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Blind Desire

TOP SHELF

An imprint of Torquere Press Publishers

PO Box 2545

Round Rock, TX 78680

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Cover illustration by Rose Lenoir

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ISBN: 978-1-60370-722-0, 1-60370-722-0

www.torquerepress.com

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First Torquere Press Printing: May 2009

Printed in the USA

Chapter 1

My hips jerked one last time, shoving the man I was fucking against the rough brick of the wall. He gave a high-pitched moan of ecstasy, his body shuddering with release. I held myself still, pressing into him and drinking deeply of his sexual energy at the peak of his orgasm. His aura started to fade to the point of no return far before I was ready to stop. I sighed and reluctantly ended my feeding, nowhere near satisfied. The last thing I needed or wanted in my hunting grounds was a corpse reeking of unexplained cause of death.

I slipped from my meal, straightened both our clothes, and was about to back away from him when I felt the hard press of something between my shoulder blades. My mind thought *gun barrel* until a cold burn from the metal worked its way through my clothes and told me something made of wrought iron was being ground into my back. A gun I could have brushed off without a thought. Wrought iron was a whole new ball game.

"Release your victim," said a soft voice from behind me, and I received another sharp jab to my back.

I muttered under my breath at my carelessness. I hadn't sensed anyone around when I'd impulsively seduced my current meal outside the club. Just the fact that I'd let my hunger get the better of me and risked a feeding in a semi-public area made me want to kick myself. I was getting stupid, sloppy, and complacent in my old age.

I was jabbed in the back again and clenched my teeth against the cold burn being pressed into me. I'd literally been caught with my pants down and assaulted with a wrought iron weapon. I hadn't been surprised like this in centuries. That the person behind me happened to be holding something made of one of the few things on the planet that could actually hurt me, couldn't be a coincidence.

"Release. Your. Victim," the man behind me said with growing impatience in his voice. He ground the whatever it was against my back to emphasize his point.

I took my hands off my latest meal and held them up in the universal sign of "no weapons." The man I'd fed from crumpled to his knees without my support, and I knew a satisfied smile would be stamped on his face. You couldn't enjoy an incubus feeding and go away unhappy and unsatisfied.

If you survived the feeding.

I slowly turned to face the person who'd managed to sneak up on me and, for the briefest of seconds, wondered if I'd been found by one of the angels that sometimes wandered the Earth

looking for other beings of their caliber to fight. Either that, or I was still feeling a little buzzed from my all-too-short feeding and my perceptions were skewed.

He was my height, maybe a smidge less. I probably outweighed him by a good twenty pounds. Not that he was skinny. More like lean. The crappy light in the alley would have made things like his eye color or hair color a mystery to humans, but I had no such difficulty. I had no trouble making out the lovely ginger shade of his hair on the top layers and a dark auburn on the bottom layers. His hair hung just past his shoulders, and I had the most insane urge to bury my nose in it and inhale what I knew was going to be a spicy-sweet scent.

His eyes caught me and held me transfixed. I couldn't remember ever seeing eyes so pale a green. Something in the way he was looking at me seemed a little off, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was. I doubted he'd been able to see my true form for the handful of seconds it'd been visible in the shadowy alley while I fed, but something wasn't right about his gaze. He jabbed me in the chest with the end of a cane, and I once again felt the cold burn of iron through my clothes.

"That's rather rude," I said, grabbing the end of the cane and pushing it away from my chest. Only years of practice kept me from flinching when wrought iron touched the bare skin of my hand.

The stranger opened his mouth and was about to say something, but stopped when my most recent meal groaned and pushed himself to his feet. He ran a shaky hand through his short hair and squinted at me. Confusion was in his eyes. He had no memory of our little encounter. No true victims of an incubus remembered their tryst with one of us unless we wanted them to. Generally, we'd stopped wanting them to during the Middle Ages. Too much bad press.

"Where am I? What am I doing out here?" he mumbled, looking around hazy-eyed.

"In an alley behind my club. I was stepping out to get some fresh air and almost tripped over you lying near the door," I said. That wasn't a total lie. I'd been heading for my car parked in the alley to get something I'd forgotten when my latest meal bumped into me, reeking of pheromones and frustrated sexual desire. "Are you all right, sir?"

The stranger who'd stumbled onto me during my meal swung his gaze between me and the man, who was now weaving slightly. I assumed the stranger had seen me fucking the man hard against the wall. Even in the dim light of the alley, that wasn't exactly something you could mistake. Yet, to all appearances, the man swaying on his feet seemed to have no recollection of that little encounter that'd happened less than five minutes ago. I was hard pressed not to smirk as confusion crossed the stranger's features.

"I passed out? I musta come out here to puke. Shit, I knew I shouldn't have had that last drink. It didn't sit right going down," the man said, pressing a hand to his forehead.

"I'll call the club limo for you, sir," I offered, all concerned club owner.

I noted the surprised look on the face of the man holding the cane and hid my smile. I was starting to think he'd stumbled into the alley by accident; possibly he'd been drawn by the moans of pleasure my meal made while I fed. Maybe he hadn't seen the actual fucking and only saw me pinning the guy to the wall. Although it did make me wonder what he thought I'd been doing to the guy. He'd told me to let my victim go. Did he think I'd been robbing the guy? Or something worse?

My meal draped his arm across my shoulders at my urging to steady himself as I led him toward the back door of the club. I glanced at the cane-wielding stranger, wondering what he was going to do. I could make my meals forget about the sexual encounter they had with me, but if somebody pressed the issue, memory would return. I could do nothing about those who witnessed me feeding unless they'd been involved in the act as well.

"I'll help you get him inside," said the stranger, his mouth tightening. He obviously thought I was going to do something else to the man and wanted to make sure I didn't. Not that he'd actually be able to stop me if I did decide to do something.

The stranger slipped my meal's free arm over his shoulders and helped me get the none-too-steady man back inside. The hall we moved through was narrow, and we had to struggle through several awkward turns before we stood inside the club proper. Heavy bass pounded, and lights flashed. It was Saturday night so the place was packed. The stranger blinked and jerked his head around quickly. He stumbled slightly on the raised threshold of the door, making the three of us sway together. I motioned one of the bouncers over and passed the man I'd fed from off to him with instructions to get my groggy meal into the club limo and home. Turning back to the stranger, I noticed he had a white-knuckled grip on his cane and looked a little disoriented.

"Feel free to enjoy my club, Debauchery, since you were so kind as to help me get that man inside and away from potential harm. My name is Ryzel," I said next to his ear. Damn, I'd been right. He did smell good. I was willing to bet he'd taste good, too, on several levels.

He startled and jerked back from me, blinking rapidly. He bumped into the wall behind him and dropped his cane with a clatter. I waited for him to pick it up, frowning a little when he didn't. I didn't want to touch his cane if I didn't have to. Bare skin contact with it just once had been enough for me, thank you very much.

His eyes narrowed a little, and he seemed to focus on a point just past my shoulder. His mouth pressed into a thin line, and his hands clenched into fists. A muscle twitched in his jaw, and I could only think that he looked spectacular when he worked himself up into a temper, because he was definitely getting pissy over something.

"Could you hand me my cane, please?" he said in a clipped tone.

I raised an eyebrow. Was he suspicious of what I might do if he were to sink to his knees in front of me? I smirked when I thought he probably had the right idea. Maybe he'd seen more of what'd been going on in the alley than he was letting on. That made for some interesting possibilities. I didn't even know if he was into men, but one of the advantages to being an incubus was that

sexual preference of our meals didn't matter. I could make a straight guy beg if I wanted him to. Hunger wound through me at the thought of eating from him and hearing him beg for my cock. The previous guy hadn't been much more than a snack for me, really. I was going to have to find myself another meal before I went to bed for the night if I wanted to avoid hunger pains all the next day.

He made a frustrated noise and crossed his arms over his chest. "My cane. I asked politely. I even said please," he said through clenched teeth.

"It's at your feet."

Anger made his eyes glitter like jewels. "I'd rather not grope around on the floor for it. God knows what might be on the floor. Unless you were trying to embarrass me."

"I... no, I wasn't," I said puzzled at his words.

He snorted at me and muttered "fine" under his breath before dropping into a crouch and stretching out his hands. I watched in amazement when his fingers passed within inches of his cane, yet he didn't reach out and pick it up. I bent down, gritted my teeth, and picked up the cane by the handle. I was surprised when I didn't feel the cold burn of iron in my palm but the silky smoothness of wood. I touched the back of his hand lightly and pressed the handle of his cane against his fingers.

"Thank you," he said in a low voice, standing swiftly. "I'll be on my way now."

On his way? Did he seriously think I was about to let him walk away? Not a freaking chance. I had questions I wanted to ask him. Number one being how it seemed like he could see me and my meal in the alley yet was apparently blind. I took hold of his arm, ignoring how he tried to jerk it out of my grasp with a muttered curse, and guided him away from the exit and toward my office. I shut the door behind us, and the music was immediately muted to a barely audible level.

"What the hell do you think you're doing? Where did you bring me? I want to leave. Now. This sure as fuck isn't the exit. I'm blind, not stupid."

Somebody had an attitude. A smile spread across my face. I liked a challenge. "No, it's not. It's my office."

"And you didn't bring me to the exit... why?"

I shrugged before remembering that he couldn't see that gesture. "How did you happen to wander into the alley?"

"I heard something and felt like I should check it out. If that's all you wanted to know, you could have asked me that before I walked out the door."

"Are you really blind? What did you think you could do to help if you can't see?"

"You think I'm pretending to be blind? Why the hell would I do that? Look, if you're not going to show me the way to the door, I'm sure I can find it on my own or ask somebody to show me the way."

I was usually a hell of a lot smoother than this. Judging by his pissed-off expression, I'd insulted him big time. Running back what I'd just said in my head, I winced. I'd sounded like an ass. Could I ask the question again without gagging on my own foot? I should be able to. Incubi were generally suave and had a way with words, although that didn't mean we were always smooth-tongued, as I'd just proved.

"I meant that you picked me out just fine in the alley. Can you see a little? I'm not trying to be nosy or ignorant. I'm really curious. I've never known anyone who was blind. And what should I call you? You know my name. Somehow, I'm almost positive you won't like it if I call you "blind guy."

He stared at me for several minutes without blinking. This time, I didn't feel like he was looking at a spot past my shoulder but really at me. It was a bit of a strange sensation when I didn't think he was actually seeing me as most people did. His expression softened fractionally, and he gave a little sigh.

"My name's Quinlin, and I was born blind." He opened his mouth to say something more, but appeared to change his mind at the last minute and snapped it shut.

"If you're blind, how did you pick me out in the alley? It was pretty dark and...."

"My entire world is dark. I've learned to compensate. If you're through questioning me, I'd really like to continue on my way home," he said, tightening his grip on his cane.

That wasn't the answer I was looking for. That wasn't really an answer at all, but I didn't think I'd be getting anything more out of him. Prickly and defensive were very good words to apply to Quinlin. Why were the pretty ones always either airheads or bitchy? Was there a memo about it that I hadn't gotten? Despite, or maybe because of his attitude, I liked him.

"So you live around here? I've never seen you in the neighborhood before."

Quinlin pursed his lips in annoyance, and I was struck by the thought he probably didn't realize how expressive his face was. Unless he didn't care that I could tell he was annoyed. I waited for him to answer me. I had patience when necessary.

"I don't. I was on my way to the subway station when I heard the commotion in the alley."

"You take the subway by yourself?" I asked in surprise. I knew it was the wrong thing to say as soon as the words left my mouth. If possible, his eyes turned even colder, and I got the distinct impression that he was looking down his nose at me.

"I'm perfectly capable of finding my way around the city by myself. Matter of fact, I do believe I'll show myself out the door and stop wasting my time with you," Quinlin said in an icy voice before spinning around and heading for the door.

I was surprised yet again when he was only a few inches off the mark for the door. I never would've paid attention to a detail like that, but I guessed it was second nature for Quinlin. I moved quickly to stop him from leaving, pressing my hand to the door above his head. Since we were nearly the same height, the entire front of my body was pressed against the full length of his back. He felt nicely toned under his clothes, with a tight little ass that almost begged me to plow it. I had to struggle with myself not to grind my hips against his ass. My lips brushed the edge of his ear, and the temptation to taste his skin was too much for me to resist. I gave the shell of his ear the quickest of flicks with my tongue. Quinlin sucked in a startled breath and shivered.

Well, now, that was interesting and deserved pursuing.

Quinlin turned and pressed his back to the door. Our eyes were at the same level, and I found it fascinating that under the frost in his eyes was interest. I was an incubus. I knew sexual interest when I saw it, and I'd definitely aroused Quinlin's interest with that simple touch. I wondered what else I could arouse in him as I leaned slightly forward and kissed him.

He made a low noise in his throat. Whether it was encouragement or denial, I couldn't have said. His clean, slightly spicy scent teased my senses, but was completely swamped by the information I was getting from his lips. One kiss was usually all it took for an incubus to learn exactly what would drive his chosen meal crazy with want, heightening our meal's pleasure and allowing the incubus to get the most out of his feed. Every now and again, a human came along that shot that useful information-gathering technique to shit.

Naturally, Quinlin had to be one of those people.

He was no ordinary human; he was Gifted. Comparing a normal human to someone who was Gifted was like going from hot dogs to prime rib between one bite and the next. If that Gifted individual actually bothered to hone whatever talent he had... the prime rib turned into ambrosia. In the entire time I'd been walking the Earth, I'd only had the pleasure of feeding from a handful of the ambrosia variety of humans. From just a simple kiss with Quinlin, I could already feel pleasure spreading through me and easing the hunger my earlier meal hadn't completely satisfied. I wanted more. I deepened the kiss, teasing the seam of his lips with my tongue, urging him to open his mouth to me.

I stumbled back from an unexpected, forceful shove and landed on my ass, my chest on fire. Quinlin held his cane in a defensive position before him. His lips were slightly swollen, and color touched his cheeks. His hair was a little mussed, and he was breathing faster than he had been just moments ago. The cold fire I'd felt from the touch of the wrought iron cane wasn't even close to what was in his eyes. Then the oddest thought struck me: a blind person shouldn't be able to convey emotions through his eyes. Quinlin could. I was irritated with myself for not noticing it sooner, and also for forgetting about that damned wrought iron cane of his, but I had found out two very interesting pieces of information during the impulsive kiss we'd shared. He

knew he was Gifted and used whatever his talent was on a very regular basis. He'd also enjoyed the kiss with me, participating in it before something prompted him to shove me away with his cane.

"Stay the fuck away from me. Just because I'm blind doesn't mean I'm easy prey."

Quinlin gripped the doorknob, cracked open the door, and slipped out before I could get to my feet. My chest ached and my breath rasped as I rubbed the spots where the iron spiraling around the wood of the cane had touched me. Fuck, that hurt. I picked myself up off the floor and jerked the door open. Quinlin was nowhere in sight. I made my way down the corridor, sure that he couldn't have already left the club when he didn't know the layout and couldn't see where he was going. I scanned the gyrating bodies on the dance floor from the shadows of the employee doorway and came up with absolutely fuck all in the way of one very interesting redhead. Fuck. Apparently, I was wrong. Quinlin was gone. One of my bouncers saw me standing in the shadows of the hall, hands on my hips and a fierce scowl on my face.

"Something wrong, boss?" he asked as he moved closer to me. "Uh... you might wanna calm down or something before hittin' the floor. Your eyes have gone red."

I swore roughly in several dead languages and dragged a hand through my hair, not very surprised to find the beginnings of my horns starting to poke through my scalp. Quinlin really pushed my buttons hard, and I'd only kissed him briefly. I required several deep breaths before I felt I could show my face in public and appear as a normal human. That one of the bouncers saw my red eyes wasn't a problem. All my bouncers were demons of less power than me. A few were offspring of mine. They all worked for me because it allowed them to roam the world, the choice of humans to feed from was good in my club, and I paid a damn fine wage.

"Did you see a beautiful man with a cane walk past you in the last couple of minutes? An absolutely stunning redhead with gorgeous green eyes and a fuck-off-and-die attitude?" I asked.

"An okay-looking dude with sorta red hair and a cane blew past me. He looked plenty pissed. He was coming from your office, so I didn't think to stop him. Was I supposed to? He headed out the back door maybe two minutes ago. You lose your next meal, boss?" the demon asked with a smirk.

My temper flared at the tone in my subordinate's voice. We were still in the employee area of the club, so I let my mask of humanity drop. I grabbed the demon by the throat and lifted him off the ground one-handed. My eyes turned the shade of fresh blood, and horns the color of polished ebony pushed out from my forehead. They swept back from my face before curling forward like those of a bighorn sheep. Claws sharp enough to disembowel in one swipe elongated from my fingers, digging into the skin of the demon's throat and drawing blood.

"Watch your tongue, or I'll tear it out of your throat and feed it to you. Spread the word that if you or any of the other demons see that man, you're to tell me right away. Do not approach him. Do not hurt him. Do not even think of feeding from him. You tell me and only me, understand?"

The demon I held squeaked a reply I decided was a yes. I let him go, and he dropped heavily to the ground at my feet. His breath rattled in his throat, and I could smell blood tingeing the air. He made low-pitched mewls, licking and kissing my shoes in subservience. I grunted, allowing the display of apology as I smoothed a hand through my hair, my horns and claws disappearing back inside me. I knew the time I'd just wasted with the demon had allowed Quinlin to move farther and farther away from me, but it couldn't be helped. Give demons an inch, and they'd take a mile. I smiled when I thought that Quinlin had given me that and more by allowing and participating in the kiss, however briefly, and letting me see that he'd liked it. At least now, once this demon spread the word I wanted Quinlin, I'd have a small platoon of demons on the lookout for him.

I'd find Quinlin eventually. When I did, I was going to take my sweet-ass time enjoying all the pleasure I was sure I could wring out of him.

Chapter 2

I was actually shaking slightly in the back of the cab I'd hailed. I kept touching my lips, too. That man, Ryzel, he was beyond bad-mannered. What the hell did he think he was doing, kissing me like that? I didn't even know him. I'd only met him less than half an hour before, and not under the best of circumstances, either. No matter the more accepting times we lived in, it still wasn't a common thing for one man to kiss another in a blatantly sexual way. To take that kind of liberty was downright dangerous, not to mention rude.

Regardless of the fact that he was a phenomenal kisser and I hadn't really wanted to end the kiss.

I ran my hand back and forth over the shaft of my cane, my fingers tracing the ancient runes etched into the iron-banded wood in a gesture that always calmed me down. A smile twitched the corner of my mouth at the thought that there possibly was some sort of magic in the cane that my aunt swore came from a Druidic priest who lurked in our family tree. I never felt the same sense of calm and security from holding any other cane, so she could very well be right.

I snorted softly. Who did I think I was kidding? My aunt was always right. Annoyingly so.

I leaned my head back against the seat and sighed. Things like this seemed par for the course in my life. Weird shit followed me around like a demented, faithful dog. I should've known something strange would happen if I listened to the crazy urge to check out the noises I'd heard coming from that alley. I wouldn't have even been there in the first place if Aunt Hildreth hadn't insisted I pay a visit to one of her *dear friends* to drop off a package, since I'd be so close anyway.

Close, my ass. I should've been suspicious of her motives when she'd first suggested it, but I'd been in a hurry to make my appointment. I scowled and wondered if she had some premonition about my meeting that Ryzel guy that she hadn't shared with me. I wouldn't put it past her. She seemed to take a hell of a lot of pleasure in meddling with my life. I think she needed a hobby that didn't involve messing with me or my life. I sat up straight, watching the brilliant flashes of colors that sped by the windows of the cab before willing myself to stop seeing the almost dizzying rush. I sighed softly in relief as my vision went black.

I'd never been able to see anything but blackness my entire life. Well, that wasn't exactly true. I did see things that most people didn't or couldn't. In a sense, I wasn't blind and could probably see in certain circumstances better than people around me. The strange noises weren't the only thing that'd drawn me to the alley. I'd seen two distinct auras, one weakening while the other, bigger one covered it. It'd been the height of stupidity for me to confront the men in the alley. Why I'd done it, I couldn't even say for sure. For all I knew, the owner of the bigger aura could've had a gun or a knife or any number of things I wouldn't have been able to see with my Gift. Only living things had auras.

But...

Ryzel's aura was strange and one of the most beautiful things I'd ever seen. I'd never seen anything like it before, and that probably encouraged me to check out what was going on in the alley. I really did know better than to stick my nose into something that wasn't any of my business, but it was almost as if Ryzel's aura had been drawing me to him, which was ridiculous. His aura pulsed faintly, like a heartbeat, and had a darkness I'd never seen in any auras. A permanent tinge of lust and sensuality colored it, attracting me despite my suspicions of what I'd stumbled upon in that alley. When he'd kissed me, that lust and sensuality flared sun-bright and left me feeling breathless and warmed from the inside out.

Just remembering the way Ryzel's aura looked was turning me on. Something like that had never happened before, either. I was jolted from my thoughts when the cab pulled to a stop in front of my apartment building and the cabbie rattled off the fee. I paid up and exited the cab.

Once back in my apartment, I grabbed a beer from the fridge and plunked myself down in front of the TV. I clicked it on and listened to the newscasters drone about the latest disaster and increase in municipal taxes. When I up-ended the bottle for the last swig, some trickled out of the corner of my mouth. I flicked my tongue out to catch the drops and was immediately reminded of the quick brush of Ryzel's tongue over the edge of my ear before I'd turned around and he'd kissed me. I still couldn't figure out why I'd turned around to face him instead of just leaving like I'd originally intended.

