame and solidifying into the body of a man.

His vamp was coming along nicely.

But the whole ownership thing freaked Luc out.

After spending his entire life fighting with his father for independence, it scraped him raw that Jerrod called him master.

The vampire walked up to him sliding a hand over Luc's arm as he approached. "Are you going to forgive him?"

"He let you be publicly whipped." Luc said behind clenched teeth.

Jerrod shrugged. "It's our way. I was Mal's property, sold to him by my master. It was his right to do with me what he pleased."

Luc could feel his eyes burning and he knew from past experience that his irises were glowing like small suns. He closed them, trying to regulate his breath and calm down. With so much anger flaring inside it was a miracle that the runes weren't shimmering on his skin. It was difficult to explain abuse to a man who didn't understand that whipping someone until they bled on the floor was not the normal behavior of a sane being.

He knew this from personal experience.

"No master should harm those he's sworn to care for. It's wrong and I find it odd that I should have to explain this to you of all people." Luc said.

Giving him an affectionate smile, Jerrod rubbed Luc's back in slow soothing circles. "Calm down master. Vampires have been around for centuries. You aren't going to change an entire culture overnight."

"I don't want to change the culture. I want to change one little tribe."

“You know what they say,” Jerrod said handing over a gold and red envelope. “Change is best done from within.”

“What’s this?” Luc asked, his fingers already breaking the red wax seal.

“A personal invitation.” Jerrod said with a wicked smile. “From your favorite fangy stalker.”

“Don’t make me punch you.” Luc threatened. “It ruins my credibility.”

Jerrod laughed.

“I’m invited to dine with Master Nikkolai.”

Luc frowned at the gilt card. “Do you think he thought about that before he sent it out? Most people don’t want to dine with a vampire.”

“No, he probably eats real food. The older vamps can eat.”

This was news to Luc.

“Really? Are you old enough? Should I be feeding you food too?”

Jerrod gave a wide smile. “No. I’m still too young to digest food. I’ll shuffle along with the high grade demon blood you provide. You know that demon blood is like liquid gold for vampires, don’t you?”

Luc was still staring at the invitation. “Is it? Well it’s all I’ve got so you’ll just have to put up with the top shelf stuff. If you’re good then maybe I can find you a thin-blooded wino junkie for dessert.”

Jerrod laughed. “I almost hate to tell you that you can actually purchase blood from blood suppliers.”

“Really?” Luc said without much interest, his attention still on the paper in his hand. “Do you think I should go?”

“Yes.” Jerrod tenderly slid the paper out from Luc’s hand. “I think you should go. Vampires dream of finding their mates. The older the vampire the more important it is. If Master Nikkolai thinks you’re his mate then you’ll need to find out if it’s true. You can’t do that if you refuse to meet with him.”

“I don’t know if I can forgive him for his callousness. And besides, do I really need another alpha deciding I’m his mate? Look where it got me with Bran.”

Jerrod looked into Luc’s eyes. “Bran tried to deny his needs so he got what he deserved. Master Nikkolai is all about claiming you. Vampires are a people of passion. That’s something you’ll need to get used to if you’re a master vampire’s mate.” Jerrod nodded towards the invitation. “I’ll come with you.”

“What? No!” Luc didn’t want anything to happen to his delicate vamp. “We just got you healthy.”

“I’ll come with you because in vampire culture to go alone means you’re a lesser being. It means there’s no one who will back you if there’s trouble. I will go because they need to know that you’re a master with a devoted follower. I may be a submissive with my masters Luc, but I won’t let you go to a vampire gathering without support.”

“You’re not being submissive now.” Luc grumbled. “Fine, you can accept the invitation for me. Let them know we’re coming. Do I need to get some of the wolves to back me up?”

Jerrod shook his head. "No. If we were expecting trouble I'd recommend them but Master Nikkolai wants your happiness, so there won't be any problems."

Luc didn't know what to say. That this broken man would take care of him was more than he ever expected. He leaned in and gave the vampire a soft kiss. "Thank you Jerrod. I appreciate your advice. If you needed anything you'd tell me right?"

"Always Master."

Satisfied that Jerrod was telling the truth, Luc nodded in agreement.

He cleared his throat. "I have something for you."

It took him all day but he finally had his gift ready.

Jerrod immediately fell to his knees, eyes to the floor. "Your will is my will Master."

There was only so much training one could undo in a few days. Luc stood for a moment looking down at his "servant". Not that he thought of him that way. He thought of him more like a roommate. A very fragile roommate.

"Jerrod, I've been concerned about your safety."

Jerrod's wide blue eyes, filled with apprehension, looked up at him. "Ar-are you leaving me?"

"What? No, no. But sometimes you might be separated from me where I can't protect you. I want you to know that you'll always be safe." He pulled Jerrod's gift out of his pocket. "So I made you a little charm."

Luc held up the blue-green pendent and dangled the one inch wide silver chain, so Jerrod could see the colors swirling inside the charm. He'd painted a miniature picture of himself and pressed it between a pair of three inch pieces of fused glass. Wrapping the piece with silver wire, he bound it together with metal and magic until three pieces became one. Luc shied away from calling it a collar but he knew it would look like one to other vampires checking for ownership. Short of decapitation, nothing could harm Jerrod while wearing that charm.

"It's on silver." Jerrod said nervously. "You know silver burns vampires."

Luc tilted his head and examined the vampire kneeling before him. "Do you trust me?"

Jerrod nodded.

"Will you allow me to put this around your neck?"

Another nod.

Luc knelt with Jerrod and carefully connected the clasp behind the vampire's neck while chanting a short spell to seal it for eternity.

He saw Jerrod swallow as he released the chain and let the pendent settle directly on the vampire's bare skin.

Luc watched with amusement as his vampire relaxed the muscles he'd braced for the burn.

"It doesn't hurt." Jerrod whispered.

Luc took Jerrod's face between his hands. "I would never purposely harm you."

He saw relief and a look of stunned acceptance in Jerrod's eyes. A moment passed and Jerrod spoke. "I can hear it singing to me." Jerrod's eyes took on a wistful look. "It's you isn't it? You're singing."

Oops.

“Sometimes whoever makes the spell leaves residual traces of its forming. I sing while I work. I can try to remake it if it bothers you.”

Luc reached out to take the necklace back.

“No!” Jerrod shouted, his hand clutching the pendant. “It’s mine. You made it for me.” His voice dipped lower as tears streaked his cheeks. “No one has ever made anything for me before.”

Shit.

Luc wrapped Jerrod into his arms, rubbing one palm in circles around his smooth back. The same calming gesture his vamp used on him. Jerrod was sweet but so abused.

“No one will harm you again. Not on my watch.”

Jerrod leaned back and looked at Luc, those beautiful eyes watching him with hot desire. “May I suck you off Master?”

“I-I thought I was supposed to be bonded to Nikkolai?” Not that he felt loyalty to the bastard but the change in Jerrod’s demeanor was confusing.

“But I belong to you Master. It’s important that you bond with me so that our linking is tight. If we’re properly bonded, you’ll know if I’m in danger.”

“Luc looked suspiciously as Jerrod, but his senses told him that Jerrod believed what he was saying. “It would be a better bond if you fucked me.” Jerrod said, a lustful gleam in his eyes. “But I’ll settle for sucking you off if you aren’t ready.”

A broken laugh burst out. “You make me sound like a skittish virgin.”

Jerrod smiled before placing a soft kiss on Luc’s lips. There was a teasing light in his eyes when he pulled away. “Skittish maybe, but I doubt you’re a virgin.”

Pleased at the new confidence in his vampire, Luc rubbed his palm across Jerrod’s crotch feeling him through the rough denim. Although he liked the vampire in low riding jeans he wanted to feel more. With a twist of his hands, Luc ripped open Jerrod’s button fly. The sound of fabric tearing echoed loudly in the quiet house. Jerrod let out a soft whimper, his excitement obvious in the hardening of his cock. Luc felt his own prick harden in response to the other man’s excitement. Jerrod might not be Bran or even Nikko, but the younger vamp was a sexy hunk of manhood.

“Please Master, I need.”

Luc laid Jerrod on the thick Oriental rug. The thick pad beneath the rug provided comfort. The last thing Luc wanted to do was bruise Jerrod’s body, perhaps give him rug burn, but not bruise.

As Luc continued to stroke Jerrod cock, soft whimpering noises ushered from his long, sleek body.

Without a word, Luc stripped his clothes off before helping Jerrod out of his.

“Let me get some lube.”

“No!” Jerrod shouted. “Don’t leave me.” The grip on Luc’s arm was desperate, his eyes wild.

“Shh baby, I just have to grab my pants.” Old habits kept packets of lube nearby. Weres can’t get a disease so condoms weren’t necessary.

The same was said for vamps.

Seeing that he wasn't going anywhere, Jerrod's body went limp beneath his hands. He knew from their conversations that no one had ever spent the time getting to know Jerrod's body. His vampire's past lovers just took what they wanted with little regard for this sensitive man. After making sure his packet of lube was close, Luc gave Jerrod lingering caresses, letting his hands stroke the vampire while his lips nipped at interesting and tender bits. A bite on the right nipple got a soft scream, a nip at a sensitive part of the hip caused a jerk, and lapping at the belly button produced a soft giggle.

Luc swirled his tongue over Jerrod's impressive cock, encouraging the sweet sticky pre-cum to bubble to the surface.

"Please, please, please." The vampire's chants accompanied the movements of his body trying to get closer to his touch.

Judging that it was time to stake his claim, Luc snapped open the lubricant and warmed it between his palms before sliding a finger into his partner's hole.

"More."

Luc laughed. "For a submissive you're a demanding little thing."

He slid another finger in.

"Please Master, I'll do anything just fuck me."

"Back or hands and knees."

Jerrod's eye lit up. "I get to choose?"

"Choose quickly."

The vampire bit his lip, little fangs peaking out. "Back. I want to see you when you take me. You're so beautiful."

Luc placed his palms beneath Jerrod's hips lifting him to the perfect angle. Lining himself up, Luc slid the tip of his cock into Jerrod's tight paradise. A groan ripped from his chest as Luc pushed in. Using gentle motions Luc got Jerrod to relax his tight ring of muscles until he was fully seated balls to ass.

Both men moaned.

Luc stayed still until he felt Jerrod try to move him. Smiling, Luc pumped into the vamp nailing his prostate over and over again.

Jerrod screamed, struggling to get closer to the sensation. Then without warning, he let it all go. Ropes of warm liquid shot against Luc's chest, propelling him into orgasm.

When his body stopped shuddering, Luc slipped out of Jerrod's body and slumped beside him on the floor. "So, do you feel claimed now?"

There was a contented sigh and a sloppy smile spread across Jerrod's handsome face. "Most wonderfully claimed, thank you."

"My pleasure." Luc said. "Now let's go take a shower and then you can accept my invitation."

Chapter Two

Jerrod had barely hung up on Nikko, when the sound of howling pierced the air.

The ringtone of the Pack house.

Sprinting across the room, Luc grabbed his old cell phone that he'd left on the kitchen counter to charge.

"Hello."

"Luc, you have to come. Bran's been shot."

The feeling of ice split his spine as fear overtook his body. "What do you mean shot?"

"Bullets! Guns! Shot!" Salvador screamed across the line. "Come to the Pack house. We need a healer!"

"I'll be there."

Luc hung up and turned around to find Jerrod standing right behind him. "Bran's been shot. I have to go to the Pack house. I want you to stay here and let Nikko know that I won't be at dinner."

"Yes, Master." Jerrod's words were obedient but his tone was sullen.

"Don't challenge me on this. The Pack would tear you apart for invading their territory. Even the little pull I have won't save you from a mauling."

"I know." Jerrod looked down at his bare feet and kicked at the carpet. "I was hoping we'd spend more time together."

Although he had to stand on his tiptoes, Luc kissed Jerrod on the top of his head. "Don't worry it'll work out fine. Bran should be easy to heal. I'm surprised he hasn't healed himself by now. I need to get some things straightened out with Bran so don't be surprised if I don't come back until tomorrow."

"How much longer do you think you can keep going back and forth between vampires and weres?" Jerrod's blue eyes were direct and penetrating making Luc wish he was still looking at the floor.

Luc shrugged. "I can't leave Bran to die. He was my lover for twenty years. You just don't throw that away." Although the alpha had tossed him aside, Luc couldn't explain to his fragile vamp that there will always be only one owner of his heart. He might not be with his alpha wolf, but that didn't take away from the fact that he still loved Bran and always would.

Jerrod wrapped Luc in his arms. "I'll be waiting for you when you get back. Want me to call a cab?"

"No. I'll travel by mirror."

"Mirror?"

"Yeah. Want to watch?"

A wide smile spread across Jerrod's face. "I'd love to."

"Let's go." A sudden urgency hit Luc hard. He needed to see Bran and assure himself that he was still alive. Mirror walking was one of his few fae talents. Only used in emergencies because it mildly freaked him out. Walking through glass was odd.

With Jerrod hard on Luc's heels, they rushed into the bedroom and approached the full length mirror in the corner of the room.

"Ever wonder what I needed a full length mirror for?"

Jerrod smirked. "To admire yourself?"

Laughing, Luc shook his head. "To travel." Licking his index finger he ran the wet tip along the top edge of the mirror focusing his mind on his final destination. The reflection of the room wavered, colors swirled and a perfect image of Bran's bedroom appeared. Luc held back his tears as memories of sharing this room with his lover crowded his mind. He could see Salvador sitting in a chair by Bran's side and Bran in human form laying still and silent on top of the covers. It took him aback to see Bran as a human but then he realized the wound must have forced the shift. When injured a were converted to human form, a disadvantage that allow paranormal hunters to separate them from real wolves when they were hunting

Admiring the perfect image in the mirror, Jarrod smiled and murmured, "Cool".

"When I return the mirror will chime to let you know I'm coming through."

Jerrod nodded. He leaned forward and held Luc in his arms one more time. "Good luck. I don't know Bran, but if you want him better so do I."

Luc pressed his lips against Jerrod's cheek. "Thanks handsome."

Luc gave Jerrod a smile then walked through the mirror. A soft pop echoed as he went from one space to another.

A low moan filled the room.

Mate. Whispered into his mind.

"He's not healing." Sal said in a low, worried tone. The were stood near the alpha wolf's head and greeted Luc. Soft kisses were placed on each of Luc's cheeks, Sal brushing skin to skin marking him as pack.

Mate.

Luc moved around Sal to sit next to Bran.

Blood soaked the were's smooth mocha skin like a body dipped in red paint.

"Who did this?"

Sal swallowed and clenched his teeth. "Hunters."

"Where was he to be so close to Hunters? Where was he Sal?"

Someone was going to die. If Luc didn't get answers soon it was going to be his good friend Sal.

"The Pack grounds were ambushed. Three hunters got four of our wolves. The others had minor injuries but were able to heal themselves."

"But Bran is the alpha. He should've healed by now." Luc stroked his ex-lover's head. A feeling of contentment sailed through him.

"His power is fractured." Sal said in a sad tone. "If he can't control his change I'll have to take over. I'll alert the others that you're here so they won't panic when they feel the magic coming from Bran's room."

The vibe in Sal's voice struck Luc as wrong, but he was too concerned with the blood pumping out of his ex-lover to pay much attention. Luc spread his hands across the wounds. Bran whimpered softly, his pain-filled eyes watching Luc with complete trust.

"Shhh. I'll take care of you, sweetheart." Luc said. Closing his eyes, Luc internally focused, drawing out the power to heal. He imagined the energy flowing from the center of his body down his arms and into his hands. Blue flames burst from his palms, slamming into Bran lying on the bed. Luc's eyes snapped open. He directed the fire into Bran's skin, pushing out the bullets, and healing the wounds. Bran's body shook. Flesh sprouted fur then receded. Although healed, Bran's body retained his human form as he dealt with the trauma of injury.

Luc collapsed on the small portion of bed not taken by the large were. He was tired. Between the stress of taking care of Jerrod and worrying about his love life, he was worn down.

Familiar fingers stroked his head.

"Even after everything, you came to save me." Bran's voice sounded rusty and painful. Luc looked up to see the were gazing at him with a familiar look of love. A painful knot formed in his throat. How he'd missed his lover.

"I'm sorry, my love, for everything." Gentle fingers traced his cheek. "If you'll come back to me we'll work something out. I swear."

Luc could hear the sincerity in his ex-lover's voice and a painful yearning filled his soul. He looked into Bran's beautiful face so dear to him, even now. "I don't think we can work out the fact you want to have sex with a woman and have her pups."

He wouldn't cry. He wouldn't.

Luc blinked rapidly looking away.

Bran's large hand wrapped around Luc's. "We can have one together. We'll find a female willing to be a surrogate. You'll be there the entire time." The alpha took a deep shaky breath. "My wolf needs its heart." He tilted Luc's head up to meet his eyes. "And my human half needs its soul. Come back to me baby and we can rule the Pack together."

Luc could feel Bran's sincerity. It shrouded him like a warm blanket.

Before he could think of a response to Bran's words the bedroom door slammed open.

"What's he doing here!" Betsy screamed.

"Hello, Betsy." Luc's heart hammered in his chest. He didn't want to fight an angry she-wolf. It was bad enough that he'd invaded her territory and took back her man.

"Why can't you leave us alone? You're tearing the Pack apart." Her fangs dropped in anger, a low growl rolling up from her chest.

Shit.

Behind Betsy in the hallway, Luc saw Sal appear but he was slower than the blur that rose from the bed that took the alpha bitch down.

A thud echoed in the room and Betsy hit the ground hard, buried beneath the large alpha's body.

"Don't ever talk to my mate like that." Bran growled, his voice low and dangerous, his hands shifting into claws.