I cursed softly as I set the empty beer bottle down on the coffee table. Ten to one odds were that I was going to dream of Ryzel and that hot kiss he'd laid on me. I swore I could still feel the press of his lips against mine, and the faint taste of him seemed to linger on my mouth. It'd been far too long since I'd had somebody share my bed.

I think I needed to get laid. That was my only excuse for my out-of-character reaction to Ryzel's boldness.

I groaned when my alarm went off. I slapped it into silence and debated about staying in bed. I muttered when I realized that lolling about in bed wasn't going to help anything and would probably make things worse. I'd dreamed of Ryzel again. For nearly a week, I'd been having erotic dreams of him, even going so far as to wake up several times during the night, absolutely sure he was beside me. I'd been irritated with myself when I reached out to draw him close and encountered nothing. My sleep hadn't been restful since our chance encounter. I now had one hell of a morning hard on to deal with. Again. I forced myself from the bed, stalking to the bathroom and berating myself over my idiotic behavior. I was acting like some randy teenage boy with his first crush.

Once under the pounding hot spray of the shower, I realized it was pointless to try and ignore the desire curling through my belly. I'd hoped the hot water would wash away those persistent

desires, but my brain seemed determined to bring the fragments of my dreams with me into the shower and expand on them. I should have known better. A frustrated noise left my throat. I leaned my back against the cool tiles of the shower stall and ran my hands down my body. After six days of trying not to think of Ryzel and failing miserably, I let my mind fantasize that it was Ryzel touching me.

The fingers of one hand plucked at my nipple while I rubbed the palm of my other hand over my length. A murmur of pleasure found its way from my throat, and I wrapped my fingers around my rigid cock, imagining it was Ryzel's hand touching me so intimately. I bit my lip and stroked myself slowly, letting the pleasure and fantasy build. I replayed Ryzel's seductive voice in my head and groaned when that made me quicken my strokes. I let my mind re-create what his aura looked like and lost myself in the remembered shifting colors, bright flares, and heartbeat-like pulsing I'd been entranced by. My breath caught in my throat when I recalled the way his aura had glowed when he kissed me. That simple memory of warmth and overwhelming sensuality triggered my orgasm. I moaned deep in my throat as my cock spurted between my fingers, my release seeming to go on and on.

My lust now spent, my legs suddenly felt like jelly, and I slid down the wall until I was sitting on the floor of the shower, panting, hot water spraying onto my head.

Damn, I hadn't come that hard in months. I really, really needed to get laid.

My little shower interlude almost made me late for work, and I ended up feeling scattered and sluggish the entire day. Fortunately, it was a slow day for me in the studio, and I could work on autopilot. If I'd actually been working with a musician and playing what they needed me to, I'd have been royally screwed. As it was, I'd needed to stop and re-start standard back-up pieces I had to record for a session later in the week to correct stupid mistakes. I should've been able to play them in my sleep. I was exasperated with myself for dwelling on Ryzel, and I was more than a little annoyed at him for getting under my skin so completely in such a short period of time.

Just what the hell was with the man that drew me to him?

"Hey, Quin, quitting time. Get lost in your music again? You were supposed to meet me at the front door."

I jerked my head up. I'd been lost in thought over Ryzel again, my fingers not moving over the keyboard. Jesus fucking Christ, but Ryzel was pissing me off and he wasn't anywhere near me. I looked at the man standing next to the piano, recognizing his aura and voice, and dredged up a smile for one of the few people I considered a friend.

"Shit," I muttered. "Sorry, Kell. I was... never mind. It's not important."

I could feel Haskell's eyes on me as I pushed away from the piano. Realistically, I'd been done before I'd even set foot in the studio that morning. Nothing I'd recorded would be usable. Haskell waited for me to finish tidying up and held out his arm once I was done. I'd have probably snapped off anyone else's head for the offer of help. But Haskell had been a friend since we were nine, and a fuck buddy since we were sixteen. That earned him special consideration.

"What's got your underwear in a bunch, Quin? You've either been in dreamland or pissier than usual all week. And that's saying something, since I think you were crowned pissy bitch of the universe the day you were born."

I cracked Haskell in the shins with my cane hard enough to sting, but not hard enough to leave a bruise. He yelped and gave me what I knew would be a wounded look. The effect was spoiled by the fact that I couldn't see it, and I knew from his aura that he wasn't physically hurt or emotionally wounded. He knew the strike with my cane wasn't intended to hurt him.

"You know damn well I can't see that look you practice for everybody. You're wasting the effort."

"On you, maybe, but that pretty, new, brunette secretary thinks it's real. You should see the look of sympathy she's giving me now. Did you already chew her a new one? You really gotta stop terrorizing the newbies, Quin. Hey, whack me again with your cane. I can get her phone number if I play the pity card for having to put up with your nasty ass."

I snorted, but rapped Haskell in the shins again with my cane. It was barely hard enough for him to even feel it, but he gave a grunt like I'd hit him hard. I could picture him grimacing in pain and sending a helpless look at the secretary with a little shrug of his shoulders, as if to say "what can you do?" I just shook my head. She was new, and eventually she'd learn that we were long-time friends and just playing around. But if it helped my best friend get a foot in the door with someone he was interested in sleeping with, I could play the "angry at the world blind guy." Wouldn't be the first time I'd done that for Haskell, and it certainly wouldn't be the last time, either. Apparently, my nasty attitude and Haskell's practiced, long-suffering look were a great ice breaker.

Once Haskell got the phone number from the new secretary, he guided me to his car, chatting the entire time about the new restaurants he'd discovered, as well as the new bar he wanted to take me to. He claimed I'd like the bar, since it was quiet, had good prices for drinks, and was yet undiscovered by the trendy hordes of people he knew I disliked. Where we went didn't matter a whole lot to me as long as we could carry on a conversation without having to shout over people, music, or sporting events blaring from TVs.

The bar was exactly as Haskell described. The sound from the game playing on the TVs was set at background levels, the beer I'd ordered was well within acceptable prices, and judging by the number of auras I could see, the crowd was light for a Friday night. I started to relax a little in the pleasant atmosphere.

"Out with it, Quin. What's his name, where'd you meet him, and was he any good in the sack?"

I glared at Haskell for several seconds before an easy laugh left me. Haskell knew me better than I knew myself sometimes. He always got straight to the heart of the matter, too. "His name is Ryzel, we met in an alley, and I have absolutely no idea."

"You met a guy in an alley? Seriously? Mister fuck-off-and-die-don't-touch-me chatted up a strange guy in an alley? Holy shit, Quin. Did you suffer a serious head wound or something?"

"Shut up, Kell. There were... circumstances. I just... and he was... and then he kissed me and..."

"You met a guy in an alley, and he kissed you? Is he still alive, or do I need to provide you with an alibi?"

I flipped Haskell the finger before taking a drink of my beer. I could go out on my own and meet guys. I could even be friendly and genial if I wanted to be. It wasn't like I was always alone or lacking in company of an erotic nature. I didn't typically pick up guys in alleyways, but stranger things could happen. Not that I could think of a single one at the moment, but that wasn't the point. "He kissed me by surprise. He was alive, if flat on his ass, after I hit him with my cane and stormed out of his office."

"Wait, what? I thought you said you met him in an alley. How'd you go from meeting a guy in an alley to kissing him in his office? I want details, man. It's not every day the king of the bad attitude stoops to being a normal, randy guy kissing hot strangers. I assume he was hot..." Haskell trailed off, not-so-subtly prodding me for details.

"Just because you're my best friend doesn't mean I haven't already chosen where to hide your body after I kill you," I said with as serious an expression I could muster while trying not to snicker like mad.

Haskell snorted with laughter. "Yeah, yeah, whatever. Was he hot?"

"I don't know. I didn't get the chance to check out his face. His aura was hot, though." I grinned.

Going out with Haskell was helping to ease the tension I'd been dealing with the entire week. I knew it'd only take a word or two and Haskell would gladly help me deal with the other kind of tension I'd been living with as well. I was looking forward to that more than I could say. We always had a good time when we played between the sheets.

Haskell signaled a waitress over and ordered more beer, along with chicken wings and ribs. He insisted the wings were nice and spicy, just the way I liked them, and that the ribs were tender and juicy. Since drinking on an empty stomach was a bad idea, and I had no plans for supper anyway, I didn't protest too hard. Haskell prodded me into telling him all about my little encounter with Ryzel. He even managed to weasel out of me the reason for my tired look the past week. Not that I'd been trying to keep the information from him, but I had a rep as a closed-mouth bastard to uphold.

"So, if you're this hung up on the guy, go back to the club and ask for him. He had to be interested if he kissed you. Betcha he'll remember you, especially if you knocked him on his ass. I'll go with you for, like, y'know, backup. I'm curious to see this guy myself. He's gotta be something if he managed to stay alive after putting his hands on you without your say-so."

I shook my head no at Haskell's request. He used to model when he was younger and still took the occasional job to supplement his income as a photographer. Although I had no interest in dating Ryzel, I didn't want to introduce my very good-looking best friend to the guy I was screwing in my dreams. I knew that was completely irrational thinking, but I couldn't seem to help my reactions to Ryzel. Which pissed me off a little and made me scowl.

"Aw, come on, Quin. I wanna see this piece of manhood that's captured your attention to the point of you dreaming of him. You haven't shown this much interest in anyone since you spooked old what's-his-name with your freaky mental shit," Haskell teased.

I snorted. My last lover had been shocked when I finally told him why it seemed like I could see him when I was completely blind. Spooked was a mild way of putting it. Running screaming from my apartment calling me a tool of the devil was much more accurate. Funny, but I hadn't pegged the guy as very religious when we first started seeing each other.

"No, Kell, I'm not bringing you anywhere near Ryzel. You're much too good looking for me to compete against. You have people fawning all over you within minutes of meeting them. And, as you're so fond of pointing out, you have a lovely personality to go with those model looks. I know I'm difficult, but as you've said to me before, once you get to know me, I'm worth slogging through all the shit." I grinned at Haskell and waved a chicken wing at him as I continued. "I'll make do with my little fantasies of Ryzel. You know, if you buy me more of these delicious chicken wings and my beer for the rest of the night, I'll let you tie me up and have your wicked way with me to help me deal with the itch Ryzel caused. Sound like a plan?"

I smirked and waited for Haskell to reply. Offering to let him play with me like that generally got me a very enthusiastic response, considering I was usually the one who did him when we slept together. A frown drew my brows down when he didn't say anything. Haskell never missed an opportunity to jump all over a suggestion like I'd just made. I felt the presence of somebody standing next to me, but ignored it, assuming it was the waitress coming to refill our beers.

Haskell was never bothered by our public sexual bantering. He was usually the one who started it. He was comfortable in his sexuality and didn't care who knew he liked men as well as women. I dropped the partially eaten wing to my plate and hastily wiped my fingers off on my napkin before reaching across the table for Haskell's hand. Something had to be wrong for him to not answer me.

I was caught completely off guard by the fingers that firmly gripped my jaw and turned my head. I had half a second to take in the large aura filling my vision before I felt the swipe of a warm tongue at the corner of my mouth, licking up some errant sauce. The voice that had haunted my dreams and fueled my recent waking fantasies whispered into my ear.

"What kind of fantasies have you been having about me, Quinlin? I'd be more than happy to make them realities for you. I have to admit, the thought of tying you up and having my way with you never even occurred to me, but now that you mention it, that sounds like a great idea," he said, flicking my ear lobe with the tip of his tongue. I shivered in reaction as my fantasies involving Ryzel flipped rapidly through my head and tightened things in my groin. One simple touch from Ryzel, and all my higher brain functions went on a coffee break.

I'd thought the odds of my running into Ryzel again were very small given the size of the city, and I'd been more than a little comforted by that fact. I generally didn't go to dance clubs, and his club was in a section of the city I didn't frequent. The bar Haskell and I were in was well removed from the area the club occupied. I didn't like feeling as if things were slipping out of my control, and my instant attraction to Ryzel definitely fit the definition of out of my control.

Ryzel drew a little back from me, and I stared at his aura with wide, shocked eyes. It was every bit as beautiful and attractive as I remembered. Maybe even more so. He leaned down and brushed my mouth with his again. The touch of Ryzel's lips to mine made his aura flare brightly before settling into an almost hypnotic throbbing. I automatically opened my mouth to him when his tongue gently teased the seam of my lips. Ryzel slowly dipped his tongue in and out of my mouth, mimicking a much more intimate act I'd been fantasizing about doing with him for the past week.

"I'm going to assume this is the guy from the alley who kissed you and lived to tell the tale. Holy fucking shit, Quin, the two of you are hot together," Haskell said in a low voice filled with humor and appreciation.

Haskell's words jerked me back from the glorious assault on my senses Ryzel was waging. The reality of his kiss was a thousand times better than the fantasies I'd been creating in my head over the past week, and I had a damn good imagination. My hands had somehow found their way to his chest and fisted his shirt. I used that grip to push him away from me and break the kiss I was enjoying far too much. Ryzel's noise of disappointment when I ended the kiss was loud to my ears.

A blush stained my cheeks, and an erection strained my pants. I was never this flustered by someone. Never. I couldn't remember the last time somebody'd made me blush like that from just a kiss. My breathing was fast and choppy, and for the life of me, I couldn't seem to put together a coherent thought that didn't involve Ryzel and me rolling around naked in bed. I pressed my lips together to stop the little moan that wanted to leave my throat at the things Ryzel made me feel. I closed my eyes, tipped my head back, and tried to regain some inner control.

"Don't do that to me, Quinlin. You look even more gorgeous with the line of your throat exposed like that. Makes me want to lick and nibble on it," Ryzel said in a husky voice, dragging his fingers over my skin.

My eyes flew open at his words and gentle stroking of my skin. I scooted further along the bench seat to avoid a touch I wanted more than I should from a man I barely knew. Ryzel took my moving over as permission to sit down next me. I could feel the heat of his body next to mine

and see the tantalizing shimmer of his aura. I scowled, annoyed that he'd stolen another kiss and gotten me so worked up I could barely think straight from the simple press of his lips to mine.

Not knowing what else to do, I made the effort to consciously stop seeing the auras of the people around me. My world went dark, and my jaw clenched, but I felt a little more in control of myself when I wasn't being dazzled by his aura and his drugging kisses. I really hated being completely blind when I didn't have to be, but Ryzel's aura was gorgeous. Much too fascinating for my own good. I was better off not seeing it than ending up being tempted into his bed by the things it stirred in me.

"Quin?" Haskell asked with concern in his voice at my abrupt mood shift.

"Let's go, Kell," I said in a tight voice. I needed to get away from Ryzel before I did something utterly stupid. Like throw caution to the wind, drag him back to my place, and screw him hard and fast until neither one of us remembered our names.

"No," Ryzel said in a voice that didn't allow for any argument. I turned my head to face Ryzel and opened my mouth to give him the nastiest smack down I could possibly deliver. His next words rendered me speechless. "You've been on my mind since I kissed you. I've had my people keeping an eye out for you because I couldn't stop thinking about you. Do you have any idea how hard it is to find someone with only a first name and description to go by in a city this large?"

"You were trying to find Quin?" Haskell said in surprise, beating me to the question that'd been on the tip of my tongue.

"Why wouldn't I? Although our first kiss was short, it was very... good," Ryzel said, his voice dropping into a seductive tone and packing a lot more meaning into 'good' than the word usually had. "Quinlin liked my kiss, and from our brief encounter, I know he's feisty. I like a partner with a little fire in his blood. Makes things interesting, don't you think? Combine that with the fact that he's gorgeous, and I don't see why I wouldn't be interested in finding him again."

Now I knew Ryzel was just playing with me. My scowl deepened, and my mouth tightened into a thin line. I hated being played for a fool. Just because I couldn't see my face didn't mean I was unaware of how I looked. I wasn't gorgeous by any stretch of the imagination. Haskell was gorgeous. I'd run my fingers and lips over every inch of his body more times than I could remember, and he was perfection. He was even a genuinely nice guy.

Not to say I was a troll in the looks department. I did okay. I managed to drag my reluctant ass through a short, daily workout routine so I wasn't out of shape. I even bowed to Haskell's better fashion sense so I didn't look like a complete dork when out in public, but I was not model material, and I most certainly wasn't gorgeous. I was about to correct Ryzel, but Haskell spoke before I had a chance.

"You think Quin's feisty?" Haskell threw back his head and laughed like a demented loon for a few moments before he got himself under control. "Oh god, that was good. I haven't laughed like that in ages. Quin's not feisty; he's a pissy bastard. Don't delude yourself."

"Thanks, Kell. You're a real friend," I said with a fierce scowl in his direction. I wished I had enough room to swing my cane at his head. "How do you happen to be here in this bar at the same time as me and Kell?" I asked suspiciously.

"I told you I had my people keeping an eye out for you. This is one of my business ventures. As soon as your waitress called me with a description of you, I had to come and see if it was you or not. You've no idea how pleased I am that it was you."

Ryzel was stopped from adding anything further when a woman came to the table and said something to Ryzel that was too low for me to hear. He muttered something under his breath and offered an apology to me, touching my thigh and saying that he needed to resolve a problem but would be back shortly. He damn near demanded that I stay put until he got back. I felt him move away from me and cautiously allowed myself to see the auras of the people around me again. Ryzel was across the room, and his aura had sharp spikes of anger coming from it. As hard as it was, I dismissed him and his much-too-pretty aura from my mind and faced Haskell.

"Let's go while he's busy, Kell," I said as I snatched my cane and started to slide from the seat.

"Are you out of your freaking mind, Quin? The guy obviously has the major hots for you, going by that kiss he laid on you. You've been dreaming about nailing his ass for the past week. Opportunity isn't just knocking on your door here, Quin. It's trying to kick the damn door down."

"But..."

"But fucking nothing. You said you didn't get the chance to touch his face. I'm gonna guess you didn't get to feel up his bod, either. Quin, he makes me look like a dog's breakfast. He's so beautiful; it'd make you almost weep with pleasure to look at him."

I paused. Haskell was always dead honest with me. If he said Ryzel was good looking, that was the god honest truth as Haskell knew it. But, in all the years I'd known him, Haskell had never said he was ugly compared to another person. As shallow as it was, I was now even more curious about Ryzel.

"You really think he's that good looking?"

"Dude, he's like classic fallen angel. Tall, nicely toned, black hair that hangs all the way to an exceptionally fine ass. Chiseled looks, cornflower blue eyes with the most sinfully long eyelashes I've ever seen on a guy or girl. His mouth looks like it was made for kissing or cock sucking. Probably both. Jesus, Quin, I saw him standing next to you, and I couldn't say a word. He literally took my breath away. And you know what? It was like I didn't even exist once he saw you."

I stared at Haskell, my mouth hanging open a little. I knew from the colors in his aura that he was telling me the absolute truth. I'd never had anything like that happen, and as far as I knew, neither had Haskell.

"Look, Quin, you don't have to move in together and register for china patterns. Take him home or let him take you to his place or a hotel or whatever and fuck like bunnies. As much as I'd love to tie you to my bed and screw you senseless, I'd be the worst friend in the world if I didn't tell you to take him up on his offer and have the real guy you're panting after."

I rubbed my fingers over the symbols etched in the metal of my cane as I thought. Haskell knew I wasn't much of one for casual sex. A few experiences with people wanting to know if it was any different to screw a blind guy than a sighted guy had cured me of the casual fuck damn quick.

But I wanted Ryzel with an intensity that just wasn't going away. I was still half hard from the kiss he'd given me. I wanted more, and I really couldn't come up with a valid reason not to have what I wanted. I was single, not even dating anyone at the moment. Just because I wasn't much for casual sex didn't mean I never had it. Maybe falling into bed with Ryzel would work my desire for him out of my system, and I could get back to my regular life.

My decision made, I waited for Ryzel to come back to our table.

"Your place or a hotel, Ryzel?"

Chapter 3

"Your place or a hotel, Ryzel?" Quinlin asked as soon as I returned to the table.

I stared at Quinlin with surprise and pointedly ignored the choked-off laughter from his friend. When I left the table to go take care of a minor problem, he'd been trying to convince his friend to leave. I'd had to almost wrestle a promise to stay out of him. I hadn't even been positive he'd stay. Sure, he'd really enjoyed the kiss and participated in it more than I thought he would, but most of that was probably because I'd broadsided him out of nowhere. I can fully admit to taking advantage of his blindness to steal another kiss from him. I wasn't sorry about doing that.

I'm a demon. I do bad things. It's genetic.

"Choose what you want, Ryzel, or I'm retracting the offer. You can ask Haskell. I don't suggest this kind of thing often," Quinlin said as he toyed with the shaft of his cane.

I shifted my gaze to Quinlin's friend, really noticing him for the first time. Haskell was very good-looking. Not as gorgeous as Quinlin, but he was a very hard act to follow. If I'd seen Haskell first, I would've made a play for him. At least until I saw Quinlin. I had a real weakness for the drop-dead beautiful ones. After more than a week of searching for him, I still couldn't believe I'd found him or that my demons had been having such a hard time with my description of him. How they could insist his friend was better looking was beyond me.