“I’m your mate.”

“You’re nothing.”

Luc winced. Subtle, Bran wasn’t. This was not going to be good for Bran’s allegiance with Becky’s pack.

Sal slipped into the room and patted Luc’s shoulder in a silent message of support. A low whine filled the air. Betsy had converted to wolf. She was baring her neck and stomach to the alpha. With a low growl Bran stood up between Betsy and Luc, in a protective stance. With a sharp bark, Betsy ran down the hall.

“You’ll start a pack war if you send her back to her pack.” Sal said with a sigh.

Bran shrugged. “Bring them on. She was a pain long before I learned we weren’t compatible.”

“I’ll make sure she leaves. You’ll have to talk to the Pack soon and let everyone know what’s going on.” Sal kissed Luc’s cheek before walking out the door and shutting it behind him. Leaving Luc alone with Bran, he was uncertain of what to do next. For a long moment Luc stared at the closed door not sure of what to say.

“Luc.” Bran’s voice held a familiar note of longing.

He reluctantly turned to face the alpha wolf. Bran’s gold eyes were glowing with hunger as he took in Luc. “What do you want from me Bran?”

The alpha walked in front of him before sliding to his knees. An eerie reminiscence of Jerrod’s behavior earlier that day. “I want whatever you will give me. Any scrap of your affection. Any moment of your time. I know you might not be able to forgive me, but I thought I was doing what was best for the Pack. I thought I could give them a future leader.” Bran let out a bitter laugh. “I should’ve known I couldn’t give you up. Instead of a strong leader, I ripped out my heart and gave them a broken alpha. Dissension in the pack. Do you know half of them won’t even talk to me any more because of how I treated you? How can I lead my people if they won’t follow?”

When Bran looked up, Luc saw tears filling those beautiful eyes. It felt wrong to have his strong passionate lover on his knees no matter what dreams he had after their breakup.

“If they want me gone, I’ll leave the Pack. But I’ll never let go of you again.” Luc could hear Bran swallow back the tears. “If you’ll have me back, I’ll be yours forever.”

“Oh, babe.” Luc pulled Bran to his feet and into his arms. Cradling him close as Bran broke down into sobs. “Shhh. We’ll work something out.”

It took Luc a long while to soothe his shattered lover, but eventually, after a magical cleansing to remove the blood, they moved to the bed. Tired from the emotional outpouring, they stripped and tossed their clothes to the floor.

Bran wrapped himself around Luc as if to prevent him from escaping. Nuzzling Luc’s neck he pulled back for a moment.

“You smell odd.”

“Hmmm.” Luc said starting to drift.

“You smell like that kid in your house.”

“He’s not a kid.” Luc said sleepily. “I think he’s a hundred or something.”

A long lick tickled his throat making him giggle. Sniffing continued and Bran lifted Luc’s hand lapping at his palm. “What’s this?”

“Jerrod’s mark.”

“His what?”

“Don’t yell.”

“How can I not yell? You let some baby vamp mark you?”

“I didn’t let him.” Luc slid out of bed turning his back to Bran in annoyance. “It was a mistake. I saved him from his master and by some funky vampire process it made me his new master.”

Bran’s warm hands stroked Luc’s shoulders. “Sorry I yelled, baby. What do we need to do to find him a new master?”

Luc turned to face Bran. “According to Nikko I’m his master until one of us dies.”

Bran gave him an evil grin. “I’ll take care of it.”

Luc punched him.

“Ow.” He sat down on the bed cradling his shoulder.

“I forgot how bony you are.”

“Ha! Serves you right.” Bran said placing a kiss on Luc’s cheek. “You shouldn’t beat your lover.”

“Bran, I don’t know what to do. I’d love nothing more than to come back and be your mate but I have Jerrod to be responsible for. I just can’t abandon the kid.”

“Give him to Nikko.” Bran said with ruthless efficiency.

“I can’t just give him to Nikko. His last master abused him. He needs care, protection, blood.”

Bran sighed. “He can’t live here. The other weres wouldn’t tolerate it.”

Luc nodded. “I know but I can’t leave him to fend for himself either. I think it’s best if I stay where I am.”

“What about your birthday? It’s only three days away. You’ll need preparation the day before if you hope to survive your father’s persuasion.”

“I know.” Luc swallowed the ball of fear lodged in his throat.

Every year on his birthday his father pulled him into hell to try and convince him to give up his soul and become an official Hell Lord. As the only son born with a soul, Luc was an object of personal pride to his father. Lucifer senior wanted his son’s soul but he was absurdly pleased when Luc survived his challenges each year. His theory was that the longer Luc resisted, the stronger Hell Lord he would make. But each year his test was a little more difficult until it mostly consisted of Luc surviving as much torture as his brothers could dish out.

What the devil didn’t know was that his older sons didn’t try as hard as they could. None of them wanted the devil’s favorite to join them in hell. With Luc there they would all lose ranking as Lucifer had vowed to make his half-fae offspring his right hand man. Even with his brother’s holding back Luc still came back bruised, bloody, and burned after every challenge.

In the past, to keep himself sane from the torture, Luc focused on Bran. When he focused on Bran, his mind and soul felt complete. Luc was torn in too many ways with the current situation.

Bran flicked the necklace around Luc's neck. "Still wearing your collar, love?"

The low menace in Bran's voice made Luc shiver. "I was going to return it but he told me to keep it for now."

"Of course he did." Bran stood up running his hands through his shiny black hair. "He wants you to return to him. Each time you look in the mirror you see that damned jeweled prison and he knows he has you. Give it back to him. Tell him you aren't interested." The commanding tone in Bran's voice erased the tender words shared moments ago.

"I'm *not* interested." Luc protested. "But you can't just fling a priceless necklace at a vampire who thinks he's your mate."

"Mate!" Bran roared. "He's not your fucking mate!"

"I didn't say he was. Shit, maybe I should go home."

"No." Bran wrapped Luc in his arms, stopping him from leaving the bed. "I'm sorry. This whole thing has me spinning. I just got you back. I don't want to lose you so quickly."

"You're not losing me Bran but sometimes things aren't always so black and white. I will tell Nikko that we're back together but I don't want to start an interspecies war. You're going to have enough on your plate with Betsy's pack. We have to approach this diplomatically."

"I'm not a diplomat." Bran said nipping at Luc's neck. "I'm your lover and I'll protect my mate with every last breath in my body. Come back into bed, baby. We'll discuss this tomorrow. We have some makeup sex to do."

Suddenly breathless, Luc laughed. It felt like the beginning of their relationship when everything was new. As if Luc was the center of Bran's world.

How he'd missed that look.

There wasn't much time for reflection when Bran yanked Luc back towards him using his huge muscled body to pin Luc's lighter frame. Luc's world shrank to Bran's beautiful amber eyes as he dipped his head and took Luc's mouth like he was food, water and everything necessary in life.

The months prior to Luc's departure were filled with tension and pain when Bran made his decision to seek a female mate. Now it was as if those days never happened. This was the old Bran. The one he'd loved for so long.

Nothing could beat the familiarity of an old lover who knew where all the hot spots were on your body. One who knew his nipples were sensitive and how to rub that bit of skin on his hip to drive him completely insane.

Luc gave himself over to Bran's touch. He was floating. Enjoying sensations only his lover knew how to cause.

Unexpectedly Bran slid down Luc's body, licking and nuzzling his way until he settled between Luc's legs and swallowed his cock in one long slide. With Bran's big hands pinning him, Luc was at his mercy, unable to shift his hips.

Whimpering mindlessly, Luc's head whipped back and forth.

“I’m coming!”

A low growl vibrated through his body making Luc shoot down his lover’s throat. Panting he tried to calm his racing heart as Bran lifted his legs and exposed Luc’s hole to his hungry amber gaze.

“Who do you belong to?” Bran growled. His voice low and demanding. Luc had to unscramble the words in his sex-muddled head.

“You. I’m yours Bran.”

“Remember that.” Bran released Luc long enough to grab some lubricant from the nightstand drawer. Bran rushed back and covered his fingers. First sliding one finger into Luc’s hole, then another, and then three fingers scissored inside. When he was satisfied that Luc was open enough, Bran removed his fingers and slid his cock inside Luc, growling as he claimed his mate.

“You will always be mine. I don’t care what the vampires think.”

Luc clamped down on Bran’s body. If his lover could still speak he wasn’t doing a very good job of distracting him. The were’s eyes rolled in his head.

“Fuck!”

A few hard pumps later and Luc could feel Bran convulsing. He released inside of Luc’s body before collapsing on top of him.

“Umph.”

“Sorry.” Bran slid out and off of Luc leaving him empty but at least able to breathe.

Luc waved his hand using magic to clean them up. That task took the rest of his energy so he snuggled up and let his lover cradle him as they slept.

Chapter Three

Luc woke to a knock on the door. He blinked, trying to clear his vision.

Bran yelled. "Enter!"

Sal appeared in the doorway with a covered tray. "I thought you two might be hungry."

"You're a doll." Luc said sitting up in bed. He was starved. His stomach growled as he looked expectantly at the tray.

Unfolding the legs, Sal set the tray over Luc's lap and lifted the cover exposing fresh squeezed orange juice and piles of food. Thick slabs of ham, fried eggs, a pile of home style potatoes and a stack of buttered toast.

"I think I'm supposed to share this." Luc laughed.

"Good thing. I don't think you could fit all that into your scrawny body." Bran said with a wicked smile.

Luc gasped in mock outrage. "Did you just call me scrawny?"

Bran scratched his heavily muscled chest and gave him a taunting smile. "Maybe I meant puny."

Sal snatched the tray up just as Luc attacked Bran, finding his sensitive spots. He plundered Bran's silky flesh until the alpha howled with outrage.

"All right you win." Bran said, tears of laughter running down his face. "I should know better than to wrestle with someone who knows where I'm ticklish."

"Yes you should." Luc agreed. He settled back against the pillows and Sal returned the tray with a fond look in his eyes.

"It's good to have you back, Luc."

Luc smiled. "It's good to be back." Maybe he was just being paranoid, but there was a little voice in the back of his head telling him something was wrong.

Smiling at Sal he took a long sip of his orange juice. Luc savored the rich fruity flavor, letting the flavor soak into his mouth before swallowing. He let Bran serve him eggs and ham before taking a bite of toast and another sip of juice.

"This juice has an odd aftertaste. Different brand?"

Who knew what the wolves were buying now. Wolves in general weren't known for their love of fruit.

Sal nodded. Luc could see beads of sweat dotting Sal's brow.

It felt hot. No wonder Sal was sweating. Luc struggled for breath. Something was definitely not right.

Luc's body started to go numb. He tried to grab at Bran as his vision grayed around the edges.

He heard Bran scream, "Luc, no!"

* * *

Death wasn't bad. He couldn't die, well not permanently. When Luc died his soul returned to his childhood bedroom while his body repaired the damage. Lucifer had taken great pains to make sure his youngest son would always survive no matter what. Why he went to so much trouble was a mystery to Luc but it had come in handy more than once.

The only problem was that while his body rebounded from mortal death his spirit went home, to hell.

Flames flared around Luc, but without his physical form they couldn't touch him.

"Greetings brother."

Luc turned to see his brother, Galthine, standing in his room. There was never a positive reason for one of his brothers hunting him down. Not to mention Galthine knew he was coming.

Trap.

"Greetings."

Galthine was monstrous. He was seven feet of rippling muscle, with great horns piercing his skull and a pair of red, leathery wings tucked tight against his back. Galthine was the oldest of Luc's five brothers and the only one who could breathe fire. Something he did constantly during Luc's birthday challenges.

Luc flinched at the memory of his last birthday challenge with his skin charred and crispy from Galthine's flames.

"Come with me."

Luc knew better than to refuse his brother without reason. He was glad his physical form was at the Pack house. His brother couldn't harm him in this form but it didn't stop the memories. All of Luc's previous birthdays began to surface. His brothers were not allowed to touch him outside of the challenge. If they did it was reported to father and they were sent to the lowest hell for retribution.

Floating behind his brother, Luc followed Galthine into his private torture studio. Careful to look only at the ground as he floated after his brother, Luc didn't want to see what caused the screams coming from the walls. Last time he was here, bodies were dangling from the ceiling by meat hooks.

"Happy Birthday." Galthine's smile was pointed and wicked. He waved his hand towards a hunk of red flesh lying in the middle of the room.

Luc's vision couldn't focus. What was that? The blob gave a small moan.

"Who is that?"

"Don't you recognize your old friend?"

The blob emitted a soft whisper, "Lucifer."

Memories bubbled to the surface. "Carn?"

Galthine sidled up to Luc. "Don't you want to heal him?" His voice was low and coaxing. He sounded sympathetic, but Luc knew that pure evil lurked in his brother's heart. "Your poor friend. I bought him from his master but I'm willing to give him to you for a birthday present."

"What do you want?" His brother would rescue no one without a reason.

“I want you to use all of your energy to heal your friend and drain your reserves. In three days you’ll still be weak and I can break you like I always wanted.”

Startled, Luc turned to face his brother. “I thought you didn’t want me to stay down here? Stilne said you and the others wanted to keep me out.”

“Father changed the rules.” Galthine growled. “He grows impatient to have you as his right hand. He offered us an incentive. The one who breaks you gets to be the Third Lord of Hell. The ones who don’t will fall under his hand for punishment. I won’t go back under father’s hand.” Smoke poured out of Galthine’s mouth but Luc could see the panic in his brother’s eyes.

It was a good plan. Luc had to admire the strategy behind it. Luc couldn’t leave his childhood friend bruised and battered on his brother’s dungeon floor even if it meant his own downfall.

As soon as he made his decision, Luc could feel his body pulling him back. He must be healed already.

“Deliver him to the Pack house.” Luc said.

It looked like his reconciliation with Bran wasn’t going to be long lasting.

* * *

Luc’s spirit floated through the levels of hell following the call of his body. He didn’t run into any of his other siblings but he knew that Galthine was just the first to approach him. Only three days until his birthday and Luc was now in the possession of a needy vampire, an injured demon, and a soon to be angry werewolf.

Luc became aware of his surroundings, slowly. Air filling his lungs, sheets brushing against his bare skin, and a pleasant soreness that oddly wasn’t taken away by the healing.

But the crying had to go.

Whoever was wailing was really getting on his nerves. Even though he couldn’t die, being poisoned was really uncomfortable and it took a while for his system to fully regenerate. He hoped the crier wasn’t going to carry on the entire time.

“Shhh. No crying.” Luc struggled to open his eyes but his lids felt like they weighed a hundred pounds.

“He spoke. Master Nikko, he’s not dead.”

What was Jerrod doing at the Pack house? Surely Bran wouldn’t let him stay.

Luc opened his eyes to see a tear-stained Jerrod kneeling by his bed and a hollow-eyed Nikko sitting close by.

What happened to Bran? He tried to speak but the only thing that came out was, “What happened?”

Nikko’s face fell into hard lines. “Sal poisoned you, so Bran killed him and combined with tossing out Betsy there was an uproar in the pack. He thought it best if you were some place protected while you were healing.” He continued in the same hard voice. “If you came here for

dinner instead of staying over to have breakfast with your ex-lover you wouldn't be in this position."

"No one likes an *I told you so*." Luc commented as he thought over what Nikko said.

It made sense. As an alpha, Bran would only be comfortable if Luc was watched over by another alpha.

Nikko's eyes stared into his. "I didn't believe him when he said that you would be fine. But then I also didn't know you were the son of the devil." A sarcastic laugh burst from him. "I should have known you were too beautiful to *not* be an agent of hell."

"I'm not an agent of hell." Luc snarled. "My father just happens to be the devil."

"Who's going to try and pull you under in three days."

Wow, Bran really did feel like sharing. Wait. "Did you say Sal tried to poison me?" Luc tried to sit up but his body was too heavy. Merging the soul to the physical wasn't complete. "Why would Sal poison me? He knows it won't kill me." He'd had many conversations with Sal over the years, they knew that nothing would kill Luc.

Nikko's voice was cold. "He was hoping to kill Bran. Now that you've bonded he thought your apparent death would send him over the edge. It appears that one of your brothers told him if he killed Bran, Sal could be the leader of the pack with you at his side."

"Me? I thought he was straight."

"Bi. Don't tell me you never saw him looking. I saw him staring at your ass at the club."

Luc shrugged. "Everyone looks. It doesn't mean they'll kill my lover to have me."

Jerrod broke into sobs. "You're the best Master ever. I'm going to taste your food for you every night."

Luc smiled. "Then you would be sick and then I'd have to cry at your bedside."

Sniffling Jerrod climbed up on the bed and hugged Luc, rubbing one tear-streaked cheek against Luc's shoulder. "You would too."

He patted the sobbing vamp on the head before asking Nikko. "What's he doing here?"

"When you weren't home in the morning he came to check on you. Bran told him he brought you here so he came over." Nikko's eyes indicated that there was more to the story, but Luc was tired and frankly didn't give a shit. He was relieved when Nikko said. "Come Jerrod, why don't you go down to the kitchen and find your master some nice broth. It will do wonders for him."

The slim vampire jumped up eager to be of use. "I'll be right back." He gave a small tearful smile to Luc before running out of the room.

"Thank you." Luc gave Nikko a heartfelt smile. "I don't think I could handle any more waterworks." But now that Jerrod was gone he felt a little self-conscious without the smaller vampire as a buffer.

Nikko pulled his chair closer to the bed. "How are you feeling, baby. All better?"

Luc nodded. "I'm fine, did Bran tell you I can't die."

"He told me he still felt your link even while your body grew cold. Sal didn't count on that."

"What happened to him?"