Haskell snorted and pointed at me with his beer bottle. "I've known Quin for more than twenty years, and he's never made this kind of offer to a total stranger. You must be special. I hope you realize the sacrifice I'm making here, Ryzel. I wouldn't normally pass up the chance to tie Quin to my bed and screw us both into unconsciousness. But he's my best friend, and he's been dreaming kinky shit about you for the past week, so I guess I can step back this once. I'll get all the juicy details out of him later, so it's all good."

"Haskell," Quinlin hissed, a blush coloring his cheeks. I saw his hand tighten on his cane and wondered if he was going to take a swing at his friend. He'd certainly had no problem hitting me with the damned thing.

"What? It's true. You told me you'd been dreaming about him since he kissed you," Haskell said with a devilish twinkle in his eyes. I idly wondered if maybe he had a little demon in his family tree somewhere to be picking on his blind friend like this. I could possibly get to like Haskell.

"Pick, Ryzel. Your place, a hotel, or we go our separate ways. Last chance before I change my mind and leave." Quinlin scowled.

"I'd pick quickly, Ryzel. Quin's getting annoyed. Well, more annoyed than normal. If he changes his mind and decides to take back his offer, nothing on this Earth will change his mind. And you really don't want to miss out on having Quin in your bed."

"Shut the fuck up, Kell," Quinlin said through gritted teeth. Hostility was in his eyes, and I was almost sure he was going to try and crack Haskell in the head with his cane.

"Hotel, since I don't think you'd be very comfortable going back to my place, and I don't want to waste time driving around when there's a perfectly good room a few floors above us."

"Fine. Kell, I'll catch you later."

Quinlin moved closer to me on the bench seat and gave me a little push. I didn't need any further urging than that. I slid from the booth, waiting for Quinlin to join me. The kiss I'd stolen earlier had only whetted my appetite for more. Kissing Quinlin was like eating one potato chip; I couldn't stop with one. I fully intended to do a lot more than just kiss him. I looked at Haskell and gave my head a nod in Quinlin's direction.

"I'll make sure Quinlin gets home safe and sound. Don't worry about the check. It's on the house."

Haskell smirked at me, but said nothing. He waved and said, "Hey, Quin, have fun and don't do anything I wouldn't do."

For the first time, I saw Quinlin genuinely smile and found myself struck dumb. He was gorgeous when he looked all pissy. When he smiled with pleasure, I was sure there had to be some naughty, chastity-fence-jumping angel in his lineage. I'd seen a lot of beautiful people in my life, but nobody held a candle to Quinlin.

Quinlin shook his head and reached toward me. I was surprised his hand hit my arm on the first try. Quinlin seemed to have an uncanny knack for knowing where people were in relation to him. I was a little curious about how he could do that, but my hunger was subtly pushing at me to be satisfied. I steered Quinlin from the bar and into the lobby of the hotel. A nod at the concierge was all I needed to do to let him know I would be staying at the hotel. He unlocked the elevator that went to the suite reserved for my use. Quinlin was silent the entire ride, and I was starting to wonder if he was having second thoughts about his impulsive behavior.

He spoke once we left the elevator. "Show me to the couch or a chair or something. I have a couple of personal rules, and if you can't live with them, then I go home right now."

I led him to a chair before offering him a drink, which he declined, and I sat down opposite him. Whatever he wanted in the way of personal rules, I could probably live with. As long as I got my meal, I was an easy-going demon. If it came down to it, I could use incubus wiles. He'd do whatever I wanted him to then. I generally liked willing meals, but I wasn't overly fussy. And a meal like I could get from Quinlin, well, that was worth a little coercion in my books if things headed in that direction.

"Condoms are required. I have enough shit going on in my life. I don't need any nasty surprises, disease-wise, if it could be prevented."

"Okay." It wasn't like he could catch anything from me or me from him. Incubi couldn't get or transmit STDs, one of the perks of being nearly immortal. Wearing a condom wouldn't affect the quality or quantity of my feeding either, so I didn't really care.

"I barely know you, so kinky shit is out. No ropes, no handcuffs, no paddles, no flogs. I'll only play like that with people I know well and trust."

"Fine," I said with a little smile I hoped he couldn't hear in my voice. We'd see about that rule at some point if I had my way. The mental image of Quinlin tied to my bed, spread for my pleasure, was all kinds of arousing.

"If you're going to do something sudden, give me a little warning. You don't need to give me a play-by-play, but I can't see you or what you're doing. I'm not a big fan of surprises during sex."

I hadn't thought about that, but it made sense. "Okay, duly noted. Anything else I need to know?"

"No. If you're okay with my little demands, then we're good," Quinlin said with a sharp nod of his head. "I'd like to know what the person I'm about to jump into bed with looks like. I want to touch your face."

I stared at Quinlin in surprise. Even though I knew he was blind, I'd conveniently let the fact that he didn't know what I looked like escape me. Moving from my chair to kneel between Quinlin's legs, I had no idea what to expect. Given my considerable good looks, it was a unique occurrence to have someone in my bed based solely on my personality and kissing skills. I hadn't even had to use any demon charm to get into Quinlin's pants. Damn, I must be better than I thought.

He placed his hands on my shoulders and slowly moved his hands up my neck to my jaw. His thumbs traced along the underside, his touch surprisingly light. He dragged his fingertips along the sides of my jaw to my chin, and a little smile quirked his lips. I wanted to ask what he found amusing, but didn't want to interrupt whatever information he was getting. He was barely touching my skin, yet I found myself eager for more.

His fingers traced over my lips, and he snorted softly to himself but smiled a little wider. If he kept doing things like that, I was going to break down and ask him what put that sexy smirk on his face. I was also having one hell of a time resisting the urge to lick and suck his fingers. He abandoned my lips and ghosted his fingers over my cheeks before moving over my nose.

"Close your eyes, Ryzel," Quinlin said softly.

I understood why he was telling me to do that, but I wanted to watch his face as he learned mine. His features softened when he touched me, making him look more open. I made the impulsive decision to have him facing me when I fed from him, something I seldom did unless my meal

was under my spell and would remember nothing of what my true form looked like. Nothing ruined a perfectly good meal like having said meal suddenly start screaming about demons and being damned to Hell when he got a look at what I really was. With Quinlin, I wanted to watch his expressions when he came, and because he couldn't see, I had no worries about him catching sight of my demon form. Win/win situation for me.

"They're closed."

Quinlin's fingers moved over my eyelids, his touch as light as a butterfly's wing. As he brushed over my eyelashes with the pads of his fingers, he made an approving noise I doubt he was even aware of. My eyes opened when I felt him trace over my eyebrows before moving on to my forehead. I made my own noise of approval when his fingers threaded through my hair, gliding over the sensitive spots where my horns would normally be. He combed his hands through a length of my hair, pulling some of it forward over my shoulder.

"Kell was right. You are beautiful. I've never had a lover with hair this long. It has all kinds of possibilities, doesn't it?"

I smiled slowly at Quinlin. Oh yeah, I had a bunch of fun things we could do with long hair. I hadn't expected to enjoy his touching my face like I did. It'd been a surprisingly sensual thing. I wondered if his touch elsewhere on my body would be as much of a turn on. Somehow, I was almost positive it would be.

Now, in addition to hunger, I was starting to feel true desire. Although incubi feed on sexual energies, we didn't need to feel desire to eat. Feeding and sex were actually two separate things for us, and generally, wanting a meal didn't make us want sex. To want to eat and have sex at the same time was a fairly rare occurrence and almost never happened to me when I was with a human. Hell, if succubae and incubi could get away with a fast hand job to feed instead of penetration, it'd make things a whole lot easier, not to mention quicker for us. Not to say the sensation of penetration wasn't nice, but there were times when you just wanted a quick snack instead of a sit-down dinner. Of course, I wasn't protesting the seven-course meal I was pretty sure I was going to get from Quinlin.

Quinlin was going to be a treat in more ways than one, and I could hardly wait to get him naked and writhing under me.

I took Quinlin's hand and tugged him from the chair. He rose easily enough and reached for his cane. I stopped him with a hand on his wrist. I didn't want that... thing near me more than it had to be. I was also thinking that I could keep Quinlin in my bed longer if he didn't have an easy way to navigate around an unfamiliar room. Yes, that was underhanded and possibly a little evil, but I blamed demon genetics at work again.

"Leave it. You're not going to be needing it for the rest of the night."

"Who says I'm staying the night?"

"I do. If this is a one-time offer, I'm going to make the most of it. Afraid you can't handle an entire night in my bed, Quinlin?"

Quinlin stiffened, and a scowl darkened his face. I could tell he wanted to hit me, and I was positive if he'd had his cane in hand, he would've cracked me in the skull with it. His scowl disappeared as quickly as it came, and he let his body sway against mine. His lips brushed the edge of my ear, sending shivers of pleasure through me.

"No, I didn't think you could handle an entire night in bed with me," he whispered, flicking his tongue against my ear lobe before moving a half-step back from me.

Hunger and arousal surged through me. I was startled to realize that I wanted Quinlin more as a lover than as a meal. A meal was something I had to hunt for to keep from starving and was a necessity. Feeding felt good, and I did enjoy the sensations involved, but it wasn't the same as having sex. Rarely did an incubus reach orgasm while feeding, because that's not what eating was about.

Taking a lover, though, that was all about pleasure for the sake of pleasure and no other reason. For the first time in my entire existence, I was going to take care of both my needs at once with a human. Excitement rushed through me. I loved new experiences; especially ones that promised so much possible delight.

Not wanting to waste any further time, I scooped Quinlin up and marched for the bedroom. Quinlin gave a very unmanly squawk and struggled against my hold, punching with surprising accuracy while curses flew from his lips. I think I'd just managed to piss him off. I couldn't help the grin on my face. I enjoyed a feisty lover, and he more than delivered on that account. Quinlin had no hope of getting free. I had more strength in one hand than he did in his entire body, and quite honestly, I found his struggles and the angry flush to his skin arousing. I laid him down on the bed, pressing my body against his to stop his attempts to get away and to keep that nasty left hook of his from hitting me again.

"Relax, Quinlin. I was just getting us to the bed in the fastest way possible."

"I can walk on my own," he said through gritted teeth as he continued to struggle and push against my chest.

"Yeah, I know. Has anyone ever told you you're dead sexy when you're mad?"

Quinlin made a noise of disbelief, but his struggles lessened, and the hands that had been shoving at my chest stopped pushing so hard to get free. He hadn't given in, but he wasn't exactly fighting anymore, either. Irritation was still in his eyes, but it was bleeding away as he became aware of how nicely our bodies fit together. There was also no way he could miss my rapidly hardening cock pressing into his groin. He eventually stilled, and I could feel his enjoyment of our position when he subtly shifted his hips around, grinding our cloth-covered erections together.

"You do know this works better when we're both naked, right?" Quinlin said with a suggestive smile and the subtle flexing of his hips.

I laughed and kissed him full on the mouth before pulling back to stare into his pale green eyes. "Yeah, but don't you want to savor the moment and be brought slowly to arousal?"

"Savoring can come later. I'm ready to go, and right now a fast and hard fuck sounds good to me," Quinlin said, wriggling his hips against mine in a way that let me know how much he wanted that hard, fast fuck.

"Just remember that I did try and do the gentlemanly thing."

Quinlin snorted and gave a lusty chuckle. "Whatever. I have condoms in my jacket pocket. Let me up so I can get them and get undressed, and we can get to do what we're both dying to do."

"Quinlin, you're taking all the romance out of it," I said as I stroked a finger down his cheek and over his lips. His tongue flicked over my finger, and he hummed his approval at the taste of my skin.

"There's no romance involved here, Ryzel. I want you. You want me. We both want to fuck. Plain and simple. Don't make this any more complicated than that."

I gave a put-upon sigh that I'm sure Quinlin recognized as false and rolled off him, pleased beyond belief by his statement of want. I'd had a lot of people say they wanted me, but it was somehow different coming from Quinlin. It was unusual enough that, once both my needs and his were taken care of, I was going to have to figure out why that was so.

Quinlin pushed himself up into a kneeling position and shrugged out of his sports jacket. He dug around in an interior pocket before dropping the jacket to the floor. He'd pulled out a strip of condoms and placed them on the bed beside his leg. I smiled broadly at seeing there was more than one. More than one condom meant more than one time rolling around the sheets with him. Quinlin was turning out to be even better than I'd hoped.

"I don't typically carry lube, so I'm hoping you have something on hand," Quinlin said as he began to unbutton his shirt.

"Yeah, I have some things I keep here," I said, watching as a narrow strip of pale skin was slowly being revealed, button by button.

"Should I be pissed that you apparently reserved a room here before stopping in the bar to even see if it was me? If I hadn't been the one you were looking for, would anyone have done?"

Well, shit. Talk about your trap-door questions. The only way to answer that was to ignore it and hope Quinlin didn't press the issue. "The hotel and bar are both mine. This suite is only for my use. One of the perks of being the big boss and financially comfortable."

Quinlin stopped undressing for several seconds and seemed to be staring at me before making a non-committal noise and continuing to undo his shirt. He was pulling the tails of the shirt from his pants when he stopped and gave me a patient look. I was struck once again at how expressive his eyes seemed to be when they really shouldn't have been. Where was that blank, glassy-eyed stare I'd seen in so many movies and TV shows? It'd be so easy to forget that Quinlin was blind.

"I said I wanted a hard, fast fuck to start off, but I didn't mean we'd just loosen our clothes and go at it. That's kind of crass, and even if this is a one-night stand, I do expect a little better than that. If I'm getting naked, so are you."

"How do you know I'm not getting undressed too?" I asked, interested to note that Quinlin had some strange standards. He'd do something as meaningless as a one-night stand, but he wanted the niceties of a date screw. Quinlin was one strange, fascinating guy.

"I don't hear any clothes coming off you. I can't see your body, so I'm going to want to feel it so I know what it's like. My sense of touch is very finely tuned."

My cock gave a hearty twitch at that information. My brain immediately jumped to all kinds of fantasies of what Quinlin might be able to do with a few simple touches. I was naked before Quinlin even finished taking off his shirt and popping the fly on his pants. He snickered at my eagerness, which made him look far too enticing, and I had to clench my fists to keep from grabbing him to me. Unholy fucking damn, but he was gorgeous. He shrugged his shirt off and dropped it over the edge of the bed. A harsh little growl left my throat when I finally saw what I'd guessed was hidden by his clothes.

Quinlin had a lovely, toned body. I was a little surprised that he had no freckles, given his hair color and fair skin, and wondered briefly if it really was his natural hair color. Not that it really mattered, but I'd always had a bit of a weakness for redheads. I was surprised when I saw that Quinlin sported tattoos on both biceps, something I never would have considered a blind person having. Especially someone who'd been born blind as Quinlin said he was. The tattoos seemed to be bands of some kind. Music, I think, and if I hadn't been so intent on getting between his legs, I'd have asked about them. He pushed his pants to his knees, his erection springing free and drawing my eye.

Pleasure made me smile broadly. I had me a genuine redhead in my bed tonight. My luck couldn't possibly have gotten any better. I rolled to my knees and called Quinlin's name softly before pressing my lips to his. He made a small noise of protest when I twisted us around and dropped us back to the bed, me on top of him.

"At least let me get my pants off, Ryzel," Quinlin said with humor in his voice as he wriggled around under me, exciting me more.

"They're sorta off. The important bits are free," I replied, attacking his throat with soft little kisses and nibbles while my hands were busy stroking over his chest and belly.

"But not off all the way," Quinlin said with a laugh, giving me a shove that caught me off guard and pushed me from him.

He sat up, pulled his pants the rest of the way off along with his socks, and turned back to me. He put a hand out to my chest, stopping me from drawing him back to me. I made a small noise of annoyance, but remained on my back as he seemed to want me. His hands traveled over my chest, his touch light and barely there. He glided his hands over my thighs, murmuring his approval at the firm muscles he found. My breath left me in a rush when he closed his hand over my cock. I'd known he was going to touch me, but I hadn't known how much I'd enjoy the feel of his fingers wrapped around me.

"Well, somebody is very excited," he snickered, giving my cock a few experimental strokes.

"I have you in my bed. Why wouldn't I be excited?" I asked, pushing my hips up into his hand.

Quinlin laughed and leaned down to blow warm breath across the head of my cock. Oh damn, but this was going to be good. Once I got him into bed, his pissed-off-at-the-world attitude seemed to melt away. Not that I didn't find his bitchiness oddly attractive. I did. But this teasing, playful side of him could be seriously addicting.

He slowly stroked my cock and nuzzled my balls, his tongue flicking out now and again to tease me. His hair brushed back and forth against my thighs, arousing me and making me want to grab his head and demand he start sucking my cock. I was hungry and horny, and the object of my desires was within my grasp. My normally excellent control was officially shot to shit.

Deciding that a little turn about was fair play, I gripped Quinlin's arm and pulled him away from my groin. Satisfaction curled through me at the noise of protest that earned me. I maneuvered him around until his cock was near my mouth and mine was near his. I swear my mouth was watering from just the idea of finally tasting him. A little tug on his hips had him moving his hips lower, his cock brushing my mouth. Quinlin settled on top of me, his lips brushing over my erection. I groped beside me for the lube, popping the cap and squeezing some over the crack of his ass.

"Hey!"

I snickered at the surprised sound and rubbed my fingers back and forth in the lube now slicking his hole. Quinlin groaned softly when I slipped the tip of my finger into him and wiggled it. I felt him groping on the bed beside me, and shortly, his sound of triumph when his hand landed on the tube of lube. I squirmed a little at the feel of cool lube sliding down between my ass cheeks and hummed my approval when Quinlin's mouth closed around my cock and his finger slipped into my ass. He crooked his finger, rubbing over the spot that made me see stars, and he sucked hard on my cock. Not to be outdone, I swallowed him down until my nose was pressed into his balls and pushed my finger into him as far as I could. His pleased moan vibrated along my dick, making me suck harder on his. I was so looking forward to sinking into his ass that I could barely concentrate on the delight of stretching him.

Hunger twisted in my guts the longer I played with Quinlin. I loved the feel of him working my cock, but I had two strikes against me. I was aroused and hungry, and having him under my hands like I currently did wasn't helping either situation. We had the entire night to play. I rationalized that I could always have him again later; taking my time once I'd appeased my hunger. The more I thought about it, the better the idea sounded to me. I let Quinlin's cock slip from my mouth and slowly withdrew my fingers from his ass. A smile bloomed across my face at his protest of the dual loss. I rolled us over so he was under me and regretfully pulled back from his talented mouth.

"Ryzel?"

"I'm hungry for you. We can do a slow, relaxing fuck later, but right now, I want," I said as I turned and settled myself over him, my spit-slicked cock brushing against his lubed hole.

Quinlin smiled at me. "Fine by me. I did say I wanted a hard, fast fuck, and I haven't changed my mind. Grab the condoms. I've lost track of them in the sheets."

I spotted the condoms and scooped them up, dumping them on the night table so they wouldn't be misplaced again. Quinlin's eyes remained fixed on my face while he stroked his cock. He was displaying himself beautifully for me; his leg bent and exposing his hole slicked with lube while he slowly jerked himself. I stopped in the middle of opening the condom wrapper to watch him play with his cock. Damn, he was gorgeous and sexy.

I had the condom rolled into place and was pressing my cock against his lubed hole between one breath and the next. Quinlin stiffened under me, and a protest left him as I slid smoothly into his body, pushing past some minor resistance. I groaned at how good it felt, my eyes drifting closed. He was deliciously tight on my cock.

"The hell?" Quinlin's angry voice and his hands pushing against my chest made me open my eyes to stare at him. Had I hurt him by moving so fast? I didn't think so. I'd made sure he was nicely lubed and stretched, even if it'd been a bit of a rushed job. I was very considerate of my meals, especially when I intended to sample one more than once.

"What's wrong?" I had to use every last bit of willpower I had to stay still when what I wanted to do was move and allow myself to feed. My brain wanted to shut down and revel in the sensation of being buried balls deep in his ass.

"Wrong? I have your dick up my ass. I propositioned you. To top or not is my choice, and I always top."

The one working brain cell I had left told me chuckling at the outrage in his voice and face that was in direct contrast to the subtle rocking of his hips against me wouldn't be a good idea at the moment. He looked so damn adorable when he was riled.

But this was a problem I hadn't foreseen. I always topped unless a demon higher up the food chain than me decided he wanted my ass. I wasn't opposed to getting stuffed by cock, and I even

actively sought that out sometimes. My problem was that playing the top or bottom was more a dominance/social thing among demons than just liking one position over another. I'd also never been a bottom for a human lover.

"Always? I do seem to recall you saying your friend could have your ass tonight," I said as my body finally overruled my brain and started to rock my hips against his ass; thrusting just enough to tease us both with the pleasure. I shifted slightly and smirked when his breath caught as my cock rubbed over his prostate.

"I... that... he... oh, fuck, do that again," Quinlin demanded as his body ignored what his brain was trying to say. I gave my hips even more of a twist, putting more pressure on his sweet spot.

I grinned at him and started a hard, fast rhythm of thrusts. His hands came up to grip my biceps in a surprisingly strong hold. His legs tangled around mine, and a fierce look passed over his face. My hair fell around us like a curtain, and he startled me when he grabbed a fistful of hair and jerked my face down until our noses brushed. Intensity was in his eyes.

"Talk. Later. Fuck. Now," he ground out, kissing me hard before releasing his hold on my hair and letting his body take what he needed.

Quinlin's fair skin flushed a delicate pink, and he panted and gasped with every thrust. His eyes took on a far-away look, and I felt energy building in him. I dropped the mask of humanity I wore, a low growl of pleasure leaving me as I opened myself up and started to drink from Quinlin.