Nikko gave a smile almost as evil as Galthine's, fangs peeking out. "Bran sent him to chat with your father. The Pack is cleaning up the mess as we speak."

Luc fought back tears. Sal had been a friend for years. The loss of his friendship cut him like a knife. How long had they wanted him in silence?

Luc felt the poison easing out of his system until he was certain he was toxin free. He started to sit up only to have Nikko leap over and pin him down.

"You will stay right here and rest."

Nikko's eyes glowed bright when he was pissed. "I'll stay right here and rest." Luc agreed meekly. He tucked the blankets around him and played possum.

He felt the scrape of Nikko's stubble as the vampire whispered in his ear. "I'll know if you leave this room, my love. I've put a guard outside your door and he has instructions to only let me and your servant inside and no one outside."

"Sneaky bastard." Luc whispered not bothering to open his eyes.

"*Your* sneaky bastard."

He felt the soft brush of lips on his cheek before he heard the door close.

More tired than he wanted to acknowledge, Luc was in the middle of falling asleep when a harsh ringing sound filled the air.

A hole opened in the air beside the bed and Carn's bloody body was tossed through the portal. He landed on the floor, leaving a long streak of fresh blood across the carpet.

Galthine's head popped through the portal. "I followed your spirit signature, brother. Sneaky of you to try and escape me. Maybe you'll make a good Hell Lord yet!"

Luc didn't have a chance to contradict him before the portal vanished and he was left with an oozing bloody body on Nikko's fancy carpet.

Nikko was going to kill him.

Sliding out of bed, Luc approached Carn's battered body.

At close glance, he looked worse.

How was that even possible?

The demon was encrusted with blood from multiple whip marks. A pair of handcuffs had cut into his wrists and they were leaking blood over his broken hands.

Jerrod entered the room with a bowl of soup balanced in his hand.

It fell to the floor when he saw Carn lying on the carpet. The fabric muffled the sound of soup splashing.

Jerrod crouched down beside Luc and asked in a whisper. "What is that?"

"A childhood friend."

"What are you going to do?"

"Heal him."

He would stay in hell should his brothers break him, but he couldn't let his friend die. Unlike Luc, the demon wouldn't come back. Carn's breathing was slow. He wouldn't last much longer. His remaining demon blood was the only thing keeping him alive.

“Thank you. Thank you.” Carn whispered as Luc came closer. The demon’s eyes were glazed with pain but he focused on Luc like he was a savior. “I kept hoping you’d come. I knew if you found out, you’d save me. Thank you. Thank you.” His neck was bruised and his voice was a raspy whisper

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Jerrod asked. “Nikko isn’t going to be happy if you heal a demon in his club.”

“I can’t leave him like this.” Luc said. “I won’t leave a friend to bleed to death on the floor because it might make Nikko unhappy.”

With determination Luc held his hand over the center of Carn’s body. Luc’s body jerked as power pulsed from his body and into the demon. Silver glowed across the demon’s body, magic filling the cracks in his skin. It was like watching a movie in reverse. The wounds sucked the blood back into the body sealing the skin behind them. For a few moments Luc lost all sense of self.

This was why he wasn’t a healer. He used too much power and didn’t know his limitations. Luckily he never healed humans. They were too fragile.

“Enough, Master!” Jerrod’s voice snapped Luc back into his body. Carn lied before him, glowing with Luc’s power, convulsing lightly.

“Fuck me.” At the current rate of Luc’s incompetence Carn would die from power poisoning. Luc placed his hand on the demon’s stomach. The power welcomed his touch and poured back up his arm. Carn’s eyes snapped open.

Luc no longer glowed, but he knew the small amount of power he absorbed back wouldn’t be enough to save him from his father’s hands.

“Feeling better?”

Carn’s nod was more of a convulsion than a motion of agreement.

“Please don’t send me back, Luc. Please.”

“Carn, I can’t keep you. You know the laws. I will have to return you to your master.”

“You’re my master. Galthine gave me to you for your birthday, remember? That makes me yours. If you return me there, everyone will use me as a way to get to you. I’ll never have a moment of peace.” Carn gave him a sly smile. “However, if I’m yours no one will touch me. I will serve you.”

“What would I do with a demon servant?”

“Please. I must be able to be of some service to you.” Carn’s face was desperate.

Luc closed his eyes and looked away from the sight. “Can you feed my vampire?”

“Luc, you don’t have to do this.” Jerrod said. His wide eyes looking back and forth from Luc to the demon.

“Yes. I can feed your vampire.” Carn said quickly as if sensing his opportunity was slipping away. “I’d be happy to feed him, fuck him, be his pet. Whatever.”

There was no way he would send a friend back into hell, not without a master to protect him. He opened his eyes to look at his new servant. “Fine. I’ll be your master.”

The pain on the back of his left hand was familiar now. A demonic symbol glowed gold next to the small set of wings. Great. Now he was a vampire and a demon master.

Bran and Nikko are going to be pissed Luc thought, before he passed out on the floor.

Chapter Four

Luc surfaced from the darkness, limp and tired. His body felt weighty as if the earth's gravity increased five times its usual strength. His throat was dry and his eyes crusted over. Luc sensed he was alone, but he didn't bother to look around.

A scream from the other room jolted him.

That was his vamp.

Fighting his weariness, Luc pulled himself out of bed stumbling on his way to the door. A quick check proved he was in sleep pants, but shirtless.

Good enough for company. He briefly wondered where Bran was but was too fixated on Jerrod's screams to worry about it now. What could he do though? He was too weak to defend his vamp but he couldn't leave Jerrod defenseless.

Forcing his body forward, Luc tore open the door and stepped into the other room.

Surprisingly, the guard Nikko mentioned was missing.

The scene that met his eyes wasn't what he expected. Jerrod wasn't cowered on the floor. Instead three of Nikko's vamps were trembling on the ground. Each was pinned by a growling hellhound with flaming eyes and jowls dripping acid. The vamps were screaming as the corrosive liquid burned through their clothing and onto their skin.

"Where did the hellhounds come from?" Nikko demanded.

Luc spoke up as he leaned against the doorjamb.

"One of the protections that Jerrod's necklace provides is that hellhounds will hold his enemies until he can escape." Luc looked over to his vamp. "Are you okay?"

Jerrod gave him a smirk and stood taller than he ever had before. "Of course, you promised I would always be safe."

Luc nodded not thinking much about the statement. It was true. He took care of his own.

He turned his head to look at the master vampire. "Perhaps you need to teach your boys some manners."

"They're new." Nikko tilted his head. "Do you think you can call off your hellhounds?"

"Sure, which do you think they should eat?"

"What?" Nikko asked a stunned expression on his handsome face.

"Hellhounds need to be satisfied with blood before they will return to their resting place. In this case hell. So who do you think they should eat?"

Nikko chuckled. "Well I guess it will depend on who started this fight. Jerrod?"

Luc's servant wrung his hands. "I was sitting there," he pointed at the chaise, "staying out of trouble waiting for my Master to wake. And these three started coming on to me. I didn't want them touching me." He shifted from foot to foot. "Only you can touch me." He added fiercely looking at Luc.

"And how are you touching him?" Nikko's hand grabbed his arm.

"Can we focus here?" Luc asked ripping his arm out of Nikko's hold.

"I told them to let me go but then that one...." He pointed to the largest of the three pinned beneath the hellhounds. "...he said he was going to make me his boy and the others grabbed me and pulled me down."

The first one Jerrod pointed to started to scream. "Fuck, man I didn't know he was yours. Let me go. It burns. I'll never touch him again, I swear!"

Luc walked over and gripped Jerrod's amulet in one hand before chanting the basic hellhound incantation. "Return from where you came."

The dogs looked up from the vamps they were torturing. "And tell the hound master to give you those special rations I set aside."

Happy yips followed this announcement. Sulfur and smoke quickly appeared then the three dogs vanished. The vampires waited patiently for permission to get up.

Nikko looked at Luc with amusement. "Guess they didn't need blood after all."

Luc shrugged. He liked to keep them guessing.

"You may rise." Nikko said.

Ohhh,

Nikko's voice had a commanding tone. It made Luc tremble as he became hard. All of his energy escaped and he fell onto the closest chair. Jerrod kneeled at his feet and Luc absently stroked his hair.

"Where's Carn?" Luc whispered.

"Getting you food." Jerrod responded in an equally quiet voice. "Bran came by and said he'd be back later."

He missed Bran. But maybe it was better to be away from him before he left. He knew Bran would suffer the most when Luc didn't return from hell. With a motion from Nikko, the three vampires leapt to their feet and stood straight and tall, shifting their eyes between Nikko and Luc giving them equally nervous glances.

"In general, touching is permitted as long as it's consensual. However, Jerrod doesn't belong to the tribe and he's not willing. He belongs to Luc. Luc is very protective and doesn't allow touching of his servant. Is that understood?"

The vamp in the middle with the most acid burns on his shirt raised his hand.

"Yes, Laurence." Nikko nodded.