Energy poured into me, making me gasp in surprise. I hadn't expected so much so fast from him. Quinlin moaned under me and reached for his cock, jerking himself in time with my thrusts. Pressure built in my belly, and I was startled by the urge to mark the pale skin of his throat, warning all other demons off from what was mine. Quinlin's hips snapped up to meet mine, and his body tensed for a heartbeat before his orgasm stormed through him.

My head spun from the surge of energy and the erotic sight of Quinlin finding release. His cock spurting seed across his belly, and his ass clenched down on me almost painfully tight. He gasped and thrashed under me, grunts of pleasure coming from his throat in a continuous stream. His body shuddered, arching up against mine. I felt his short nails break the skin on my arm, and a harsh sound of deep satisfaction left his throat.

The small pain in my arm triggered my orgasm, and I growled deep in my throat as pleasure washed through me. I stopped feeding from him as my cock spurting, the combined pleasure too much for me to handle all at once.

Quinlin collapsed bonelessly to the bed, panting hard, sweat making his hair stick to his forehead. I leaned down and kissed him gently on the lips. I could barely wait to try a long, slow screw with him. One where I didn't have to divide my attention between feeding and sex.

"You are amazing," I said, nuzzling into his hair. I wasn't surprised that I wanted him again after just orgasming. If I was of a mind to, I could quite literally sex a partner to death. I didn't want to kill Quinlin, but I definitely wanted to have him again.

"You're pretty damn good, too," Quinlin said in a rough voice that sounded exhausted. I wondered if I'd taken too much from him at once, but dismissed that idea since he was conscious and talking. If I'd over-indulged, he'd have been out like a light.

I reluctantly slid from his body, earning a sound that might have been regret from Quinlin. I removed the condom, disposing of it in the garbage, and snagged several tissues to wipe his seed from his belly. Somehow, I didn't think he'd appreciate my licking him clean. Possibly once we got to know one another better, but not as something to be done after our first time having sex. He let me clean him, and I swiped a sneak taste of him from the finger I'd dragged through his seed during my wiping up. I barely managed to stifle the moan of pleasure at having the flavor of him in my mouth. Quinlin seemed to push all my buttons, and at the moment I was more than happy to let him do so. I'd figure out why later.

Chapter 4

I woke from a light doze to the sounds and feel of a strange room and bed. There was also the very pleasant warmth of a person snuggled against my back. My sleep-hazed brain took a few precious moments to wake up and process where I was. My bladder also decided that now was an excellent time to remind me that I'd had several beers a number of hours ago. I was torn between wanting to close my eyes and go back to sleep, oddly secure in Ryzel's arms, and needing to get up and take care of certain issues.

As in most decisions of this kind, my bladder won the argument. Now my only problem was that I had absolutely no idea where the bathroom was, and I refused to bang around the room searching for it.

Rolling away from the warmth at my back, I sat up and looked down at Ryzel. Doing so reminded me that I'd seen something very, very weird when we had sex. I'm not even sure what I saw. I'd been a little preoccupied with how damn good he made me feel, even if I'd been the one playing the bottom. That thought made me scowl at him and punch him hard in the arm for surprising me like he did.

I never saw him move.

One second, I was scowling down at him and feeling all pissy, and the next, I was face first on the bed with a grip like iron on the back of my neck, my face shoved into the mattress. Harsh words in an unfamiliar language, spoken in a voice at least an octave lower than Ryzel's, sounded in my ear.

A little burst of panic at the rough tone made my guts clench, and I started to struggle against his hold, cursing him and demanding he let me go. A mild tingling sensation spread across my shoulders turning to an icy heat that whipped through my veins. I sucked in a sharp breath at the unfamiliar feel and was surprised when Ryzel suddenly freed me with a little hiss. It was several seconds before he spoke.

"Fuck, I'm sorry, Quinlin. I didn't mean... I'm not used to a lover punching me for no apparent reason, especially when I'm dead asleep."

I lay where I was, waiting for my heart to stop jumping around in my chest. I hadn't even gotten the barest hint that Ryzel was moving. That'd never happened before. I always saw tiny little fluxes in people's auras before they committed themselves to a move. Then again, I'd never seen anyone's aura do what Ryzel's had done while we had sex.

His hands moved my hair away from my neck, I assumed to check if he'd hurt me. His fingers stilled, and I knew he was staring at the tattoos on either side of my spine at the join of my neck

and shoulder. People always stared at my tattoos, like they never expected a blind person to have any. Unlike every other lover who'd seen them, Ryzel didn't touch them. Instead, he seemed to be taking great pains *not* to touch them, circling his fingers around the tattoos.

Curiouser and curiouser.

"Quinlin, you do know you have an Eye Of Ra and an Eye Of Thoth on your back, right?"

I pushed myself up, sat back on my knees, and turned my head to look at Ryzel. The comment was odd, and his aura flickered erratically. I frowned as I tried to think of why my tattoos would bother him. Some people didn't like tattoos, but that didn't seem quite the case with Ryzel. He hadn't said anything when he'd seen the music bands around my biceps. Frankly, I was a little surprised he knew what the Eyes were. Rarely did somebody correctly identify them, and Ryzel didn't seem like the type of person who'd know something as obscure as the name of an ancient hieroglyph.

"Quinlin? Why do you have the Eyes on your back?"

"Can you think of anything better for a blind guy to get inked?" Ryzel was silent and seemed to be studying me. When he didn't seem inclined to answer me, I surprised myself by offering a little more information.

"My gran told me I'd need them. She took me to a shop when I turned thirteen and had them done. She said it would protect me when she couldn't."

"At thirteen? Isn't that illegal or something? Did you even want that permanently etched on your skin?"

"Yeah, I was underage, but if my gran said I needed them, then I needed them. I think the shop owner owed Gran for some favor or something. She didn't even bat an eye at doing it. My gran was a... special woman. Why the sudden interest in my tats?"

"I was surprised to see them, that's all."

I grunted at him. I wasn't buying that load of horse shit. Something about the tattoos bothered Ryzel. Maybe bothered wasn't the right word. He seemed a little unnerved, but I didn't think I'd get a straight answer from him. I let the matter of his reaction drop for now. I could always corner him about it another time.

"Ryzel, do you recall my saying that I wanted to be warned about sudden moves, since I can't see what you're doing?"

"Yeah." Wariness was in his voice over my sudden topic change.

"Surprise butt sex counts as a sudden move."

"How much of a surprise could it be when the whole point of you coming to this room with me was for sex? You enjoyed yourself. I know you did."

"That's not the point. One moment I'm expecting you to hand me a condom or put one on me so I can fuck you, and the next thing I know, I've got your hard cock up my ass. I didn't even get the chance to protest. One stroke, and you were balls deep." I was trying for pissed off, but to my ears I sounded a little too well pleased for my liking. I scowled at Ryzel and crossed my arms over my chest.

Ryzel gave a frustrated-sounding sigh. "I didn't hurt you. I used a good deal of lube when I stretched you. You were moaning and squirming the whole time I fingered you. You were getting off on my playing with your ass. What the hell else was I supposed to think?"

He had a point there. I suppose my panting and groaning and demanding he fuck me once his dick was inside me could have been taken as "Yes, I'll be the bottom for you." I did like the feel of Ryzel's fingers working my ass. He seemed to know exactly how to move his fingers inside me and precisely how to work his lips and tongue to blow my mind. Ryzel's cock pumping my ass felt better than anything I'd had in longer than I cared to think about.

"Fine. Maybe I was sending you the wrong message about what position I'd take when you were playing with my ass, but what you were doing felt so damn good." Oh shit, I hadn't meant to say that out loud. Great, now he'd think he could always top. What the fuck was wrong with me?

"Really now?" Ryzel asked, with way too much satisfaction in his voice.

He moved faster than I expected him to and had me flat on my back in a heartbeat. His lips covered mine in a heady kiss that went straight to my groin. Unfortunately, I was also sharply reminded that the main reason I'd woken up was to use the bathroom. I shoved against his chest, smirking a little when he gave a frustrated growl.

"I need to use the bathroom, and I don't know where it is. Show me," I demanded. I barely held back a laugh at the way his aura flared with annoyance at being denied what he wanted.

"Now?" Disbelief was plain in Ryzel's voice.

"Yeah, now. It's why I woke up. Bathroom first, and then maybe we can continue this little session after."

"Maybe continue? Oh no, Quinlin, we will be continuing this. I have you for the entire night, and we're nowhere near finished. Once wasn't enough."

I smiled. I didn't think once was enough, either. Ryzel made my body hum with need unlike anyone I'd been with before. Oddly enough, I was even willing to bottom for him again, at least one more time, just to feel the intense pleasure of having his cock stuffed up my ass. Naturally, I wasn't about to let him in on that tiny detail. If he wanted to top me again, he was going to have to work for it.

"Bathroom. Now. This isn't negotiable, Ryzel. And don't carry me," I hastily added when I felt his arms slip around me. "I can walk on my own, and it really pissed me off when you did it the first time. I'm blind, not crippled, and you take away some of my dignity when you treat me as anything less than capable." I needed to regain the upper hand with Ryzel. Something told me that if I gave him so much as an inch, he'd take a mile.

"I'm sorry, Quinlin. I didn't mean... I just..." Ryzel sighed. "I won't do it again."

His aura shrank upon itself, a sure sign that he was feeling guilty about something. Yeah, I was laying it on a little thick, but there was a grain of truth in what I said. I needed to nip these coddling tendencies from Ryzel in the bud if I was going to have any kind of equal relationship with him.

I'd actually stood up beside the bed and put my hand on Ryzel's arm when my brain caught up with itself. How in god's name did I go from agreeing to have a one-night stand to thinking about a relationship with Ryzel?

I let Ryzel lead me to the bathroom, absently noting the path and counting my steps so I could find it again on my own. Ryzel showed me the locations of the toilet, sink, and shower, and said he'd wait outside for me to finish up. My thoughts jumbled together as I tried to figure out when I'd apparently decided I wanted to see Ryzel on a regular basis. I desperately needed a few minutes alone to think. I never made snap decisions about who I was dating. What kind of weird-ass effect was Ryzel having on me?

After taking care of my pressing need to use the toilet, I turned toward where Ryzel waited on the other side of the open door. "I'm taking a shower."

"A shower? At... three-eighteen in the morning?"

"I have sweat, lube, and a little dried come on me. I feel disgusting. I can barely believe I managed to fall asleep without washing up. I'm not going to be comfortable until I get clean."

I didn't wait for Ryzel's answer before turning in the direction he'd told me the shower was. I fumbled a little for the taps, but eventually got the water running and adjusted the temperature. No sound came from Ryzel, and I assumed he'd gone back to bed when he saw me start the shower. I damn near jumped out of my skin when I felt him press his naked body against mine. How the hell could he move so silently? I always heard people walking around.

"I'll join you. Wouldn't want you to slip and fall because you're unfamiliar with where things are."

My mouth opened to protest, and snapped closed just as fast when I realized I couldn't really say no. Not unless I wanted to explain that I wanted some time alone to try and figure out why I seemed to have decided to start a relationship with him. Provided, of course, that he was

interested in having a relationship. My eyebrows drew down in a frown at the idea that Ryzel might not want anything more from me than a one-night stand.

"The shower is plenty big enough for two grown men. I had it designed that way. Lighten up. If you stop frowning, I'll help you wash up."

I didn't answer him, stepping into the shower and keeping my back to him. I felt air currents swirl around me and the soft click of the shower door closing. Ryzel reached around me, and I heard a cap pop open, followed by the smell of citrus. I felt his lips brush my ear before he spoke.

"This is a body wash, citrus something or other, and I'm supposed to use a puff ball thing to lather it up. One of my female employees insists that it's great for the skin, and you have beautiful skin, Quinlin."

A blush heated my cheeks. He was extravagant with compliments, even if they weren't true. Women had beautiful skin. Or men like Haskell had beautiful skin. Ordinary guys like me didn't. Ryzel probably had beautiful skin. The little I'd felt of it certainly led me to believe that. I'd heard the envy in Haskell's voice when he'd described Ryzel to me, and Haskell was almost never envious of another person's looks. He didn't have to be.

"You don't need to work the flattery. You already got me into bed with you. I know what I look like, and I look pretty damn ordinary."

Ryzel dropped the bottle he was holding and spun me around. Soap-slick hands cupped my chin, and I felt wet strands of Ryzel's hair slap my skin and cling to my hips. His aura flared bright, and I could almost feel disbelief leaking off him. His nose was nearly touching mine, and I found myself curling my hands over his hips, pulling him subtly closer to me. We both exhaled softly when our cocks rubbed lightly against one another. I suddenly wanted to kiss him so badly that the breath stuttered in my chest.

I wanted to press my lips to his and devour him. I wanted to shove him back against the wall of the shower, jerk his leg up, and push my cock inside him as far as I could. I wanted to watch his aura flare bright and pulse as I fucked him hard in the shower until both of us came and ended up on the shower floor because our legs couldn't hold us up anymore. I'd never had to struggle so hard against my desire. What kind of magic did Ryzel have that made me lose all rational thought around him? Christ, if he could bottle it, he'd be richer than god.

"Whoever told you that you were ordinary, lied. They were probably jealous of how beautiful you are. You're easily the most gorgeous creature I've ever seen, and let me tell you, Quinlin, I've seen some specimens of Heavenly beauty. They pale beside you." Honesty rang in his voice, and his aura glowed with the truth of what he believed.

Okay, so I still liked the flattery even if I knew it wasn't true. Who doesn't like hearing that their partner finds them attractive? His words were a little over the top, but I was willing to let him say what he wanted when it made me feel good inside. Ryzel moved his head the fraction of an inch

needed to bring our lips together, and we both sighed into the kiss. His hands moved down my body as he gently steered me around until I felt the cool tile of the shower stall pressing against my back.

"I can't seem to get enough of you. Would you be opposed to a little shower sex?" Ryzel asked in a husky voice when he pulled slightly away from our kiss.

Was he fucking serious? Shower sex with a gorgeous guy who'd already given me one of the best orgasms of my life? The only wrench in the idea I could see was that neither one of us had brought condoms into the bathroom. And screwing around with condoms in the shower was never an easy thing. God, some days I hated being so damn responsible.

"No, but neither one of us brought condoms, and I don't do sex without them, Ryzel."

Ryzel laughed softly and gave me a fast, hot kiss, slipping his tongue quickly in and out of my mouth. "Sex doesn't always have to involve sticking your dick into someone."

I opened my mouth to question what he meant, only to have my breath leave me in a rush when he took both our cocks in his still soapy hand, sliding them together slowly. He took advantage of my open mouth, planting a kiss on me that made me very grateful to have the solid wall of the shower stall at my back. Damn, but Ryzel was an amazing kisser.

His free hand glided soap slick over my body, stopping to pluck my nipples before moving on to send shivers down my spine when he cupped my balls. His tongue imitated the intimate act we'd done earlier with a lewdness I found incredibly arousing.

I moaned into his mouth and slid my hands up his back, my fingers tangling in the wet silk of his hair. I forced my eyes to stay open so I could watch his aura as it pulsed and shifted. The water spraying on his back threw bright sparkles of white light around the edge of his aura. I'd never seen anything so beautiful.

Even though I'd just chewed him out for putting me in the position of bottom, I didn't make a single sound of protest when his hand glided over my ass cheek and dipped into the crack to tease against my hole. I think I groaned encouragement. Ryzel moved his fist a little faster over our cocks, changing the rhythm of the tongue thrusts in my mouth to match. Tension started to curl in my belly from the pleasure he was giving me.

When he slipped a finger inside me, my back arched, and I fisted my hands in his hair. He barely gave me time to adjust to the sensation of one finger before he was pushing two into me and stroking me in exactly the way that made me see stars.

Just when I'd started to breathe heavily through my nose from the pleasure, he pulled his fingers free from my body. I jerked my head back from the kiss, a needy moan leaving me. God damn, but everything he did to me felt fantastic, and I didn't want him to stop. I heard something that sounded suspiciously like a growl and watched with wide eyes as his aura shifted, just as it had before.

From near his forehead, two streamers of his aura as thick as my forearm twisted away from his head before curling back to point toward me. The black tinge I'd noticed before expanded out from his center, leaving only the outer edges of aura colored with lust. He leaned into me, and I felt incredible heat and could smell something that was intoxicating and made my desire go through the roof. My balls pulled tight, and I panted harshly, breathing in his scent. From just one hot kiss, a little ass play, and his hand pressing our dicks together, Ryzel had me teetering on the edge of release.

"Come for me, Quinlin," Ryzel said in a voice that was deeper and rougher than his normal tone.

As if obeying his command, orgasm rushed through me. I yelled, my voice bouncing off the tiled shower stall, and arched against him, my cock spurting in his fist. He groaned and licked a long line from my collarbone to my jaw, breathing my name in the deep voice he now had that sounded like pure sin. His cock twitched against mine, and ribbons of come splattered on my belly and chest.

I shivered at the erotic feel and shoved my hands through his hair, intending to yank his mouth to mine for another of his brain-drugging kisses. I don't know who was more surprised when I encountered something silky smooth and hard where his aura had shifted around his head earlier. Ryzel froze against me.

My hands glided over gentle ridges, tracing the length of what my fingers were insisting were horns and what my brain was denying could be the truth. People didn't suddenly sprout horns, no matter what the situation. My fingers followed the curve of the horns from where they started just into his hairline, all the way down to the wickedly sharp tips. A deep shudder of pleasure traveled over Ryzel, and his fingers tightened on my hip. I hissed at the sharp sting of something that sure as shit didn't feel like regular fingernails. They came damn close to breaking my skin and felt an awful lot like talons.

My thoughts bounced around my head. Horns, claws, incredible body heat, deep, gravelly voice, and a black aura added up to something I would've sworn was not possible. My gran's cryptic words when she'd insisted on me getting the Eyes tattooed on my back flashed through my mind.

"You're going to get your very own prince one day, Quinlin. He's not evil, but he does do bad things because that's what he is. I won't be around anymore when you find him, so I'm doing what I can now to level the playing field between you two. The Eyes will help protect you, but you'll still need to stay on your toes with that boy. He won't intentionally hurt you, but I can't say the same for those around him. He's the Devil's own, and you'd best never forget that, no matter how much you love each other."

At the time, I'd had no idea what Gran had been talking about. I'd been thrown off-balance, not only by the tattooing she insisted I get, but by the fact that my sweet little Gran knew I liked boys and not girls. In my thirteen-year-old mind, I'd been hiding that fact quite nicely. I probably should have known better, since the woman I was trying to hide it from was a Seer.

Gran never came right out and said whatever it was she saw in her visions. I think she liked playing the all-seeing mystic, but she'd never been wrong as far as I knew. With Gran's words from years ago and what my senses told me now about Ryzel... I'd just officially reached my what-the-fuck quotient for the day. No, make that the whole year.

Tension of a very different kind rushed through me. My hands dropped to cover Ryzel's on my hips, and my heart hammered in my chest. I had no idea how to get out of the hotel room without tripping over god knows what. My ability to see auras didn't do dick for me when it came to seeing ordinary objects that might be in my way.

Considering what I believed Ryzel was, it probably wouldn't matter if I could see my way clear to the door. He was likely stronger and faster than I could ever hope to be. I guess my life lesson here was never to go to bed with a stranger I'd first met in a dark alley assaulting somebody. That probably should have been a given, but I'd let my cock do the talking for me, even though I knew that to be the dumbest part of my body.

I swallowed hard and hoped like hell he couldn't smell the beginnings of my fear. Nothing to do now but try and bull my way out of this and believe that the Eyes would give me some kind of protection. If not, I was dead meat.

"So, are you going to explain how you managed to grow a most impressive set of horns during sex, or do I make up my own wild story about falling into bed with the Prince Of Darkness?" I asked, in a voice I was proud didn't shake.

Chapter 5

"So, are you going to explain how you managed to grow a most impressive set of horns during sex, or do I make up my own wild story about falling into bed with the Prince Of Darkness?" Quinlin asked with the tiniest of cracks in his voice.

Shit.

The last thing I expected was for Quinlin to have his hands anywhere near my head when I let my mask drop. The idea had never even occurred to me. Major slip up on my part there. My only excuse was that it'd been so long since I needed to keep track of where a human was putting his hands during feeding, I hadn't thought to pay attention. Never mind that it was sex and not feeding, and I hadn't actually had sex with a human in several years, fellow demons being my choice of partner. Either way, I'd still fucked up big time.

I could hear the tension in Quinlin's voice and smell the beginnings of fear from him. I could feel him drawing away from me physically, and those things caused something to twist in my chest. With just some random guy, I'd have used demon wiles on him to make him forget what he'd just discovered. With Quinlin having the protection of the Eyes, I was pretty sure they'd allow him to "see" the truth no matter what I did, now that he'd seen my true form.

Fuck. Me.

"How about we get out of the shower and I explain as much as I can?" I suggested, settling my mask of humanity back in place and raising a hand to touch his face.

Quinlin didn't flinch, but his body stiffened before I even touched him. I wasn't sure how he knew I was going to touch him, but I let my hand drop without making contact and stepped back, although it was the last thing I wanted to do. To have Quinlin shy away from my touch was damn near painful, and I had to work hard to strangle the whimper that wanted to leave me. The need for physical contact with him was totally unexpected, as was the surprisingly strong urge to mark him as mine.

A frown drew my brows together. I shouldn't feel the need to touch Quinlin like I did, and I shouldn't be upset that he didn't want my touch or refused to touch me. My reaction was seven kinds of weird. Something niggled at the back of my mind, but refused to come forward and enlighten me. I shrugged my shoulders. Whatever it was would come to me when it was ready. I had to work some damage control here.

We stepped from the shower, and I passed Quinlin a towel, angling my hand so that he'd end up touching me when he took the towel. An unhappy sound left my throat when he turned his hand awkwardly to avoid the barest brush of my skin and his. I consoled myself with the knowledge

that he'd have to take my arm when we left the bathroom. Tossing the damp towel to the floor, I reached for Quinlin's hand.

"I can make my way from here to the bedroom by myself just fine," Quinlin said in a voice that sounded an awful lot like the one I'd first heard from him when he'd jabbed me in the chest with his cane. The slight actually hurt. What the fuck?

I was going to lead him to the couch in the living room for this little talk, but if he wanted to have the discussion in the bedroom, who was I to say no? I did most of my best work in the bedroom. He seemed to be holding it together pretty damn good. Maybe he wasn't as freaked out as I thought he was. One look into his eyes cured me of that idea. He was putting on a brave face, but I knew fear and mistrust when I saw it.

I stepped back and let Quinlin pass me, ready to grab him if he happened to walk into a wall or anything. He surprised me by walking straight to the bedroom without a problem, only holding his hands out from his body a little, to feel for walls I assumed. He sat on the bed and immediately groped for his clothes on the floor. I knelt and picked up his shirt, placing it in his hands.

"I can find my own stuff, thank you very much," Quinlin gritted out through clenched teeth.

If I hadn't seen his warm humor when we'd first hit the bed, I'd have thought he was nothing but piss and vinegar. It struck me that Quinlin used a bitchy attitude to keep people at arm's length. I wondered briefly why he felt the need to do that. It was too late, though. I'd already seen the guy underneath the nasty attitude, and I liked him. A lot. Maybe more than I should, considering I'd only fed from him once.

And the sex. Couldn't forget the sex. Not that it'd be fucking likely that I could forget it. I'd enjoyed myself more than I thought possible. I didn't want to scare Quinlin any more than I already had, so I pulled up a chair to face him. I wasn't sure if Quinlin would realize that I'd not only put a little distance between us, but was now sitting between him and the only exit from the room. His mouth flattened into a thin line. Oh yeah, he'd somehow noticed, and as afraid as he was of what he thought I was, my cutting off his exit pissed him off and pushed some of his fear away. I smiled, pleased with myself. He was gorgeous when he was angry.

"Talk. Don't try and bullshit me, either. I can tell when somebody lies to me." Polar ice was in his voice.

He was mad and scared, and it upset me to no end that I'd been the one to put that fear in him. But my eyebrow rose at that last statement. How could he tell a lie from truth if he couldn't see body language? More specifically, how in the seven Hells did he think he'd be able to tell a lie from me when it was something I excelled at as a demon? I had some questions of my own for Quinlin, and I figured share and share alike was going to be the order of the day here.

"How can you tell if you're being lied to? Come to think of it, how is it, exactly, that you seem to be able to see when you say you're blind?"

Quinlin's jaw set, and a mulish look passed over his face. I couldn't help but think of how cute he looked when he was riled and nearly naked. He sat on the bed in just a shirt that clung to him in all the right places, teasing and tantalizing me. His hair was still damp from the shower, and the ends dripped water onto his shirt, making wet trails over his chest and turning the fabric transparent. I stared in fascination as his nipples hardened from the contact with the cool material and had to reel myself in to keep from simply jumping him. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that Quinlin would *not* be interested in sex with me right now. Quinlin wasn't trying to be sexy and enticing. He just was. That made him all the more tempting.

Some days it was damn hard being an incubus.

"I asked you first," Quinlin said, folding his arms across his chest.

I rolled my eyes and gave a soft snort. *Real mature there, Quinlin.* At least some of his fear seemed to be ebbing when I did nothing more than sit in my seat. I still wasn't sure why that sent relief through me so strongly. Yeah, Quinlin was a great meal, and better in bed than I'd had from a human or demon in a long time, but that didn't explain where these feelings were coming from.

"What is it you think you know?"

"Don't answer me with a question, Ryzel. I think the least I deserve is a little honesty."

He just wasn't going to be swayed from what he wanted to know. I guess if I were in his position, I'd want to know what the fuck was going on, too. A soft sigh left me. Time to 'fess up. This could go a few different ways, and most of them weren't positive.

I was hoping that, because he did have a Gift, he'd be able to listen to what I had to say and avoid the hysterics of regular humans when they came face to face with something they thought wasn't real. The chances of us continuing to have a relationship would be iffy, but at least there'd be a chance.

"I'm waiting, Ryzel -- if that is, indeed, your name," Quinlin said with impatience in his voice.

"Ryzel is my name. Not my full name, but you probably understand why I won't be telling you that, don't you?"

Quinlin grunted and stared at me with a surprisingly hard look in his green eyes. "If you are what I think you are, then yes, I do know why you won't tell me your full name. Or, more accurately, your True Name."

Oh yeah, Quinlin had a bang-on right idea of what I was if he was referring to my True Name. Not like the horns weren't a dead giveaway, but still. He deserved a nod of respect for not running screaming from the room the second he'd realized that. Not that I would've let him leave.

"I'm a demon. An incubus, to be exact." I heard Quinlin mutter something that sounded like "figures," followed by choice swear words, but I ignored it. "I'm not going to hurt you. Not all demons are out to cause pain and suffering. Incubi and succubae are two of the sub-breeds that generally don't try to hurt the people we come into contact with. Not to say we won't cause pain or kill. Don't get me wrong, here. We will do both things and not feel all broken up over it. We're just more reluctant to do that at the drop of a hat."

"Why? You're a demon, not an angel," Quinlin said, sounding a little belligerent.

I laughed softly. Humans had some fucked up ideas of angels and demons. Goes to show you what happened when only one side writes a book about it. "Angels aren't all pureness and light. There are sub-breeds of them, too, and not all of them are nice. Humans keep forgetting that there's a whole army of the fuckers just waiting to go to war on God's command, and they ain't armed with harps and halos. Some of the meanest beings I've come across have been angels wandering the Earth, spoiling for a fight out of sheer boredom."

Quinlin looked skeptical, but at least he was still talking and listening to me. "So why don't you want to hurt people you come into contact with?"

I wanted to squirm a little in my seat at that question. I'd started off wanting Quinlin as just a meal, but once I got him into bed and tasted him, I wanted more. I wanted the pleasure of sex with him, and when I got that, I realized I wanted both things from him on a continuing basis. He was able to completely feed my hunger without me draining him dry, and he gave me more sexual pleasure than I ever expected to find with a human. Saying that the majority of incubi and succubae didn't like to rough up their potential meals because it was seen as bad manners would probably go over like a lead balloon with Quinlin.

"I asked you a perfectly reasonable question, Ryzel." The chill was back in Quinlin's voice.

"How much do you know about incubi, Quinlin?" I hedged.

If Quinlin wasn't freaking out, that meant he had to have some kind of knowledge about creatures that most humans thought of as myth. He didn't even bat an eye at my mention of angels walking the world. Quinlin was intriguing on more than a sexual level. Yeah, he had a Gift, but even those humans weren't generally so accepting of the idea of demons and angels, especially in the modern times we lived in.

"Typical stuff. You're demons. Not too high in the hierarchy, but not bottom feeders, either. You have sex with humans to stay alive, although I'm not sure how that works. I seem to recall something about you needing to get the raw materials to reproduce from humans and that, as a rule, incubi only have sex with females, and succubae only have sex with males." Quinlin frowned. "Which, if that's the case, doesn't make any sense if you had sex with me, since we're both guys. So, either you're not what you say you are, or general knowledge is wrong. Which one is true, Ryzel?"

Smart man to ask me a direct question. Otherwise, I'd have skirted around the truth as much as possible. I really wanted to find out more about Quinlin and his rather unusual knowledge.

"Some of what you said is true. We're not upper-level demons, but we're not to be taken lightly, either. We feed off the sexual energy in humans at the point of orgasm, but that's not sex for us. Feeding and sex are two different things, and we usually don't do them at the same time. We feed to stay alive. Sex is about pleasure, for us and whoever we're with. We can have half-breed children with humans, but to create another... sex demon, we breed with each other. How else would you get a true demon?"

"And the having sex with somebody of the same sex as you?" The light of interest was in his eyes now. He wanted to learn more, and the initial fear I'd seen and smelled was easing off. Good. That boosted my chances with him.

"Some of us are picky about the sex of our meals. Or even who we find our pleasure with. I never saw the point in that. A meal is a meal. For the sex part, as long as everybody had a good time, it's all good and it doesn't matter to me if my partner is male or female."

Anger flared bright in Quinlin's green eyes, and I groaned inwardly. Why did my normally suave demon tongue go on vacation the moment I started talking to Quinlin? And I'd been doing so well, too. But that last bit sounded like I'd just told him he was nothing more than a meal. Yeah, it started out that way, but that's not how it felt now. I still didn't know why.

"I see," Quinlin said in a frosty tone. "Shall I assume that you got what you needed from me, then? I should have suspected something was up with all that ridiculous flattery you heaped on me. I'm leaving."

I felt that twisting pain in my chest again. Quinlin got as far as bending down to find his pants on the floor when I moved. I couldn't let him leave. Not yet. We had a deal of sorts. I bowled him over so that he fell onto his back on the bed with me on top of him. My hips settled into his like they were made for each other. Arousal rushed through me, and instinct had me kissing his face and throat like I intended to drown him in pleasure. He struggled under me, cursing a blue streak, his fists and knees coming close to damaging some rather dear parts of my body. I managed to grab his wrists and pinned them to the bed above his head. I choked back a groan when his struggles aroused me further.

"We have a deal, Quinlin. You. In my bed. For the night. It's still night," I said in a low voice. Yeah, that was dirty pool, but I am a demon.

Quinlin jerked against my hold for several seconds until he realized he wasn't having any effect at all. He made a frustrated noise in his throat. His body went lax under me, and he turned his head to the side, closing his eyes.

"Fine. You know, I almost believed you. Your aura looked like you were telling me nothing but the truth. You really are a good liar, Ryzel. I've never been fooled before. Congratulations. Our deal officially ends when the sun rises. I know a demon can't go back on a deal made in good

faith, so don't even try and weasel your way around that. Eat or feed or whatever it is you need to do while you can, because as soon as the first sliver of sun touches the sky, I'm out of here even if I have to grope my way to the door."

What? Believed me? About what? That I found him desirable? That I'd enjoyed myself more with him than any human or demon I'd been with in longer than he'd been alive? That I wouldn't hurt him? My aura? What the fuck? It was Quinlin's turn for a little sharing.

"I said I wouldn't hurt you, and I mean that. What the hell did you mean by my aura?"

"I see auras. Always have. I can tell a lot about a person from that because auras don't lie. As to not hurting me, I guess that depends on what you call being hurt. Somehow, I doubt I'll be able to tell the difference you say there is between feeding and sex. It'll be sex to me. I can feel your cock, and you don't get a hard on like that if all you want to do is discuss theological points of demonology. You're stronger and faster than me. I could struggle as hard as I want against you and do myself harm, and you'll still fuck me. Or I lay here and let you do whatever you want or need and hopefully I walk away with very few injuries. Not really a choice, Ryzel."

I blinked. I wasn't... I didn't... awww, shit. Quinlin short-circuited all my brain cells. That's my only excuse. When I thought of how it probably looked from his point of view when I'd jumped him, the achy feeling settled back in my chest. No wonder he thought I'd take what I wanted regardless of how he felt about it. I let go of his wrists and rolled off him to lie beside him on my back. I was totally screwing this up, and I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out why it was so important to me *not* to fuck this up.

"I don't force my meals or hurt them. I find fear and pain leaves a nasty aftertaste, and I don't enjoy that flavor. I have never in all my life forced a human into sex. Why would I? It's not like finding somebody else would be hard." I snapped my mouth shut before I could dig an even deeper hole to fall into. Thankfully, Quinlin didn't latch onto that last bit of poorly chosen wording of mine.

"But you have forced something into sex." Quinlin said it like a statement. I could almost see him making the mental leap that if I'd forced sex even once before, I'd do it again with him. I wasn't sure if my explanation would make things clear or make him even more wary of me.

"Other demons lower on the totem pole than me. Sex is a way of showing power between demons, as well as a bargaining tool and something we do for fun. Demons can demand sex from those with lower status than them. The higher-level demon always tops. Sometimes, you need to remind lower-level demons of their position when they try and step on you. Jockeying for power is a major thing for us. It's what we do."

Quinlin rolled his head toward me and opened his eyes. "Calling your need to top a cultural thing is lame, and I, quite frankly, expected better lies from a demon."

"No lie, Quinlin. I've had my ass plowed when it wasn't what I wanted. Mostly when I was still young and stupid and much too full of myself. I've also specifically gone looking to get my ass

stuffed by demon cock, but I always chose a higher-level demon than myself in those instances. I've never had a human top me. It honestly never even occurred to me."

Quinlin was silent for a long time. I was finding it pathetically encouraging that he hadn't gotten up and tried to leave again. He stared at me intently, his eyes taking on a gem-bright glitter. I wondered what he was seeing and barely managed to keep from asking. He was thinking something through; I could almost see the wheels turning in his head.

"I'm sure you're not telling me everything, but I suppose until I figure out the exact right questions to ask, I'm not going to get the entire story. That's fine. After this night, we won't see each other again, so I guess it doesn't really matter. I really don't think I could have sex with you again, Ryzel. Not that what we did wasn't good, but... well... I'm just a little fucking freaked out that I had sex with a demon. I know that a night of sex was more or less our deal, and if you push the issue, I'll do it, if only to make sure I don't break the deal and suffer whatever consequences you dream up."

I stared at Quinlin in surprise. He must have had one of the most bizarre upbringings ever. He knew about demons and angels better than the average person. He used a Gift like it was commonplace. He understood the basics of deals with demons, and I'm guessing he even knew about the power of True Names, since he'd mentioned it in passing. Every time Quinlin opened his mouth, he made himself more fascinating to me. This was starting to weird even me out a little.

"You're taking this awfully calmly. Is there anything else you should maybe tell me besides the fact that you have a Gift? Humans don't usually react well to the idea of having a conversation with a demon, never mind the news they've had sex with one. Then there's the Eyes tattooed on your back. I get the feeling that I'm not getting the full story from you, either."

"My gran was a Seer. She told me I'd meet you and that I'd need the Eyes to even the playing field between us and give me a little extra protection. I've been around lots of freaky shit, so finally seeing a demon, in a manner of speaking, doesn't make me run around in a circle screaming. I can deal," Quinlin said in an off-hand tone, while his eyes slid away to focus on something other than me.

I pushed myself up onto my elbows and looked at Quinlin. I was intrigued that his gran was a Seer and said we'd meet. I wondered what else she'd said about us. I knew Quinlin wasn't giving me the whole story. I also didn't want him to continue to be afraid of me and what he thought I might do. Turning so I was facing him, I placed my hand lightly on his arm. He didn't move away from me, but his muscles tensed.

"I won't do anything to you that you don't want, Quinlin. You have my word on that. I'm not going to lie and say I don't want to have sex with you again, because I do. And it was sex with you. Well, the first time was a combination of feeding and sex, but I've never done that before. I've never wanted to. I really enjoyed myself with you, and I think you liked being with me up until you found out I was a demon. Yeah, this was supposed to be a one night stand between us, but I'd like to see you again."

Quinlin closed his eyes and gnawed on his bottom lip. I was shocked at how nervous I felt waiting for his answer. If he told me no, I highly doubted anything I said would change his mind. An answer had never seemed so important to me, and I started to wonder again why that was so.

Quinlin sighed heavily. "You know I'm going to hold you to that, right? Sex with you was great even if I ended up being the one who got fucked, but I'm sure you already knew that. I can't say I like the idea of being a meal for you. That seems so... I don't think it sets a good basis for a relationship."

"I won't feed from you if you don't want me to, but I do need sexual energy. You don't strike me as the type of guy who shares his partner, and while it would be feeding for me, I don't think you'd see it that way. I need to feed at least twice in a twenty-four hour period from normal humans. That's two different people a day that I'd basically fuck so I can stay alive."

Quinlin looked at me finally. Indecision warred in his eyes. I could tell he liked the idea of my screwing random strangers even less than he liked the thought of being a meal for me. His brows drew down together.

"Why two different people?"

"I could feed from just one person, but I'd either severely deplete him or end up killing him in the process. I try to avoid that nowadays. It's a lot harder to hide the bodies or explain a bunch of deaths than it used to be."

"Then, even if I let you feed from me, you'd still need somebody else. What's the difference between one other person or two? You'd still be fucking other people. You're right; I'm not big on the idea of the person I'm seeing sleeping around with other people."

I sighed. Looked like a little more truth-telling was in order. I hoped like hell he appreciated how much truth I was dishing out here. I hadn't been this honest in centuries. I also hoped he didn't take this the wrong way. "Actually, because you have a Gift, I'd only need to feed from you once a day, and I'd be good."

"So I'm like, what, a premium food source for you? Is that the real reason you said you'd like to see me again?" Outraged anger was back in Quinlin's voice. Fuck, but he was a prickly bastard.

"You are ambrosia, and normal humans are undercooked hot dogs. You're top notch, and I would dearly love to feed from you on a regular basis, but," I pressed a finger to his lips to stop his rush of angry words, "more than that, I want you as a lover. That's the honest truth, Quinlin, I swear it."

His eyes searched my face and took on that gem-bright glitter again. I guessed that he was intently studying my aura. He pushed my hand away from his lips and gave a frustrated-sounding sigh. "I need to think about it. That's the best answer I can give you right now."

I was disappointed he didn't say yes, but he hadn't said no, either. I still had a chance to try to convince him to see me again. There was definitely something more going on in his head, but I let it go for now. He was off-balance enough as it was from everything I'd dumped on his head. All things considered, he was doing a surprisingly good job of holding his shit together, and I was definitely impressed with his mental strength.

I stood and moved to snag a robe from the closet. Nudity didn't bother me in the slightest, but I didn't think Quinlin would believe me if I said I was okay with not having sex again if I was pressing my nude and obviously very eager body against him. I returned to the bed and pulled him to his feet, yanking the covers down before pushing him back to the bed. He stiffened for a few seconds before crawling into bed.

"I told you I won't do anything to you that you don't want me to. You said you didn't think you could have sex, and as much as I want to, I won't force you. I gave you my word on that. But, I do have you until the night is done, and that's still a couple of hours away. Your choice here. Sex or snuggling with me. You already know what I'm hoping for."

Quinlin shot me a dirty look and punched the pillow. He flopped down, muttering about that being not much of a choice at all. He didn't take his shirt off, so I assumed the sex was out. I joined him on the bed, dragging him close to me and nuzzling into his now dry hair.

"I'm a demon, Quinlin. I do bad things. But I won't hurt you."

Quinlin squirmed in my arms, making certain parts of me very happy. He might have said he couldn't do sex with me, but his body had other ideas. I smiled to myself and stroked a hand down his back and over his ass. He stiffened but eventually settled down, and I thought that he felt very, very right held tight to my chest. I closed my eyes and let myself drift in the feelings Quinlin stirred in me.

My eyes snapped open to find sunlight filtering through the curtains, Quinlin missing from my bed, and the feel of a demonic presence making all my senses jump to attention. Even though my instincts screamed at me to leap from the bed and grovel at the demon's feet, I stretched lazily and pushed myself into a seated position. Among demons, it was never wise to show fear. Not even if you had every right to be scared shitless.

Figuring distraction was probably my best tactic, I let the robe I was still wearing slide down my arms and gave my head a shake, sending my sleep-tangled hair into a sensual curtain around my face. I looked up coyly through my lashes as I wracked my brains for what I could've possibly done to attract the attention of this particular demon.

"As lovely and tempting as you look, Ryzelmei Dovifer mur Mogarth Tuy Asmodai, I'm not here for that, and you can't distract me with your exquisite charms," the demon said, with a sensual smile that put mine to shame.

He'd used my full, True Name. Fuck. He meant business. I tried to swallow around a suddenly dry throat and was grateful beyond words that Quinlin wasn't with me. I rose from the bed, dropped my mask of humanity and my robe, and prostrated myself at his feet. Groveling never hurt when dealing with higher demons, and there was only one demon higher than the one before me. I really, really hoped this wasn't going to hurt too much.

"What would you have me do, my Lord Father, Prince of Hell, Asmodai?"

"It has come to my attention that you've recently made a connection with a human, yet I don't see this person here with you. Is there a problem, my child?"

My brain screeched to a halt. He knew about Quinlin. Fuck. How? I scrambled mentally.

"I don't," I started.

"Whenever something this large happens to any of my children, I know. Relax, Ryzel, I have no desire to steal this person from you. My children become stronger with this type of relationship, increasing my own standing among the other Princes. Besides, I remember vividly what the Sunaldar feels like," Asmodai said, with a wistful smile that almost made tears spring to my eyes from the depth of feeling I saw.

I felt like I'd just been pole-axed with a two-ton iron bar. I'd heard of the Sunaldar. Every incubus and succubus knew what it was. I'd simply never thought it would happen to me. My sudden possessiveness toward Quinlin made perfect sense now, and a broad smile appeared on my face. Quinlin may have said he needed to think about seeing me again, but I wouldn't be feeling the irresistible pull of the Sunaldar if he wasn't feeling it, too.