"Why does he have a servant, he's not a vampire?" The vamp named Laurence was polite, although shaking a little.

"He killed a master vampire and the mark was transferred. He is also my mate. Luc has special status, harming him is harming me. Are we understood?"

Luc wanted to scream and stamp his foot to let Nikko know he wasn't his mate, but now wasn't the time. He belonged to Bran even if it was only for a few more days.

"Yes, Master." The trio responded as if coming from one mouth.

"Excellent."

Laurence raised his hand again.

Nikko sighed. "What now."

“Can I belong to Luc? I’ve never had a hellhound to protect me.”

Jerrod’s grip on Luc’s legs became numbing.

“No,” Luc said, “one is enough for me.”

Jerrod rubbed his head against Luc’s thigh earning a glare from Nikko.

“Yes,” Nikko agreed, “one is more than enough.”

After dismissing the vampires Nikko turned his attention to Luc.

“You don’t look so well love why don’t you go back to bed?”

Luc knew his time was fading but Nikko was right. He needed sleep or he’d never be able to put up a fight when his brothers came for him.

* * *

“Good morning Master, I have your food.”

“Hmm.” Luc opened his eyes. The warmth was gone. Jerrod had already risen. He must’ve been sleeping hard.

“Hungry?”

Luc rubbed his eyes until Carn came into view. “Evening Carn. You brought me some food?” The demon beamed, his eyes glowing with fervor. A tray was placed over Luc’s lap. Eggs Benedict with hash browns, surrounded by an assortment of fruit.

“Wow that looks great.”

“It is my pleasure to serve.” Carn kneeled beside the bed.

“You made this?”

The demon nodded. “I’ve been training as a chef under Doem.”

Luc’s was certain his father didn’t know that Carn was training to be a chef. If Lucifer or Luc’s brothers knew this, they would have never harmed Carn. Father loved his food.

Cool.

The first bite was like eating paradise. Luc let out a low groan. “That is the best damn Eggs Benedict I’ve ever had.” He was about to continue when he felt a coldness seep into the house. An unnatural stillness taking over. Ice crystallized his cup and his orange juice solidified.

It was a familiar feeling.

Pithel Demons.

“Where’s Nikko?”

“He had a meeting.”

“Here?”

Carn shook his head. “He said it was across town.”

Convenient for someone.

By the time he returned Nikko could lose everything. He might not agree with Nikko’s methods but Luc couldn’t let the man’s house fall apart while he was gone. Pithel demons were ruthless and took whatever they liked. Luc was almost certain that the Pithels received a tip by someone on the inside. Great, just what he needed. Another confrontation.

Luc slipped out of bed, quickly dressing as he went.

“Stay out of sight.” He whispered to Carn.

“I’m going with you.” The demon stood proudly.

“Then stay behind me so I’m not worried about your safety.”

Luc left his room, went through the outer lounge and slipped down the stairs keeping his steps quiet. Once he got to the bottom he saw he didn’t need to bother. A dozen Pithel demons were standing in the foyer facing down a group of Nikko’s vamps. Neither group was moving but Luc could feel the hatred in the air. Nikko would be crushed if any of his vamps were killed by demons while he was away. Pithel demons were nasty and unremorseful. A group of vamps would be no problem for them. They could kill the entire household then take the time to pick their teeth with the bones.

Centering himself, Luc let in and out a deep breath before sauntering downstairs. His energy was still low. If they challenged him he would be visiting his father sooner than he planned. There was no hope but to battle it out.

“Well look who has come to play.” Luc was proud and steady as he walked down the rest of the stairs and addressed the demons.

The demons gazed at Luc as he walked down the steps. He could feel Nikko’s vamps trying to decide if they should get in the way or not. After all if the demons didn’t kill them, Nikko would for letting Luc get hurt.

“Baby Luc is that you?” The leader of the Pithel demons turned towards Luc as he came down the stairs.

Lady luck was smiling at him today.

He didn’t try to hide his laugh as he faced down the biggest of the Pithel demons and a good friend. It was like visiting memory lane this week. “Turell, how in the hell are you and what are you doing here?”

“I could ask the same of you.” The large white demon stepped forward; his wings scraped the floor as he spread his arms for a hug.

It was lethal to be scratched or bitten by a Pithel, for both their fangs and wingtips were tipped with acid. To everyone in the room besides the two hugging, it looked like an act of courage.

Only Turell and Luc knew he was completely immune.

Luc stepped back patting his friend’s feathery white shoulder. “I’m staying here now. Nikko is my friend.”

“No!” Turell shouted. His pale face turned red with anger. “I was supposed to get a vampire tribe. They were going to be mine!”

“Not this one.” He might not be there for long but Nikko had treated Luc decently and the very least he could do was keep this pack off Nikko’s property. Besides Nikko’s territory was too close to Bran’s. Pithel demons didn’t stay in one spot and they tended to kill anything in their way.

Turell’s black eyes burned, turning red like overheated coals. “But I was promised.”

Shit, Pithel demons were scary.

Luc stood his ground. "Well, whoever promised you lied. Maybe you should take it up with them." Keeping his cool, Luc flicked a piece of lint off his shirt, glad he got dressed before coming downstairs.

"I say we take it anyway." The Pithel demon closest to Turell sent Luc a leer. "And then we eat his soul."

It was amazing how little effort it took to rip out a demon's heart. It was much harder to get it off your hands. Luc flicked the organ on the ground before meeting Turell's gaze with a cold one his own. "I hope you have a backup plan."

The sound of the demon's dead body falling to the ground echoed loudly in the still room.

Luc wiped his hand on the demon leader's chest.

For a moment Turell watched Luc's hand as he smeared the blood on his clean white skin, then he threw back his head and laughed. "Dylan was a stupid second, I'm glad to see him gone." He gave a quick sweep of the room with his eyes. "What should we do? I want a vampire enclave and obviously I can't have this one."

Luc scanned the room and spotted Gabriel, Nikko's lieutenant. "Gabe who's Nikko's biggest enemy?"

Might as well get rid of two birds with one stone.

"Thomas." Gabe said without hesitation.

"Where does he live?" Asked Luc.

"In the memorial cemetery on Queen Anne hill."

Luc waved his hand. "Well there you go. Obviously a bastard that needs to die. Help yourself."

Turell gave a short nod of his head. "Thank you friend. I'll send you a token once we get settled."

"Agreed."

The demons turned and left.

Luc spun around to see Nikko's vampires shifting stares between him and the demon on the ground. "Jerrod."

"Yes Master." The vampire stood slightly behind the crowd but stepped forward at the sound of Luc's voice.

"Have you any interest in trying Pithel blood. I hear it's a delicacy."

Jerrod's head shake was definite. "No Master. I have enough demon blood."

"Gabe, please do with this what you will as long as it's cleaned up." His gaze swept the entire group. "I don't think we need to mention this little incident to Nikko. He worries." Luc flashed a smile. "I'm so fragile you know."

Chapter Five

The Pack house ring howled as Luc walked back into the bedroom. Tired, Luc sighed as he grabbed his phone from his pocket and pressed the answer button. He was going to have to change that ring tone until the wolves started calling with good news.

“Are you leaving me to Nikko these days?” He greeted the caller.

Bran growled. “He better not have touched you.”

“Well, he’s not here right now but I’m wondering how much longer I’ll have to stay. I’ve only got two more days before father calls me back and I was hoping to spend them with you.”

Bran cleared his throat. “I’m trying to settle things with the Pack. Betsy’s alpha already sent a note about his disapproval and the Pack is upset about Sal.”

Luc sighed. “I’m worried about Sal too, but I used most of my power to heal Carn and I need you to recharge.”

“Who’s Carn?”

“Demon friend.” Luc said breathless. “I don’t know how to tell you this Bran but I don’t have any reserves. I’m not going to make it this year.” He said softly. “I’m going to ask Uncle Michael to dissolve our bond.”

“Don’t you fucking dare.” Bran said in a low menacing voice. “I didn’t go through all of this to have you ruin it. You leave your uncle out of this and keep your beautiful self right there. Get some rest and I’ll think of something. But whatever you do don’t call your uncle. Promise me that Luc. Promise me you won’t ask to have our bond dissolved. You’re the only thing I have to live for.”

“Fine.” He didn’t want his mate to lose all hope in life.

“I won’t ask him to dissolve our bond.”

“Thank you. Now sit tight at Nikko’s and I’ll come for you tomorrow.”

“When did you and Nikko become so tight?”

“When we realized you were the only thing either of us had to live for.”

“Love you.”

“Love you too. Behave.” With that final warning, Bran hung up.

The door opened and Jerrod and Carn appeared.

“Hello boys.”

“Hello Master.” They said in stereo.

“I need you two to stand guard outside my door while I talk to my relatives.”

Carn’s head snapped up. Luc could tell he was dying to ask which relative, but as a well-trained lower demon he knew better than to ask questions.

“Yes, sir.” Carn bowed.

Jerrod looked from one to the other, questions flying from his expression. Luc waited careful not to offer any information.

“I’ll wait outside.” Jerrod said.

The look Jerrod gave Carn told Luc that the vamp liked his new companion. “Don’t forget to feed.” They both shot him identical smiles as they left the room.

At least someone was happy.

Sitting on the floor on folded legs, Luc closed his eyes and focused. After only a few moments he got a response. Michael was always at hand this time of year.

Lucifer, my sweet boy, what do you need?

A favor.

I’m coming.

Luc opened his eyes as the pressure in the room changed and his skin sparked with electricity. In a showy display of power, white wisps danced through the air amid streaks of lightening, forming the shape of angel. Powerful shoulders crowded the room and enormous white wings brushed the ceiling.

Standing, Luc waited to approach the white creature until it dimmed its light.

“Michael.” He greeted the angel as the glowing light faded. A gorgeous angel with dark hair and silvery eyes looked down at him.

“Luc.” He shivered as the power rolled over him. Standing next to an angel was never a comfortable feeling and Michael had more power than most.

He looked into the angel’s silver eyes. “I’m not going to make it this time Michael. I don’t have it in me. When I don’t come back I want you to remove me from Bran’s memory.”

Technically this wasn’t asking for removal of the bond. After all you can’t bond with someone you don’t remember.

The angry rustle of wings brought his attention back to the angel. Michael’s expression wasn’t encouraging. “What do you mean you aren’t going to make it? You’ve fought your father for two hundred years. Why is this year any different?”

“Because this year my brothers are really going to try and I used most of my energy healing Carn. I’m tired, Michael. I’m really tired.” Luc tried to hold back his tears, but he started sobbing uncontrollably.

Before he could say anything else he was wrapped in a pair of warm feathery wings like a baby chick. A feeling of tremendous well-being filled him. “I’ve watched over you since you were born. I’m not going to let you lose your soul.”

They stayed intertwined for a moment while Luc absorbed what comfort he could from Michael’s embrace. After a moment Michael stepped back and pinned Luc with his powerful gaze.

“There *is* one way to bring you back to full power. You need to perform the vitality ritual.”

Shaking his head, Luc sat down on his bed. “I don’t think sex with Bran will be enough and he would feel the need to kill any other wolf touching me.”

“Then you will need another non-wolf. What about Nikko?”

“What about Nikko?”

Michael’s gaze entranced Luc until he couldn’t look away, couldn’t blink.

“A combination of Nikko and Bran would give you enough power.” The angel looked away. “I foresee it.”

“Do you foresee them ripping each other’s throat out? Because I can see that without any powers at all.”

Michael laughed. A buzzing sound that rocked Luc’s body. Not a comfortable feeling. “For you they would put aside their differences.”

Luc closed his eyes. “I don’t know about Nikko. My bond with him is a shallow thing next to what I feel for Bran. I can’t ruin my fragile relationship with the wolf.”

Michal’s expression was filled with pity. “A torpedo couldn’t hurt that relationship. Your wolf has learned what’s important to his heart. His pack will soon fall in line. Sal is sitting with your father learning the error of his ways.”

It was painful to hear of his ex-friend’s punishment. Despite his methods, Sal had been a good friend for many years before the madness crept in. Living with his father would be a new form of torture because that was what Lucifer excelled at. Knowing what would hurt his denizens the most.

“Focus on one thing at a time.” Michael said, reading Luc’s mind. “If you survive this, I’ll help you help your friend. If you mess this up and let your father have you, I’ll burn your body and keep you from becoming one of your father’s minions.”

Luc’s fear faded as the angel renewed his vow. Every year, Michael made the same promise. Only this year Luc knew it might be a real concern. He might not survive. Even if he could convince Nikko and Bran to play nicely together, it might not work.

“Now you have to get your men together and make them cooperate.”

Luc laughed. “You have obviously never met Nikko. He’s not the cooperative type.”

Michael flicked his necklace. “He will be if he wants to keep his pretty pet alive.”

Chapter Six

They had moved the party to his rental house, neutral territory for this discussion. Luc sat in a high-backed chair on one side of the room while the alphas sat on opposing loveseats so they could glare at each other properly.

With only five people, the large living room shouldn't feel so full. Luc looked at the two alphas glaring at each other across the room and leaned his head back in his chair. This was never going to work. They would kill each other before any clothes came off.

A hand patting each of his legs had Luc looking down. His demon and vampire sat on either side stroking him like they were soothing a wild beast.

"You two can sit on chairs and everything." He offered.

They shook their head in unison. Creepy.

Closing his eyes, Luc decided he could just sleep until his birthday. Would it be less painful if he just gave up as soon as he reached hell? His brothers couldn't torture him if he was already agreeing to be a Hell Lord. How much could it really hurt to have his soul ripped out? It was twenty-four hours until his birthday. He could sit here until then.

"I'll do it." Nikko's voice was low and angry.

"Don't put yourself out." Bran said. "I'd hate for it to be too much trouble to fuck Luc and save his life when you could be sucking an unsuspecting vagrant dry in the streets."

"At least I didn't toss my lover out of the house so I could fuck women." Nikko taunted.

"Enough." Luc jumped to his feet. The room spun a bit and he swayed only to have Jerrod and Carn catch him on either side.

Handy.

"I won't have you two fighting over me. You," he pointed at Nikko, "only want me as a trophy. And you," he pointed at the smirking alpha wolf, "would not even be here if your wolf hadn't refused Betsy. So don't bother whitewashing our relationship."

Both men growled.

Long fingers plunged into his hair and cinnamon flavored lips captured his. Instinctively, Luc wrapped himself around the taller form. Jerrod's familiar scent filled his nose as he gave into the vampire's embrace. Power flowed from the young vamp and into his body. When Jerrod released him he felt strong enough to stand on his own.

"Thank you." He whispered. Placing a kiss on Jerrod's cheek. If the vampire was older or perhaps more powerful, Luc could've used him to recover.

Carn turned to him and for the first time Luc took a good look at the demon who had changed a great deal since he saw him last.

Now to full maturity, Carn's skin was a deep sensual red with gold-colored designs swirling across his skin. His nails were gold tipped and there was a bony ridge across his forehead. A sign of beauty for his kind. His eyes were a deep gold, matching his long, straight silky hair. He was dressed in a pair of jeans and a white shirt that contrasted well with his richly colored skin.

Carn was a beautiful demon.

Carn's eyes fixated on Luc as he cupped Luc's cheeks with his long red fingers. "You saved my life Baby Lucifer. If you choose to return to the home of your father I will accompany you. You gave up your life essence so that I would survive and that is not a debt I can ever repay. My life is your life to do with as you will but I implore you to try and get these men to do what is right because there is nothing right about what will happen to you if you go back to hell."

It was the most he'd ever heard the demon speak maybe collectively over their entire relationship. Carn placed a soft kiss on Luc's lips before stepping back and giving Luc a sad smile. "I know we will never be lovers we are too much like brothers under the skin, but know that I will do whatever is necessary to help you through this."

Luc hugged Carn close even when the ridges of bone on his back dug into his arms. "Thank you."

Feeling stronger, Luc stepped away from the pair and turned towards the alphas now standing in the middle of the room staring at him like he'd grown a pair of wings.

Or horns.

"What do you think gentlemen? Can you put aside your differences long enough to save my life?"

"I can." Nikko growled taking a step closer to Luc.

"So can I." Bran responded also stepping closer. The wolf leaned forward and pressed his cheek to Luc's. "Even if my wolf hadn't wanted you and I'd gone ahead and mated with Betsy. Never think I wouldn't have missed my beautiful boy. I feel lost whenever you leave my side." He placed a soft kiss on Luc's cheek. "You are my heart and soul and if you let your father have you I will live the rest of my days empty inside."

That snapped Luc out of his funk. He realized for the first time that he was feeling abnormally passive about the whole thing. Where was his spark and the will to combat his father's control? Ever since leaving hell he'd been preparing to lose.

"Nikko, can you search for spells?"

The large vampire nodded. "What am I looking for?"

"A suppressor or something that would take away my will."

Nikko muttered some words Luc couldn't hear as he waved his hands over Luc's body. A green glow flared around him like a shield.

"Fuck." Nikko growled. "It's an incubus spell. This one is set to drain you of all feeling."

"Galthine must've put it on me when I left hell."

"Can you remove it?" Bran asked

Nikko nodded. "Come here babe and take my hands." When Bran stepped up behind Luc he shook his head. "Go to the other side of the room I don't want it clinging to someone else when the spell disperses."

Bran hesitated but did as Nikko asked. His gaze watched over every motion the vampire made. Luc had no doubt that if Nikko made a wrong move, Bran would take him down.

Nikko placed his hands on Luc's shoulders. "Just relax and clear your mind. You can close your eyes if you want to."

Deciding it was best to block everyone out, Luc closed his eyes and practiced the meditation Michael was always harping on him about. Breathing in slowly and letting the air out with equal measure.