"Have you put your mark on her, Ryzel?"

A tiny flare of panic surged in the pit of my stomach. My demon mark on Quinlin would let other demons know he was taken and alert me if any demon tried something on him. Without it, any demon could try and lay claim to him, and I'd never know about it until it was a done deal and I saw him again. "No, and it's a him, not a her. He... uh... said he needs time to think about whether or not he wants to see me again."

One elegant eyebrow arched, and Asmodai made a soft tscking noise. I struggled against the urge to squirm uncomfortably. Being called on the carpet by your parent was the worst feeling ever. If that parent happened to be one of the Princes of Hell...

"You always were a wild one, Ryzelmei. I suggest you find your wayward lover, mark him, and proceed to add to my status among the other Princes. Just to satisfy my curiosity, what Gift does this human of yours possess?"

Suggest my ass. That was a command if I'd ever heard one. "He sees auras, my Lord Father."

"That's it? Nothing more? Hardly seems a worthwhile Gift to set the wheels of the Sunaldar in motion," Asmodai said with a little puzzlement in his voice.

"He uses his Gift every day. Probably all day. He's blind, and uses it to help him see what his eyes can't. He says his grandmother was a Seer. A powerful one. She apparently saw him meeting me and insisted he get the Eyes of Ra and Thoth tattooed on his back when he was young." Fear was making me babble information about Quinlin to try to please Asmodai, hopeful of improving my chances of coming away from this little encounter with minimal injuries.

That elegant eyebrow arched again, and Asmodai, Prince of Hell and Lord of Lust, Originator of Incubi and Succubae, smiled at me as if I'd done something very praiseworthy. That smile made my stomach churn. He smoothed a hand over one of my horns, gripping it in a hold I had no hope of breaking. "Ah, I see. Don't let your intended think too long, Ryzelmei Dovifer mur Mogarth Tuy Asmodai. I'd be most disappointed if he tried to refuse the Sunaldar. Make sure that doesn't happen, my child."

Between one breath and the next, he vanished. I closed my eyes and gulped a huge lungful of air, massively relieved that he was gone and I wasn't bleeding or hurting anywhere. I was a direct spawn of Asmodai, but that didn't mean he wouldn't kill or maim me if it suited his purposes. He'd used my True Name more than once, so I knew he was dead serious. At least I hadn't told him Quinlin's name. My eyes popped open at that thought, and I started swearing in every language I knew.

While I hadn't told Asmodai Quinlin's name, I didn't know all of it, either. My finding him earlier was more a matter of blind luck than anything I'd been actively doing. Before, I'd been interested in finding Quinlin because I'd enjoyed him in my bed and wanted to have his delightful ass again. Now, I not only had the shove of the Sunaldar to make me want to hunt Quinlin down and go all possessive demon on him, but I also had my father's not-so-subtle demand for me to mark Quinlin as my own so he'd get additional power and status. Keeping my father waiting for something he wanted done the second the command left his lips was never a smart or pain-free move.

How the hell was I going to find Quinlin? I was so fucked.

Chapter 6

I dropped my keys on the hall table, amazed I'd actually managed to leave Ryzel's room without waking him up. Getting out of the bed had been a challenge. I hadn't been sure Ryzel was going to let me go. He'd had a hold on me like a vise, and only relaxed when I protested that I couldn't breathe. He took an eternity to fall asleep, and even if it'd felt comforting and like I'd finally come home after a long journey, I still worked my way free of him and left as quietly as I could once I was sure the sun was up. A little voice in my head was whining about how nice it felt to be held in Ryzel's arms and how I should turn around and go back to the hotel to sleep next to him. That little voice needed to shut the hell up and stop sounding so reasonable. I toed my shoes off, placing them on the mat by the door, and shrugged out of my jacket, hanging it on the wall hook.

"About time you wandered in. You need a better couch, Quinlin. This one is positively uncomfortable."

I nearly jumped out of my skin at the unexpected voice from the direction of the couch. While I recognized the voice right away, I wasn't expecting anybody to be in my apartment. I drew in a steadying breath and hoped this newest torture would be over fast and relatively painlessly.

"What, no 'hello, Aunt Hilde'? I know Mina and I raised you better than that."

I scowled at the aura now sitting up on my couch. "Hello, Aunt Hilde. Did you have an easy time breaking into my apartment so you could lie in wait to scare me half to death?"

The woman who'd help my gran raise me burst out laughing and approached me. She planted a kiss on my cheek and gave me a light hug before steering me to the couch she'd so recently vacated. She pushed me to sit, so I did. Nothing good ever came from fighting her on anything. Years of experience had taught me that. She sat beside me and patted my knee.

"So, did you think sleeping with an incubus was all that it's cracked up to be?"

I groaned softly and hung my head. I should have known Hilde showing up in my apartment the morning after my romp with a demon wasn't a coincidence. Nothing with Hilde was ever a coincidence. She never seemed to think discussing my sex life was a big deal. Hilde always brushed aside my discomfort with the excuse that she was a doctor and it was part of her training to discuss and help patients solve all kinds of problems, including sexual ones. Yes, she was a doctor. A psychiatrist, to be exact. That didn't make me any more eager to tell her what had happened between me and Ryzel. The last thing I needed or wanted was to talk to my aged head-shrinker of an aunt about what I'd been doing between the sheets; with a demon, no less.

"That good, huh?" Hilde said with a smile in her voice.

"I don't suppose it would do me any good to say that I don't want to discuss my bedroom activities with you, would it?" I didn't even wait for her to answer. I could see the amusement in the shifting colors of her aura. "Let me guess, Gran told you about this... demon I'd sleep with, didn't she? Why'd she tell you and not me? It would've been nice to know before I agreed to spend the night with him."

"Mina wanted to make sure you had as normal a life as possible, sweetie. She saw what was going to happen and that you'd end up happy with this demon. That was good enough for her. Good enough for me, too. You look fine. There's a pretty flush to your cheeks and a delightfully mussed look to you. I'd say you had a really good time. It's important for your physical and mental health to have a satisfying sex life, Quin. From the way you look, I think you'll get that with this demon of yours. I don't understand, what's the problem?"

"The problem? I slept with a fucking demon, that's the problem. A demon, for Christ's sake," I said, dragging a hand through my hair. After that first attempt, and failure, I knew it was pointless to try to steer her away from the fact that we were discussing my sex life. I didn't know of anybody who'd ever been able to sway her off course; not even Gran could do it.

"Yes, yes, so he's a demon. So what? You enjoyed yourself, didn't you? You were obviously attracted to him or you wouldn't have gotten into bed with him. I know you're not worried about some sort of damnation of your immortal soul, seeing as how you don't believe in that. What's got you so worked up into a lather, Quin? Was this demon of yours a little more forceful than you're used to? Did you have to do things his way? Would you like to talk about how that made you feel?"

"He's not my demon," I muttered as I looked away from Hilde's face. I so did not need my aunt psychoanalyzing me and my bedroom activities.

Leave it to Hilde to get right to the heart of the matter. She was a damn shrewd woman with incredible insight, which made her very good at her chosen profession. I'd sound like some whiny brat if I bitched about ending up playing the bottom regardless of how fantastic the sex had been. Not that I wanted my aunt to know that much about my sex life, either. She already knew way too much about what went on in my bedroom. I pressed my lips together and said nothing.

Hilde sighed softly and placed her hand on my knee. "You really liked him, didn't you? I know you don't jump into bed with any old pretty face that comes your way. You're not that type of man, Quinlin. Something about him appeals to you, though." Hilde gave my knee a firm squeeze, her voice turning earnest. "Mina wouldn't have given this relationship the go-ahead if she hadn't seen something good come of it. You know that. He's a demon, yes, but give him a chance. You know I won't purposely steer you wrong, and neither would Mina. We love you and only want the best for you. According to Mina's vision, this demon is the best thing to happen to you for a bunch of reasons that I'm sure you'll come to realize on your own."

A frustrated sigh left me. Apparently, there was even more to Gran's vision about me and Ryzel that Hilde knew and wasn't going to tell me. Knowing my Gran, she would've told Hilde everything, just to make sure that her vision came true if it looked like something wasn't going according to plan. My gran had loved to meddle in my life just as much as Hilde did. I was reluctantly impressed that she seemed to be doing it from beyond the grave.

Hilde cupped my cheek and brushed her thumb over my bottom lip. Her aura flicked around the edges, and it took my still-rattled brain a few precious seconds to realize what she was up to. By the time I thought to jerk away from her touch, I knew the damage was already done. I narrowed my eyes at her.

"That was dirty pool, Aunt Hildreth, and I don't appreciate you prying into my personal affairs like that," I said in a frosty voice.

"Oh, take the stick out of your ass, Quin," she said with an impatient snort. "You wouldn't have told me a damn thing about Ryzel if I hadn't cheated a little. Besides, it's my duty as your closest living relative to make sure Ryzel understands that mistreating you will not be tolerated."

I folded my arms across my chest and tried not to look like I was sulking. Thirty-something men didn't sulk; we brooded. I was brooding my nuts off at the moment. Hilde ignored me and brushed some hair away from my face with a gentle touch. I muttered under my breath about interfering female relatives but let her touch me. I knew she only wanted the best for me and for me to be happy, even if she was mighty fucking high-handed about it.

Unfortunately for me, Hilde wasn't above abusing her Gift to find out what was troubling me. Hell, she probably used hers almost as much as I used mine. Hilde was a retrocognitive; she could learn almost anything from objects she touched. After decades of using her Gift so much, she could do it with people, too, but she didn't get nearly the same amount of information from touching a person as an object. Although, the better she knew someone, the more detailed the information she got. Much to my disgust, I was basically an open book to her if she decided to exercise her Gift on me.

"Leave it alone, Aunt Hilde. I kept up my end of the deal by staying with him for the entire night as we'd agreed. I have no intention of ever seeing Ryzel again."

"Intentions and the road to Hell, Quin. You will see him again whether you say you want to or not. Think about his attitude while you were with him. That's all I'm going to say right now. I'll show myself out. You get some sleep. You look like you need it. Poor boy. That demon of yours kept you up most of the night, didn't he?" she crooned as she stood and patted my cheek in a motherly fashion.

"Please, Aunt Hilde, as a personal favor to me, leave Ryzel alone," I pleaded with her, although I was pretty sure it was a lost cause.

"You make it sound as if I'm going to cause trouble. Really, Quin. I'm hurt," Hilde said with a faint quiver in her voice, the tone shifting to her patented Helpless, Frail Old Lady voice that got

most people to do what she wanted them to. I'd heard it often enough not to fall for it, but it still gave me guilty twinges in my gut.

"Fine. Do whatever you want. You will anyway. It's not like I could stop you." I was not sulking again. Brooding. I was brooding my brains out.

Hilde leaned down and kissed me on the cheek. "No, dear, you can't, and I'm very proud of you that you're finally learning that. I won't tell Ryzel where you live, Mister Hermit. That way, if he does manage to find you, you'll know that he put effort into it. And Quin, you really should ask him to take you when he's in full demon form. Not much compares to full-on demon sex."

Hilde was out the door and gone before I processed what her parting shot meant. I groaned and held my head in my hands. Super. Not only did my aged aunt know I'd gotten it on with a demon, but she knew said demon had fucked me and not the other way around.

My mouth fell open when I realized that her final words to me also meant she had more than casual knowledge of sexual acts with demons. From what I'd managed to piece together over the years, Hilde had been a real wild one in her younger days, but I'd never have thought she'd join a demon in bed. Who was I kidding? I'd never given even a passing thought to either Aunt Hilde or my gran having *that* kind of a relationship at all with anyone, demon or otherwise. Some things a guy just didn't need to know about his female relatives.

I heaved myself from the couch and headed for my bedroom, stripping off my clothes as I went, suddenly too tired to care where they fell. It'd take Hilde a little time to track down exactly where Ryzel's club or hotel was, and even longer to contact him. At least, *if* there really was any justice in the world it would take her a while. I planned to catch a little shuteye and then call Haskell with the demand to take me somewhere, anywhere, to avoid Ryzel pounding on my door, as I was sure he would. Hilde said she wouldn't tell Ryzel where I lived, and she wouldn't. She would give him enough clues that he'd be able to figure it out if he had two brain cells to rub together. From the little I knew of Ryzel, he'd be able to put Aunt Hilde's two and two together and come up with my address.

I set my clock to wake me in two hours and climbed into bed, pulling the blankets up to my chin. My eyes closed, and I snuggled into the covers, sighing in pleasure at being in my own bed. I drew in a deep, relaxing breath, and an enticing scent filled my nose, making me groan softly. Fuck it all. I could smell Ryzel on my skin, and his subtle scent of musk and aftershave made my dick stand at attention so fast that it was a wonder I didn't lose consciousness from all the blood in my body hitting my groin at once.

I tried to ignore my erection for all of five seconds before my hand slid down my belly, my fingers wrapping around myself and making my hips jerk. My breath hissed out. Good god, that felt erotic. When the hell did my cock become so sensitive to touch? Had Ryzel done something to me without my knowing it? I wanted to be pissed off, but it felt too damn good to fondle my cock and breathe in the smell of Ryzel clinging to my skin.

My mind called up the sensations from my little romp with Ryzel. A shiver travelled down my spine, and a moan sounded as I stroked myself, the scent of Ryzel teasing my nose, getting stronger and goosing my desire. I tried to force the memories of Ryzel's lips and hands on my skin away, with zero success. I shoved the blankets off, a needy sound leaving my throat, and let myself sink into the pleasure of my hand on my cock and the memories of Ryzel touching and kissing me. Heat curled in my belly, and I started to pant as I moved closer to orgasm.

I wanted more sensation and couldn't seem to help myself when I quickly slicked a finger with spit and pushed it into my ass. A shuddery little moan twisted out of my throat. My finger felt good, but wasn't nearly enough. That stupid little voice in my head started to insist that to really feel good, I needed Ryzel's cock in my ass. That wasn't gonna happen, but I could do something else to ease an ache I'd never felt before Ryzel had my ass.

My finger slipped free, and I groped for the drawer of my bedside table. My hand closed around a vibrating plug, and I prayed like mad the batteries were still good. I reluctantly let go of my cock to open the lube I also kept in the drawer and smeared some on the plug. With my feet braced on the mattress, I pushed the plug slowly into my ass, groaning in pleasure. It wasn't Ryzel's cock, but it still felt damn good. A flick of the switch made me gasp. My fingers wrapped around my cock again, gliding up and down the length. I bit my lip and tasted blood as my hips pumped my cock into the tunnel of my fist. Flashes of Ryzel moved through my mind.

The way his body moved in mine, making me feel more aroused than I could ever remember. The scent of him in my nose and taste of his skin on my tongue. The sound of his breathing, deep and ragged as his orgasm drew close. The beauty of his aura when he'd dropped his mask of humanity. His sounds of pleasure when I'd run my fingers over his horns, and his low groan of satisfaction in my ear when he came in my ass.

My head pressed back into the pillow, and my back arched with the force of my orgasm. A drawn-out groan of pleasure sounded from my throat, and my entire body shuddered at the feel of my come spurting through my fingers and over my belly. The steady buzzing of the plug in my ass seemed to make my orgasm go on and on. I could have almost sworn I could feel the weight of Ryzel's body on mine and the rasp of his heavy breathing in my ear.

Tension drained away slowly, and several minutes passed before I turned off the plug and slipped it free from my body. I was left feeling drowsy and much too pleased, considering how big a factor Ryzel had played in my wank session. I forced myself from the bed and into the bathroom for a quick clean up. As much as I would have appreciated a quick shower, I felt drained in more ways than one and just wanted to sleep. A little part of me didn't want to wash away Ryzel's scent, either, and that realization had me firing the wet facecloth across the bathroom in annoyance.

I stalked back to my bed, muttering to myself about demons too sexy for my own good. I settled back into bed and closed my eyes, making an effort to *not* think of Ryzel. I wasn't sure how well I was succeeding when the last thing I remembered was how good it'd felt to have Ryzel snug against my back and how much I wanted to have him there.

"What the fuck do you mean you're at the airport and leaving on a flight for Ireland in ten minutes?" I growled into the phone.

"Exactly what I said, Quin. I got a last minute call saying that the original photographer for this shoot was in a minor car accident. Since she and I are good friends, she suggested me to replace her on the job 'cause she can't do it with a busted leg and arm. Come on, Quin. Free trip to Ireland and a tidy sum of cash into my bank account? Of course I said I'd do it."

"But I need you to take me somewhere Ryzel won't be able to find me." Good god, I sounded like a whiny kid, but I couldn't help it.

"Why? The two of you seemed to get on like crazy. Don't tell me a fine piece of ass like him was a lousy lay. That'd be just criminal."

"No, he was great. That's not the problem."

"Great, huh? You gonna share the details of this great encounter with your best buddy Kell?" Haskell asked, interest plain in his voice.

"I can't over the phone. You're gonna think I'm nuts. I almost think I'm nuts. He was... and I... we.... Fuck, Kell, I really need to talk to a friend right now."

"Quin? You okay? You sound all weirded out, and that's saying something. You're starting to worry me, here, and I'm gonna have to turn my cell off in, like, five minutes when I board the plane. Are you okay? He didn't threaten you or anything, did he? If he did, go to the cops. He said he owned the hotel and that club you told me about. I'm sure they could track him down. Just because you agreed to go with him to his room doesn't mean you couldn't change your mind and say no later."

I swore under my breath. I was upsetting Haskell and making him worry. That hadn't been my intent at all when I'd called him after a restless sleep involving dreams of demons surrounding me and pawing at me while I called desperately for Ryzel. I felt even more irritable than before I had my brief sleep. Considering I wasn't normally the sunniest flower in the garden...

"He didn't do anything like you're thinking, Kell. Honest. It's something else entirely. Look, if you're gonna be gone, can I crash at your place for a bit? Aunt Hilde was waiting for me when I got home, and I think she has some strange idea of warning Ryzel to treat me right or some shit. She Touched me, Kell."

"Oh, fuck. That completely sucks, Quin. Yeah, you can stay at my place. My next-door neighbor's kid will be coming over every day to feed the horde, so don't freak out and try and take the poor kid's head off with your cane if he just walks in. I'll call you as soon as I can. I gotta go; they're calling my flight now. Take it easy, Quin."

I sighed and hung up the phone. I hadn't even gotten the chance to ask him what critters he had living in his house this time. Haskell tended to rescue animals that seemed to find him, and at any given time there were always at least a dozen things sharing space with him. I liked animals as much as the next person, but after walking into the bathroom and having a three-foot crocodile hiss at me from the bathtub, I was a tad leery of staying at his place without knowing what I was sharing a roof with.

I pressed a button on my watch, nodding a little in relief when the mechanical voice chirped out the time. A little past nine a.m. I hoped Hilde hadn't been able to get very good information from me when she'd Touched me earlier. I prayed very hard that she was having a rough time pinning down exactly what hotel I'd been in the previous night, since I hadn't really been paying attention when Haskell told me the name of the place. She'd probably gotten the name of Ryzel's club from me, but considering it was a dance club and likely didn't open until late afternoon or early evening, she probably couldn't catch Ryzel there until later. I planned to be long gone to Haskell's place by then. I stuffed a few t-shirts and a pair of jeans into a bag, added the book I was reading and my laptop, and was out the door.

At the moment, sharing house space with a crocodile seemed preferable to facing Ryzel again.

Chapter 7

"Uh... boss? There's an old lady here to see you, and she said she's got some information you want on some guy. Quinton or Quincy or something. I don't think you should see her, boss. When Malvik told her you didn't see just any old lady who walked in off the street, she knocked him out cold with one whack of her cane," said one of my bouncers as he shifted from foot to foot in nervousness.

My heart rate easily doubled at the news that someone was here to speak to me about a guy with a name that started with the letter 'q.' I had next to nothing to go on information-wise on Quinlin, and I was ready to take clues wherever I could get them. It was already early evening after I'd woken up alone in my bed, and I was no closer to finding Quinlin than I had been when I'd started looking.

I wasn't concerned about my underling. Malvik probably deserved the crack to the skull. He wasn't the brightest of demons, but he was big and intimidating even in his human form. I used him for his brawn, not his walnut-sized brain.

"Send her in," I said as my mind leaped around, trying to figure out who this lady might be, how she knew Quinlin, and how in the hell she knew to come and see me. Common sense said I should be suspicious of some random woman. Regardless, I wanted to see Quinlin again, even without the not-so-subtle urging of my father to find and mark Quinlin as my own.

"I don't think this is a good idea, boss."

"I don't pay you to think. I pay you to be intimidating to the drunken rabble in the club. Show the lady to my office. Now," I said, with the growl of a higher-level demon creeping into my voice.

The demon scrunched his shoulders, his posture screaming subservience, and quickly left my office. He returned moments later with a tall, rail-thin elderly lady, pulling the door closed behind him when he left and leaving me alone with the woman as I'd ordered. I rose from my seat behind my desk and took a moment to assess the woman. She looked vaguely familiar, and it took me a couple of minutes to realize why. She looked like Quinlin. Most noticeable were her eyes. She had eyes the exact same shade of green as Quinlin's. Her slow smile turned her from a good-looking senior citizen into a startlingly pretty, mature woman.