“Good.” Nikko’s voice was low and soothing. “Now I’m going to count back from ten. Ten...nine...eight...seven...”

A blast of power shook Luc from head to heel. He opened his eyes just in time to see Nikko go down under the large alpha wolf.

Luc felt amazing.

For the first time in days his mind felt clear and focused.

“Stop it!” Luc shouted. Fists started to fly. “I said stop.”

Balls of lightning rolled across the pair jolting them apart. Luc fell to the ground. The little power from the exchange with Nikko flashed away.

“Shit.”

“Why did you attack me?” Nikko asked Bran as he picked himself off the floor.

“You didn’t give him until zero.”

“He was tensing up. He wasn’t going to make it to zero.”

Luc didn’t intervene, the two men were communicating at least. Even if he didn’t think he’d been tensing.

“Do you feel better?” Nikko asked, taking a mental inventory.

Luc nodded. “Yes, I do.”

“We have less than twenty-four hours until Luc’s birthday. We need to decide how we’re going to do this.”

“I was planning on being on top.” Nikko said with a flash of fang.

Instead of taking the bait Bran gave the vampire a smug smile. “That’s because you’ve never felt Luc inside you.”

Nikko snorted, “You’ve never bottomed.”

“I was with Luc for over twenty years. You think it was all one way? We were mates in the deepest sense. I’d be more than happy to be the bottom of a Luc sandwich.”

Luc shared a smile with his wolf.

“What do you want us to do?” Jerrod asked

“Stand guard.” Luc responded. “According to Michael I need the two strongest to bond with me but I won’t be entirely comfortable if someone isn’t keeping watch. My brothers can’t come to this realm but as we’ve seen it doesn’t stop them from affecting it. I’d like you both watching the door.”

“Did you want to move this to the bedroom?” Nikko asked, scanning the living room with a critical eye.

Luc shook his head. “That is the first place they’d look and my bed isn’t large enough to accommodate all three of us.”

“We could go back to my place. My bed still smells like you.” Nikko said with a leer.

The vampire had a death wish. Luc watches impassively as Bran bashed Nikko's head against the floor.

"Bran, we still need him." Luc's voice was quiet but the effect was immediate.

The wolf released Nikko and the vampire leapt to his feet.

"Enough." Luc's voice was more resigned than anything. This was never going to work. Even with his new resolution to beat his father he had his doubts.

Distracted, Luc pulled the cushions off the three couches and threw them around the room, making a nice nest in the event the three of them ever got together.

He didn't hear the pair approaching until his shirt was flying over his head and clawed hands ripped off his pants.

"He really is beautiful!" Nikko said, stroking Luc's back.

"And all mine." Bran unfastened Luc's pants and pulled them down. In minutes, Luc was standing stark naked between two fully clothed men.

"This really won't work when I'm the only one naked."

"Maybe I spoke too early about brotherhood." Carn said, his eyes greedily examining Luc.

"Go outside. Guard!" Nikko said, before taking Luc's mouth in a hot, smoldering kiss.

Luc lost track of everything as Nikko kissed him. A warm, clothed body covered his back. The familiar feel of Bran's mouth on his neck sent shivers down his spine while Nikko's kisses hardened his body.

Ripping his mouth away from the vampire, Luc gasped. "Strip."

He felt a moment's chill as the alphas stepped away to remove their clothing but just as he was feeling cold they returned. Both naked bodies towered over his body, creating a cocoon filled with hot flesh.

The smell of males in heat.

"Let's lie down." He muttered.

Nikko lifted Luc off of his feet and walked him over to the pillows.

"He loves being carried." Bran said in his rough lust-filled voice. Luc turned his head to see Bran watching him, gold eyes flashing with desire. It was true he loved it when a strong man cradled him in his arms. He'd die before admitting it out loud though.

It was too girly.

Nikko smirked. "I know."

With care the vampire softly placed Luc on the cushions and kissed his forehead gently. "I'll grab the lube."

As soon as he stepped away Bran spread his body alongside Luc's. "How are you feeling baby?"

"Nervous." Although he liked the idea of having both men, all three of them together was frankly terrifying. His best and worst dream.

Nikko leaned forward and brushed his cheek against Luc's. The familiar motion soothed him in ways he couldn't explain. "This is a one time thing my beautiful boy. After this you will be all mine."

“You keep telling yourself that.” Nikko returned with a tube of lube clutched in his hand, “I’m glad you think this is a one time thing, but helping Luc comes with a price. He will be half mine from now on.”

“What?” Nikko jolted up from the cushions, a low growl pouring from his throat.

“You heard me. I’m not saving Luc for you. I’m saving him for me.” Nikko leaned down and stroked a finger across Luc’s collar. “You will belong to me. I may have to share with wolf-boy but I’m not doing this unless you agree that I get at least half of your time. Otherwise you might as well be in hell because I will be if I can’t have you.”

Luc locked eyes with Bran.

“Do it.” Bran said submissively. He turned on Nikko with a snarl. “I hope you can enjoy your time knowing he’s thinking of me.”

Nikko smiled, full fangs exposed. “Trust me. I’ll give him something else to concentrate on.”

“Enough. You win Nikko. I’ll be yours too. But I’m keeping my own residence.” Luc could figure out what to do later. He had to survive his birthday before he worried about anything else. Only one crisis at a time, he’d learned that much from his father.

With Nikko lying down on Luc’s other side he was sandwiched between the alphas. They took turns kissing Luc until he couldn’t think straight. Bran slid down Luc’s body as Nikko focused on keeping his mouth occupied.

It took Luc a moment to focus on the wet suction covering his cock. He arched away from Nikko’s mouth.

“Bran.” He moaned.

Nikko plunged his fangs into Luc’s neck. Come burst out of his cock into Bran’s willing mouth. When both men released him he relaxed into a happy pile. Energy pooled in his chest. Although small, it was a stronger spark than the one Jerrod gave him.

“I think this will work if I can retain the energy.”

“You’ll retain it...” Nikko said, licking Luc’s shoulder. “....because we’re not going to let you go until they come and drag you down to hell.”

“Oh shit.”

“Hands and knees, baby.” Bran said, crawling up to Luc’s body before rolling onto his back beside him.

Luc positioned himself over Bran with his legs on either side of Bran’s hip. Kissing the wolf he savored the taste of himself on his lover’s lips. He almost jumped when he felt a finger rubbing across his hole.

“Relax gorgeous.” Nikko’s voice was dark and seductive as he carefully prepared Luc for penetration. The combination of Bran’s body beneath him and Nikko’s touch brought Luc back to full hardness.

“Mmmm. Fuck me.” Bran purred.

“My pleasure. Lube, Nikko.” The tube was slapped into the hand he held out.

“Hurry up, because as soon as you take him I will be inside you.”

Luc knew where and how to rub to get Bran's best reaction. Soon he had Bran thrashing beneath him.

"Easy, love." He lifted Bran's knees to make his entry easier.

Pressing his lubed cock to Bran's tight hole he entered in one long stroke.

Bran howled.

"Oh, this is going to be fun." Nikko said, licking Luc's neck. "Ready."

Luc nodded. "Go ahead."

The vampire slid himself inside, pushing into him deeper. Luc moaned. He may have complaints about Nikko but the man fucked like a god.

"Yes, fuck me."

Luc pushed himself into Bran then slid back onto Nikko's cock. He enjoyed the experience of being fucked and fucking. It was a new experience for him. While he was part of the Pack, Bran kept him out of any orgies. His possessiveness didn't allow others to touch Luc sexually. It was a miracle that he wasn't trying to kill Nikko right now.

As the three of them moved together, Luc could feel the power building up. The sexual energy added a new dimension to his lovemaking.

"I can't wait until I have you to myself." Nikko whispered in his ear. "Oh, the things I want to do to you." A fang scraped his throat sending Luc over the edge. He clamped down on Nikko's cock, as the master vampire screamed his release. Without touching Bran, he felt the weres' thick and sticky fluid shoot between them.

Collapsing on the hard surface of his lover's body, Luc kissed Bran's sweaty chest. "I love you." He whispered.

A large hand stroked his head.

"I know." Bran said.

"Did it work?" Nikko pulled his cock out of Luc and stroked his cheek with the back of his hand.

Luc looked up to see the vampire's expression. Nikko didn't have his usual cold expression gracing his face. The vamp looked sad and confused.

"I have some energy but I think it will take a lot more to fill me completely."

"Oh, we want to fill you completely." Bran said beneath him.

All three men broke out laughing.

Luc knew it would be okay. He didn't know if he would survive his birthday challenge but the two men whose arms he was wrapped in would make his last day on this earth a happy one.

To be concluded in the final book Hellbourne III

Amber Kell is a dreamer who has never gotten the hang of what she wants to do when she grows up. For now she sits around with her computer and dreams of hot gorgeous guys and ways to get them together. You can read her blog at <http://amberkell.wordpress.com> or contact her at amberkellwrites@gmail.com.

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