"It's quite flattering to get such an intense look from an incubus at my age. You are a charmer, aren't you? Although, I doubt all that pretty hair and seductive smile of yours had any effect on Quin. He's a prickly one, that boy, but very much worth getting to know in many ways, don't you think? I'm Hildreth Sherburne, Quinlin's great-aunt," she said, holding out her hand for me to shake.

I automatically extended my hand, slightly off balance from her casual remark about my being an incubus and the fact that she seemed to know that Quinlin and I had a sexual relationship. Hildreth's eyes took on a far-away look, and her grip on my hand tightened to a surprising degree. She released my hand and gave a soft laugh, seating herself in a chair.

"I'll tell you right up front that I promised Quin I wouldn't tell you where he lived. He seems to believe that what went on between the two of you last night won't be repeated. We both know that's not the case, don't we? While I won't tell you his address, I will give you enough information so that you can find him yourself. Make you work a little to get what you want, since that, of course, makes the having all that much sweeter, doesn't it?"

I narrowed my eyes at Hildreth, immediately suspicious. "And you'd do this for me, why? You've called me an incubus, so I assume Quinlin told you about me. Most people wouldn't be trying to push one of their relatives into a relationship with a demon. Most people would be throwing holy water at me and screaming Our Fathers or something."

"I'm not most people, but you've probably figured that out by now. Why would I help you find Quin? Because Mina, Quin's grandmother, saw you and him together in a vision, and you were both very happy with each other. I want Quin to be happy, so I'm helping you to find him. Given what Quin is, what you are, and what the two of you are to each other, of course I'd help get the two of you together again," she said, with a dismissive little wave of her hand.

I was officially confused. This woman didn't seem bothered that she was talking to a demon, which was a little unsettling. Then again, Quinlin might have reacted the same way if we hadn't been in the middle of sex when he found out what I was. He'd seemed okay with the idea of talking to a demon. At least, I think he was okay with that. I wasn't sure what she was talking about regarding Quinlin. Did she mean his psychic abilities or something else? And how would this woman know anything of what we were to each other? I'd just found out that very morning. Time to play question and answer.

"What do you mean what Quinlin is? That he's Gifted?"

Hildreth waved her hand again. "No, silly boy. While I'm sure you find him more than tasty for that reason, among others, that's not it. Come, come now. It doesn't do you any good to play dumb, and it's a little insulting to me. Obviously, I know more than the average person does about demons and angels and other things that walk the Earth, or I wouldn't be sitting here having this discussion with you. Simply because you're a demon of carnal delights, that doesn't mean all your brains are centered in your libido, so please don't pretend like they are."

I raised an eyebrow at that statement. Hildreth was quite something else. I wasn't sure what to make of her. Hedging my answers and trying to prod her for more information seemed like a good game plan. A tiny smile appeared on my face when I realized I was thinking of treating her like a demon of equal status in a bid to get information from her without giving away the upper hand. I could possibly get to like Hildreth.

"I really don't know what you're talking about. Care to enlighten me?"

"You honestly don't know? Were you not paying attention when you were first told about the Sunaldar?" Hildreth made tsking noises and shook her head. "It's not my job to be educating demons on things they should know. The very least your father should have done when he told you the Sunaldar had been set in motion was to refresh your memory about some of the reasons *why* you and Quin are so attracted to each other."

My mouth fell open in shock. How did this woman know about the Sunaldar? How did she know my father had paid me a visit? How was she making me feel like a newly spawned demon, ignorant of everything? Quinlin dealt with this on a regular basis? No wonder he had a pissy attitude. I snapped my mouth shut and gestured for Hildreth to continue.

"As you know, Quin has a Gift. That in itself isn't all that unusual. Many people have various Gifts in different strengths, as I'm sure you're very aware. What is different is his background. The Sunaldar requires a demon to find his opposite. You're one of Asmodai's direct spawn, not some lower-level spawnling. For you, your Sunaldar partner has to be a fairly recent descendant of either a Grigori or a Nephilim."

I blinked rapidly. Things I'd been told thousands of years ago when I was spawned were coming back to me with surprising speed. My first reaction? No fucking way. No wonder Asmodai wanted me to find Quinlin and mark him as mine as quickly as possible. Unholy freaking Hell. I guess when I'd idly wondered if Quinlin had a fence-jumping angel in his family tree because he was so beautiful, I was more right than I knew. My eyes widened slightly, and I gave Hildreth a considering look.

"Then, you're also a descendant of either a Grigori or a Nephilim and probably have a Gift, too."

"I knew you were a bright boy. There's some family debate about which type it was that infused our line. I think Grigori simply because our bloodline always runs true with a Gift of some kind, in varying degrees of strength, for every individual. We also seem to attract more than our fair share of Otherworldly attention."

"So what's your Gift?" I asked curiously. Knowing more about Quinlin's family could only help me at this point. Knowledge was also power, and I wasn't about to pass up the chance to grab a little of that valuable commodity.

"Retrocognition. That's how I found out who you were and where, in general, to find you. Quin was very upset with me for doing that to him," Hildreth said with a mischievous smile that made her eyes twinkle. Gut instinct told me Hildreth liked screwing with Quinlin just to get a reaction out of him. I started to hope like hell that she wouldn't extend that same behavior to me because I was with Quinlin.

"I came here for two reasons. The first was to help along Mina's vision of you and Quin together, since that's what will be in Quin's best interests. The second was to give you a warning. Mina and I raised Quin from a baby when his parents were killed. You hurt him in any way, and I will do whatever I feel necessary to make you pay, Ryzelmei."

My stomach clenched, and a chill raced down my spine even though I didn't let any of that show on my face. Hildreth knew my first name. All of my first name. There was no way she could have simply guessed and gotten lucky. Fuck.

"Before you ask, yes, I do know the rest of your name. My Gift of retrocognition isn't limited to touching objects. I can do it with people, too." Hildreth leaned forward, an intent, serious expression on her face. Despite trying not to, I leaned back in my chair just a little. She seriously reminded me of my father with that look in her eyes, and that wasn't a good thing in my books.

"My warning isn't given lightly, Ryzel. I will use your True Name if I feel it's justified. Frankly, if it comes down to it, I'll use your father's True Name and really roast your muffins." The wicked smile on Hildreth's face made a shiver race down my spine. "Come to think of it, he'll probably appreciate the irony of this little state of affairs. Next time you see him, tell him that your partner for the Sunaldar is Wilhelmina and Hildreth Sherburne's descendant. Trust me; he'll remember who we are. He'll probably laugh himself silly once he gets over the shock of it."

Hildreth proceeded to tell me what Quinlin did for a living, where he liked to hang out, and when the best times to catch him there would be. She even told me Haskell's full name and that he was Quinlin's best friend. Hildreth smiled at me, a pleased expression on her face. The woman was damn dangerous; she knew it and reveled in that fact. She rose from her seat, nodded at me, and announced she'd find her own way out. I watched her go, feeling more than a little shell-shocked from everything she'd dumped on me.

If Quinlin's aunt really did know my True Name, as well as my father's, that put a hell of a lot of power in her hands. Uneasiness swamped me when I wondered if she'd tell Quinlin my full name. I gnawed on my bottom lip and hoped she knew enough about the Sunaldar not to do that. Giving Quinlin my True Name was my privilege as his Sunaldar partner and would be a gesture of my trust and faith in him.

I was still sitting at my desk, my eyes closed, wondering how my life had gotten turned upside down so fast, when all the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I didn't need to open my eyes to know who was settling himself into the chair across from me.

Fuck. Me.

"You haven't marked your partner yet. I'll know when you have. Are you trying to avoid the Sunaldar, Ryzelmei? Do you have some vague thoughts of defying me? That wouldn't be very good for your continued existence, child of mine or not. I thought I'd made myself quite clear earlier on what I wanted you to do."

My stomach churned. No, it wouldn't matter one bit to Asmodai if I was one of his direct spawnlings or not. My father highly frowned on disobedience, and he was brutally fast in dealing out punishments. Depending on his mood and temper, he'd either maim or kill those who displeased him. If he was particularly angry, he'd torture and then kill the offender. I was hoping I wasn't edging into that category with him.

"No, I'm not delaying it at all, my Lord Father. I'm still in the process of tracking him down. He didn't give me his last name, so it's taking me a little time to find him. Quinlin is a cautious, prickly bastard, and after meeting his aunt, I can totally understand why. She said to tell you something by the way. She seemed to think you'd 'appreciate the irony' of who Quinlin is."

Asmodai grunted at me and waited for me to continue.

"She said to tell you that my partner for the Sunaldar is the great-nephew of Hildreth Sherburne and the grandson of Wilhelmina Sherburne."

Asmodai's eyes widened slightly, and his nostrils flared. He rose from his seat and leaned over my desk. I smelled wood burning and glanced down to see smoke curling up from where his hands rested on the top of my desk. Oh, shit. This was going to hurt big time. I should've kept my mouth shut. What was it about Quinlin's family that made my mouth jump into motion before my brain had the chance to veto the words first?

"Excuse me? Did you just say Hildreth and Wilhelmina Sherburne?" Asmodai asked in a deceptively soft voice.

I nodded and felt sweat slide down my spine. Hildreth did say Asmodai would remember her and her sister. The thought that it might not be a good thing to remind Asmodai of them was a little late in coming to me, and I wanted to kick myself for my stupidity in letting my mouth run unchecked.

Asmodai had me pinned to my seat with the ferocity of his glower. I wasn't sure how I was able to hang onto my mask of humanity. Usually, when I had a demon with even half the power of my father glaring at me like this, my control slipped, and I let my true form show. That was usually followed shortly after by my abasing myself at the feet of the demon. Sometimes, I could avoid serious damage if I groveled prettily enough for a higher demon. I was an incubus. I could grovel prettier than almost any demon.

Asmodai snorted softly, and a broad smile stretched across his face. "Find your Quinlin and mark him fast, child. You're already benefiting from him. You've never been able to hold your human mask when faced with my irritation. This should prove interesting."

Relief hit me so fast, I actually exhaled loudly in the knowledge that I wasn't going to end up maimed. Asmodai laughed softly at my reaction, and even more tension eased from me. This was one of Asmodai's safe laughs, where nobody died. I'd seen him laugh while ripping a demon limb from limb, but this was his "you've amused me so you can continue to live" laugh. After several thousand years, I'd learned to tell the difference, and make myself scarce when it was one of his bad laughs.

"Hildreth said she knows your True Name. Does she really?" I had no idea where that little bit of bravery came from and snapped my mouth shut. We demons were pretty touchy about revealing

our True Names, since whoever knew it and spoke it with the appropriate chant had absolute control over us.

"She does," Asmodai said with a scowl that quickly softened into a fond smile. "Will was a very powerful Seer, but she was more concerned with keeping her family safe. Dre, on the other hand, would put several female sub-breeds of demons to shame with the sneaky, sly way she operates. Watch out for her, Ryzel. She'll fool you into thinking she's no threat when quite the opposite is true."

"You sound like you admire her," I said with some surprise. Asmodai was a hard demon to impress, and he admired very few demons, never mind mortals.

"I appreciate anyone who's that conniving while projecting an air of innocence. Very rarely has a mortal caught me unaware. She was also a rather tasty feed, as was her sister. The two of them together... I haven't fed that well in ages. The sex was damn good, too. Maybe I should pay her a visit. She really got off on a true demon fuck back then, a rarity among mortals. I wonder if she'd still like it now," Asmodai mused.

I watched as all demonic traits melted away to reveal a distinguished-looking older man dressed to the nines in a designer suit. His form screamed sex and money. Lots of sex and money. Hell, I was starting to feel a little turned on looking at him, and I was an incubus and used to this kind of shit. Even with a couple thousands of years of practice under my belt, I still couldn't pull off the aura of power wrapped up in sex like he could. I did okay, but I was small fry compared to my father.

"I look presentable, Ryzelmei?" Asmodai asked with a slow, seductive smile as he ran his hands down his torso, smoothing the fabric of his suit.

"Very. She won't be able to resist you." I kept my opinion that it might not be the smartest thing in the world to go see Hildreth to myself. I barely knew the woman, and I was leery of meeting up with her again. Asmodai was a big boy and certainly didn't need one of his spawnlings telling him what to do.

"You'd think that, wouldn't you? She'll refuse me just like she did the first time we met, and then the chase will be on. I'd forgotten how much fun something like this was. Specifically, I'd forgotten about Will and Dre and the pleasure I got from the two of them. For reminding me of past pleasures, you may have one minor personal favor from me."

My eyes widened in surprise. Asmodai almost never granted favors. Demons didn't like expending power for others if they didn't have to, especially the higher-level demons. Hoarding power was one of the ways they got to *be* a higher-level demon. A minor personal favor from one of the Princes of Hell was not something minor. That covered a hell of a lot of ground and was something I was going to have to think about carefully before saying what I wanted.

"Thank you, my Lord Father," I said, coming around to the front of my desk and sinking to my knees in front of him. Even if he was pleased with me at the moment, a little subservience never hurt when dealing with him.

He rested his hand on my head and gave me an affectionate pat. Desire flowed from the hand he had on my head, and I moaned softly, biting my lip and clenching my fists against the urge to rub my face against his crotch. I was surprised that I actually managed to keep myself from doing that.

Asmodai chuckled, his hand sliding down my face to cup my chin and tilt my head up to him. He knew what he was doing to me. He enjoyed toying with lower-level demons and showing how much more powerful he was than them.

It was a demon thing.

"I hope for your sake this Quinlin of yours isn't nearly as difficult to deal with as Dre. Then again, those feisty personalities are so much fun in bed."

He leaned down, dropped a kiss on my forehead that made lust twist hard in my gut, turned, and left my office. The demon who'd been stupid enough to be eavesdropping near the door gasped and dropped to his belly when he spotted my father. Asmodai paused and stared at the demon for a moment before stretching out his hand over the prostrate demon.

There was a brilliant flash of light, the smell of burning flesh, and a high-pitched scream that was abruptly cut off before it could fully form. The demon was gone, and a charred, vaguely humanoid spot on the carpet was the only indication that there'd been something there before.

"You may want to consider getting a higher level of demon to work for you, Ryzel. You should have no problem controlling them now with the additional power the Sunaldar has already given you. Either that or spawn more children of your own. These low-level demons can't be trusted to mind their own business," Asmodai said in a dismissive tone of voice.

I nodded, but said nothing. While he looked like a refined gentleman, he was anything but that. Asmodai was a Prince of Hell, and thought nothing of the utter destruction of a demon who had annoyed him for a small misstep in judgment. Asmodai continued down the hall and out of my sight, whistling a jaunty tune. I breathed a soft sigh of relief. I'd come out of my little encounter with my father in one piece and unharmed. Again.

That was a minor miracle as far as I was concerned. The arousal Asmodai had spread over me was fading, but I had the nasty thought that it'd probably roar back to life the next time I fed or had sex. Asmodai loved games of power with demons beneath him in status and considering that only the Devil himself was higher, that was an awful lot of demons to mess with. I figured the shot of arousal was either a reminder of the power he could wield over my body, or it was an off-hand blessing of a sort. With Asmodai, it could easily go either way. Hell, it could even be both.

I rose from my knees and moved back behind my desk. I had some information on Quinlin to help me track him down, and I didn't want to waste a minute.

Chapter 8

An entire week had passed since my night with Ryzel, and I *still* had him on the brain. What the fuck did he do to me? I fell asleep thinking about him. I dreamed about doing absolutely sinful things with him. I woke up harder than hell because of him. Thoughts of Ryzel distracted me during the day when I should have been focused on my work. I was startled to feel lonely without him when I'd barely even known him for twenty-four hours. This was seriously starting to piss me off. Not to mention that even co-workers who were used to my less-than-sunny disposition were commenting that I had been a bit... testy lately.

Of course I was testy. Half the time I was walking around with an erection that was a direct result of my run-in with an incubus. Who the fuck wouldn't be testy under those circumstances? The other half of the time I felt restless and anxious and had to stop myself from heading back to the club where I'd first met Ryzel. That little voice in my head was insisting that everything would be fine if I saw Ryzel again. I felt like I was losing my mind. Why I would feel almost desperate to be with that damned demon was beyond me. Gran had said he'd be good for me, but she never mentioned this crap. I would've remembered that. This was bizarre in the extreme and completely out of character for me.

Nothing I did cooled the desire I felt or pushed Ryzel far from my mind. Ignoring my nearly constant state of arousal sure as hell wasn't working for me, but surrendering to the desire wasn't exactly helping either. I'd jerk off, and halfway through my brain would add Ryzel to the fantasy. I'd gotten one of the best orgasms of my life when Ryzel played a starring role in a recent jerk-off session, but it still pissed me off more than anything, since I was trying to get him out of my head, not entrench him deeper.

I wished Haskell was back from his photo shoot so I could talk to him, but a brief call from him a few days earlier had let me know that the project he was working on was delayed because of bad weather, and he wouldn't be back for another couple of days. If Haskell had come back from Ireland, I might have at least been able to do something about this twisting *need* in my belly. I was almost positive that what I needed to work Ryzel out of my system was a good, hard fuck by somebody else, and I knew Haskell would've obliged me. That's what best friends and fuck buddies did.

I slammed my fist down on the piano keys, frustrated beyond belief. There was obviously no way to get around this. I needed to see Ryzel again and get him to undo whatever the hell it was he'd done to me. Fuck!

"Something irritating you more than usual, Quin?" asked an amused voice I easily recognized.

I looked toward the door and saw the familiar aura of a client of the recording studio where I worked. I scowled at Adrial. He never passed up the opportunity to flirt with me, and didn't seem

to take the hint when I shot him down time and again. Maybe he enjoyed teasing me and seeing how riled up I'd get. Maybe I was some kind of a challenge to him because I kept turning him down. Didn't make a fuck-load of difference to me. I never mixed business with pleasure. Artists were temperamental creatures, myself especially, and I didn't need the aggravation of an ex-lover added to my working life.

Haskell said Adrial was a sight to behold and fun in bed, but the popular singer seemed to get on my last nerve effortlessly. I hated making even the slightest effort to be civil to him, but I knew enough to listen to my boss if I wanted to keep working at the studio. Adrial brought money, cachet, and other well-known musicians to the studio. He was famous, and I was just another studio musician/songwriter. I knew to keep my nasty attitude to myself if I wanted to continue to be employed.

"Someone, actually. If you'll excuse me, I need to go punch his lights out," I said as I stood and closed the cover on the keys.

Adrial laughed softly and pushed himself off the doorframe, sauntering toward me. He stopped in front of me, and I had to tilt my head up a little. I almost always forgot how tall the man was. He reached out to me and softly touched my hair.

"Such a fiery temper. A perfect match to your hair. What did this person do that warrants you resorting to violence when other types of physical action could be so much more satisfying? Should I offer my assistance?" Adrial brushed the backs of his fingers over my cheek, and his voice dropped into huskier tones.

As much as I loved the way his voice caressed words, his cocky, spoiled attitude made me want to drive my fist into his face just to hear the sound of his nose breaking. I took his wrist in a strong grip and moved his hand away from my face. How I resisted snapping his head off for touching me without permission, I had no idea. I grabbed my cane and lifted my chin. Amusement, confidence, and arousal colored his aura. Adrial was one arrogant bastard. I pitied the poor soul who ended up with him as a regular lover.

"I can manage fine by myself. If you'll excuse me," I said as I started to push past Adrial.

He stopped me with a hand on my arm. I tried to shrug it off, but couldn't. I scowled, first at the hand on my arm, then up at Adrial. I didn't have the time for this crap. I never had time for this shit from him. I only had so much restraint when it came to being civil to someone who irritated the living fuck out of me.

"Why do you always turn me down, Quin? You look like you're interested in a little fun, unless that really is a flute in your pocket. I can make you feel very, very good," Adrial said, leaning down into my personal space.

"I'm damn picky, and you're not my type," I said as politely as I could, ignoring his comment about the state of my arousal. He wasn't the cause of it, so he didn't need to say a damn thing

about it. I shoved my cane against Adrial's chest, startled when he abruptly let go of me with a little gasp.

I used his surprise to escape the room and him. Adrial called after me, but I hurried from the building. With any luck, Adrial wouldn't follow me outside. Aside from cornering me when he found me alone and trying for the occasional ass grab, he rarely made a serious effort to chase after me.

I pulled out my cell and called a cab, hoping like hell Ryzel would be at the club where we'd first met. It was early evening, but late enough for the bars and clubs to have opened their doors. If Ryzel wasn't there, I was screwed. I couldn't remember the name of the hotel he owned. I had no idea where else to look for him, and I really needed to see him.

The cab pulled up to the curb. I got inside and told the cabbie to take me to Debauchery.

The cab dropped me off in front of the nightclub. Judging by the number of auras clustered together, the place seemed to be doing a good business, even early. That made the chances of my finding Ryzel at the club even better. At least I hoped it did.

I thought about waiting in the queue like everybody else and dismissed the idea almost immediately. I didn't want to get into the club for the music, the drinks, or the possibility of a random grope of my ass. I wanted in to see Ryzel, have him stop or fix whatever it was he'd done, and go home back to my normal life. I didn't feel I should have to pay a cover charge for that. After all, I was the wronged party here.

I made my way down the alley and hoped that the back door would be open like it had been that first night. If it wasn't, then I guessed I could always try telling one of the doormen that I was there to see Ryzel and give him my name. Ryzel had said he wanted to see me again, so that might work if this plan failed.

As I walked down the alley, I wondered if he'd really meant it when he said he wanted to see me again. I also wondered if Aunt Hildreth had managed to find Ryzel through the information she'd gotten from me and talk to him. She'd said she wouldn't give him my address, but I was sure that if she did speak with him, she would've given him more than enough clues to find me in a week. Hildreth knew the exact details of Gran's vision involving me and Ryzel, and she was determined to help it along. She had left several phone messages to that effect on my voice mail, and I'd gotten a fair-sized chew out in the last one because I hadn't been home or returned her calls.

I moved to the wall of the club and ran my cane over the brickwork, stopping every few feet to sweep my cane in front of me. The last thing I needed was to trip over something at ground level and fall face first into whatever nastiness you could expect to find in an alley. I grinned when I heard the metallic sound of my cane hitting the doorframe. I turned the knob and smirked when the door opened easily. I took a quick peek down the hall and didn't see any auras. The area was empty. *Nice security there, Ryzel.*

Memory guided me down the hall. Music pounded through the building, partially muted where I stood at the turn in the hall to Ryzel's office. I still didn't see any auras, and for that, I was grateful. The last thing I wanted to do was explain to some bouncer who I was and why I was in an area that was likely employee-only. Chances were good that they wouldn't even listen to whatever I had to say before they tossed my ass out the door.

I turned down the hall to Ryzel's office, stopping at the door and rapping sharply with my cane before opening it and walking in.

"Ryzel, I don't know..." I trailed off at what I saw and heard.

Three auras writhed on the floor of Ryzel's office. One was Ryzel's. I didn't know or care who the other two auras belonged to. From the way the auras were moving and the noises they were making, I felt it was safe to assume I'd just walked into a *ménage à trois*.

Shock held me in place for several seconds. While I knew Ryzel needed to feed through the act of sex to stay alive, I'd never expected to walk in on him doing it. I hadn't actually given any thought to what he'd been doing for the week that we hadn't seen each other. The knowledge that it was probably something very much like what I was seeing and hearing sent anger rushing through me, along with a feeling very much like betrayal, twisting my guts painfully.

"Quinlin!" Ryzel called me in a voice that held a mixture of surprise and relief. His hand reached toward me, but I noticed he didn't tear himself away from his playmates or food or whatever. As unreasonable as it was, that hurt and thoroughly pissed me off.

"I didn't realize you'd be busy. Forget it. It wasn't important. I made a mistake," I said in a cold voice before spinning on my heel and heading out the door.

"Quinlin, wait."

I put a little more speed into my steps and my free hand out on the wall. I didn't want to miscount my steps and pass by the turn for the back door. I'd have a much harder time getting out of the club if I had to wade through the crowd of people on the dance floor and around the bar. There'd be too many auras close together to help me navigate easily.

"Stop him. Don't hurt him, but stop him," Ryzel shouted from behind me.

A large shape seemed to materialize right in front of me. I skidded to a stop and glared at the person who blocked my path. I tightened my grip on my cane. I was in no mood for this crap, and I wasn't about to be hauled back to Ryzel's office like a naughty child, no matter how much I needed to see him. I'd seen him, and he'd found himself a few new somebodies to play with. End of story. I was mad, not hurt about walking in on Ryzel like I had.

"The boss said to wait," said the hulking aura in front of me.

"Tough shit. I'm not waiting."

He moved faster than I thought somebody that size could and grabbed my free arm in a vise-like grip. I smirked at him. I knew how to deal with people being grabby like that. I'd had a few incidents with other kids pushing me around when I was young. It wasn't until I came home with a busted nose that Gran decided something needed to be done. She dragged me to a martial arts academy, spoke in low, serious tones to the owner, and got me into private lessons with the guy. He worked me like a dog in the use of a staff and various pole arms until I could defend myself from pretty much anybody who felt the need to take a poke at me. I still practiced twice a week with the old guy and had yet to ever beat him.

I cracked the guy in the knee with my cane, not sparing any strength behind the swing. The most unearthly scream came from his throat, and he crashed into the wall, taking me with him. My eyes widened when his aura shifted to show horns curving away from his head.

Oh, fuck.

Ryzel wasn't the only demon in the club. My mind spun as I wondered how many more demons might be there. I needed to get the fuck out, fast, before Ryzel called more demons out to keep me there.

The fingers wrapped around my arm squeezed, and the colors of the demon's aura bled out to nearly black. I was in deep shit and sinking fast. The demon stood a great chance of breaking my arm if he kept up the pressure. Nervous sweat slid down my spine and a pained groan escaped my throat.

"Another one of you humans bringing an iron weapon into the master's club? You should die for that," the demon hissed in a low voice.

Iron weapon?

I could've kicked myself when my brain finally made the connection. Good god, I was a clueless freaking idiot. I grinned at the demon, doing my best to ignore the pain in my arm. He was either very stupid or thought I'd brought iron with me on purpose. I was counting on stupid to get him to release me.

"Let go or I swear I'll activate one of the runes on my cane and banish your ass back to Hell," I bluffed.

I had no idea how to do that, but a bluff seemed like a damn fine idea at the moment. It was actually my only idea for getting my ass out of the club in one piece. The cane was a family heirloom and, I'd been told, had been used by some long-dead Druidic priest ancestor of mine. For all I knew, there actually was a rune to do that on the cane. It sounded like a bullshit line to me, but I hoped the demon was too stupid to know I was lying.

The demon hissed at me in a language I'd never heard before and shoved me away from him. I stumbled back into someone, grunting softly at the impact. My body, traitor that it was, instantly recognized Ryzel as we both dropped to the floor. I relaxed against Ryzel like a switch had been flipped, and arousal surged through me harder than it had in the entire week away from him. His arms wrapped around me and held me tight.

"Quinlin," he said, relief in his voice as he nuzzled my hair.

I wanted to let myself go and enjoy being in his arms. It felt so very, very right that I struggled to get free just on principle alone. Well, that and the fact that I was pissed that I'd walked in on him having a kinky little three-way when he said he wanted to see me again.

His hold tightened almost painfully, so I jabbed his leg with the end of my cane, hoping I'd go free. He bellowed in pain, but didn't let go of me.

"Quinlin, stop it, damn it. I'm not going to hurt you. You're safe with me."

"No, I'm not. Get your fucking hands off me, or I swear to god, I'll banish your ass back to Hell, too," I said as I tried to wiggle free. I couldn't help but notice his erection pressing against my ass, and that pissed me off even more for some reason. Hadn't his blue plate special taken care of that for him? If not, he should ask for his money back.

"No, you won't. You're lying, Quinlin. If you knew how to do that, you'd have done it when you found out what I was. Calm down and come back to my office. I have some important things to talk to you about."

"You mean he doesn't know how to banish us?" the demon who'd initially caught me asked with anger starting to thread through his voice.

"I'm not sure, but probably not. Go back to your post, Malvik. And make sure that I'm not disturbed. Quinlin and I need to have a long talk."

"But..."

"Go. Now," said Ryzel, his voice dropping at least two full octaves and taking on a gravelly pitch.

Ryzel said something else in that guttural language the other demon had spoken before. Malvik's aura registered shock before he fell to his belly and crawled toward us, words in that language pouring from his throat. I frowned as I watched Malvik's aura hover over Ryzel's foot. Small sounds like a wounded puppy came from him. I heard slurping noises and turned my head to look at Ryzel.

"He's not licking your feet, is he?" I asked in disbelief.

"Yeah, he is. He's begging forgiveness for almost hurting you. I haven't decided yet if I'll accept this apology or make him pay." Ryzel stood, hauling me up with him effortlessly. He kicked the demon groveling at his feet in the head. The demon flew backward and hit the wall with a nasty-sounding thud. He slid down the wall and lay unmoving on the floor, his aura fading away until I could barely see it.

I was shocked at the casual violence Ryzel had just shown to a demon that was apologizing in the most debasing way I'd ever seen. I didn't have any gentle feelings for the demon who'd almost busted my arm, but I hadn't expected Ryzel to kick the guy in the head and nearly kill him. Now I really wasn't sure I wanted to have anything to do with Ryzel. It was stupidly easy for me to forget that he was a demon and technically not one of the good guys, no matter how nice he'd been with me or how much I'd enjoyed his company.

I yanked back on the hold Ryzel had on me, surprised when I actually got free. I wasted no time and swung my cane at him. Ryzel lunged for me, and I jerked sideways, throwing off the swing of my cane. My arm vibrated from the impact, and Ryzel grunted, dropping like a rock to the floor.

I'd caught him in the side of the head with one of the few things on Earth that could actually hurt an Otherworldly creature. I hadn't meant to do that at all. I looked from Ryzel to the other demon, both of them motionless on the floor. While Ryzel's aura was a little muted, it still pulsed softly. He'd be fine when he woke up, but he'd have one hell of a headache.

I realized then that if I'd really hurt Ryzel, I wouldn't have been able to just leave him there. That little piece of enlightenment ticked me off. Why the hell did I care what happened to a demon I'd only slept with once? Why the hell did I care about a demon in the first place?

God damn Gran and her vision and love of only doling out small tidbits of information regarding what she saw. I needed to know *why* she thought it was such a good idea for me to be with a demon, and there was only one person I knew of who would be able to tell me. I had a controlling aunt to confront. I cursed softly when I remembered that said controlling aunt was currently several hours away by car, at the cottage she owned on the shores of Lake Muskoka. Phoning her was useless. She'd tell me nothing over the phone.

I swore, made a bee-line for the back door, and fled the club.

Chapter 9

I cursed and pulled myself to my hands and knees while I waited for the floor to stop dipping and swaying under me. I blinked several times to clear my vision and felt blood trickle down the side of my face. I grinned. Damn, Quinlin was something else when he got worked up.

Talk about bad timing, though. Five more minutes and the couple would've been gone from my office, and he'd have never known they'd been there. I knew what he thought he'd seen, but it wasn't sex. That was my meal for the day. I could go a few days without feeding if I had to, but an entire week and I'd be dead unless I went back to Hell. I couldn't search effectively for Quinlin from Hell, so I needed to feed while I stayed on Earth. I was damned if I did and damned if I didn't.

Searching discreetly for Quinlin hadn't been easy. Hildreth's clues to find Quinlin were good. Quinlin simply wasn't at any of the places I'd gone to. I could've probably set some of my underlings to watch the different places, but I didn't trust any of them with something as important as Quinlin. The ones that were too stupid to try to use the information that Quinlin was important to me, and still unmarked -- well, they'd generally fuck things up. They could never quite grasp how to act in a world full of humans for extended periods of time. The ones that could blend in were too smart to be given the information of what Quinlin was and his status without them trying to steal him for themselves. The first time I'd been looking for Quinlin, it hadn't mattered like it did now. I thought it was a damn shame the world had moved past the point of using gargoyles as decorative architecture. I sure as hell could've used one of them in tracking Quinlin down. They made fine, loyal watchdogs, too.

Finally getting my feet under me without swaying like a sapling in the wind, I summoned an imp. One popped into existence, landing on the hand I'd stretched out for that purpose. For something that was only about six inches high, it was unbelievably ugly, and malicious intent oozed from it. Greed gleamed in its eyes, and if I weren't so desperate to find Quinlin, I'd have squashed it like the pest it was.

It annoyed me to have to use the little bastards, but I needed to find Quinlin fast, and they were my best chance. My father was running out of patience with me and had rightfully pointed out that it was only a matter of time before another demon stumbled on Quinlin. I needed to find him and put my mark on him... for both our sakes.

"Master? Can I do something for you? Can I please, Master?"

My lip curled up. Imps were ass-kissers and a total pain, but they were good for a few things. Tracking was one of those things. They could find almost anything if they had a starting point and the right motivation. I held up a strand of Quinlin's hair that had tangled around my fingers when we fell to the floor, and I waited until the imp fixed its gaze on the hair.

"Take a prank of the best imps you can gather and find the man that this hair came from. Report back to me the instant you find him. Do *not* approach him or harm him in any way, or I will fry your asses in the most painful way I can. The first imp who finds him and tells me where he is gets twenty-four hours with any one of my spawnlings in my employ to use as they see fit, so long as no permanent damage or death is the result. Go. Find him."

The imp's eyes glowed with excitement. Tiny hands took the hair carefully, and it vanished. I might not have been able to find Quinlin in a week's time for a variety of reasons, but a prank of imps with something personal like a hair and a damn fine reward would have him placed within the hour. Of course, this would make more of the irritating little shits show up and hang around my club and other businesses, causing mischief while hoping to get another sweet deal like I'd just offered. The only consolation was at least half the prank would die doing this job for me. For such small creatures, they were surprisingly vicious to others, as well as their own kind. The greedy little bastards would rip each other apart to be the one imp that got the deal I was offering. I went back to my office to wait for word from the imps.

"Master, I have found him. My reward, yes?" said the imp standing on my desk, dripping blood onto the polished surface from the stump where its hand used to be.

"When I confirm it, you get your reward. Show me," I said, standing and waiting for the imp to lead the way.

It scowled at me for a moment before shrugging its shoulders and jumping from the desk. It scampered from my office, moving quickly for something so tiny. I followed and smirked a little at the bloody bits just outside my office door. It'd taken only twenty-seven minutes for an imp to return. That was even better than I'd hoped. The imp flitted along the dark street, nothing more than a half-glimpsed shadow of movement. I kept up with the imp, bending perceptions of the people on the street so they never even saw me moving among them. It took nearly half an hour moving at a good clip before the imp eventually stopped at the door to a recording studio and motioned me inside. I was a little out of breath from the run and envied the imp's ability to teleport. It pointed to a door and folded its little arms across its chest.

"In there. My reward?"

I glanced at the window in the door and swore. I nodded once at the imp in agreement and shoved the door open. The imp laughed evilly and vanished.

I stalked into the room and grabbed the tall man pressing Quinlin against the piano. Whoever he was, he was kissing Quinlin, and that was not allowed. I threw the stranger against the wall, hoping I seriously injured him. Quinlin stared at me in shock for several seconds before his fist shot out and caught me in the jaw. My head snapped back from the punch, and when I looked at Quinlin, pure murder crackled in his eyes. Crap. I think he was still pissed over that feeding he'd walked in on.

"You must be the gentleman that Quinlin wanted to punch out earlier. I can see why," the man said as he stood up and brushed off his sleeve.

I started to snarl out a reply when I got a good look at him. Just my luck that Quinlin would attract someone like him. My lip curled up and my eyes narrowed. The man looked me up and down. His expression mirrored mine, and his hands clenched into fists. If it came down to a fight between us, I was a little out-classed on skill. I figured I now had more raw power than he did, thanks to the Sunaldar, so it would probably turn into a long, drawn-out fight. Fuck.

"Nephilim," I hissed as I maneuvered myself between Quinlin and the man.

"Demon," the man sneered.

He dropped the pretence of humanity. Small, silvery-grey wings appeared on his back, and a war-hammer materialized in his left hand. He started to laugh when I dropped my humanity as well.

"You've got to be kidding me. An incubus? Oh, this isn't even going to be worth my time. I'm going to smear you across the floor."

I snorted. Nephilim were cocky pains in the ass. You couldn't help but want to punch one when he crossed your path. At least, that was my experience with them. Sure, this guy would hurt me, but he obviously thought he was dealing with a run-of-the-mill incubus. I wasn't about to correct him. Not when it'd help me beat the snot out of him.

"What the hell is going on here?" Quinlin asked in a tight voice. "Adrial? You're a Nephilim? I don't fucking believe this. I've had it. I'm leaving. Both of you can beat the snot out of one another for all I care."

Quinlin shoved past me and Adrial. Color was high in his cheeks, and I could almost hear him grinding his teeth together. If he left, I had no idea where the fuck he'd go, and I sure as shit didn't want to make another deal with some imps to find him again. With the appearance of the Nephilim on the scene, I couldn't let him just walk away. There was no telling how many Otherworldly creatures would cross his path and try to stake a claim on him. He was drawing us to him like flies to honey. I grabbed his arm and yanked him to me.

"We need to talk, Quinlin. Please. It's important," I said, brushing my cheek against his and inhaling his scent. Maybe a little sweetness would work with him.

I felt Quinlin's body tense. He knew he was no match against me, so I had no idea what he thought he could do. I had his arms trapped so he couldn't swing that nasty cane of his at me. Adrial folded his arms and smirked at me. He could see Quinlin was pissed and not reacting to my subtle seduction. Fuck, I hated those smug, quasi-angelic beings.

"I don't suppose you'd fuck off and let us have a moment in private, would you?" I asked in my most syrupy-sweet voice.

"Nope. This is highly amusing. Besides, I bet Quin doesn't want me to leave. He probably wants me to rescue him from you," Adrial said as he pushed himself away from the wall and stepped in front of me and Quinlin.

"Like hell he does," I said, holding Quinlin tighter to me and shifting to the side so Adrial couldn't touch Quinlin.

The elbow to my ribs was unexpected and made me loosen my hold on Quinlin enough so that he wriggled free. He faced me and Adrial, his cane held like he meant to crack one of us in the head if we moved too close. My body had already reacted to having him close, and my mouth was in motion before my brain had a chance to veto the idea.

"Fuck, you're gorgeous when you're pissed."

His eyes snapped with anger, and his breath came a little faster. More color appeared in his cheeks, and the first thing that came to mind was that he looked almost exactly like that when he came. Damn, I wanted him bad.

"You're an asshole, Ryzel. I only went to your club to get you to undo whatever the hell it was you did to me. Just because I need you to fix it doesn't mean I won't still crack you in the skull with my cane. I know how much it hurts you, and you, too, Adrial, to get hit with wrought iron. I've got no problem using this cane on either one of you."

"God, I love the fire of a redhead," Adrial said with a smirk. "Even though he's not nearly as pretty as his friend Haskell, I'm willing to make some allowances because of that temperament. I bet he's wild in bed, isn't he?" Adrial leered.

Quinlin looked like he wanted to murder Adrial. "Standing right here, dickhead. There's nothing wrong with my hearing. I should bash your head in on principle alone for that comment. Like I'd sleep with an ass like you." Quinlin snorted.

"You were going to before demon-boy interrupted us," Adrial said with a cocky smile. "Still could. He's right. You do look quite enchanting when you're all worked up."

"Like hell I was," Quinlin hissed. "A kiss, and not a very skilful one at that, doesn't automatically mean someone will jump into bed with you. You're a pompous ass, Adrial. One of these days, you're going to get taken down a peg, and I hope to fucking god I'm there to see it so I can laugh my ass off."

I edged subtly away from Adrial. Quinlin was beyond pissed now, and I thanked my lucky stars that I wasn't the one he was so mad at for a change. I also wasn't stupid enough to provoke a guy holding a weapon that could actually hurt me. If Adrial wanted to get his skull dented, I wasn't about to stand in his way.

Quinlin made a noise that was damn close to a growl and jabbed his cane at Adrial. The Nephilim laughed and went to deflect the blow with his hammer. I stared at Quinlin with wide eyes when he reversed his movement at the last minute and connected with Adrial's elbow. There was a sickening crunch of breaking bone, a shriek of pain that was oddly beautiful, and a thud as the heavy hammer dropped to the floor from Adrial's suddenly nerveless fingers. Quinlin smiled savagely at Adrial.

"I've wanted to do that for a long time. Stay away from me, Adrial. I now know what you are, and I've got no problem using whatever I have against you. I may have had a brief moment of insanity and let you kiss me, but I can't see ever being so desperate as to actually take you to bed. Why the hell would I when I have an incubus eager to get into my pants?" Quinlin said in a haughty tone with a superior little sniff.

I smirked at Adrial as he stood there clutching his arm, and walked over to Quinlin. Adrial would be fine in a day or so. A busted bone was painful, but ultimately it was only an inconvenience for a few hours. Hell, we could re-grow limbs. Adrial would remember not to underestimate Quinlin again, though. Getting my mark on him was even more important now. Nephilim had a nasty habit of seeking vengeance. That had to be a side effect of being so closely linked to warrior angels.

I took Quinlin's arm, ignoring his hostile look. He was still pissed. I sighed and steered him out of the room, cloaking myself in humanity again, and hustled him out the front door of the studio. I flagged a cab, keeping a firm grip on the arm Quinlin held the cane with. Now that I'd seen him swing it around, I guessed he'd had some kind of weapons training somewhere along the way. I wondered if that Gran of his was responsible for that. It seemed logical.

"Get your fucking hands off me, Ryzel," Quinlin said through clenched teeth.

"No. I've been trying to find you for the past week, and now that I have, do you really think I'll let you go? We're going to my place, and we're going to have a little chat, and you're going to listen to everything I have to say whether you like it or not."

"I'm not afraid to hit you. I've done it once, and I'll do it again."

I shrugged. I was willing to take that risk. A cab pulled up, and I shoved Quinlin inside, following close behind him before he could open the door on the other side and leave. I gave the cabbie the address and jerked Quinlin tight to me. He swore at me and tried to jab me with his cane. The cabbie flicked his eyes to the mirror, probably wondering if something was wrong with the fares he'd just picked up. I pressed my lips to Quinlin's ear.

"I need to talk to you, and if I have to resort to extreme measures to do that, I will. The cabbie's life means nothing to me, but I'm betting you'll come with me quietly if I let him live. His life is in your hands, Quinlin."

Quinlin snarled something at me and jerked his arm away from my hand. He crossed his arms and turned his head away from me. A smile quirked my lips. He really was beautiful when he was mad. I don't know how Adrial could think Haskell was better looking than Quinlin. The guy must have shit for brains.

The cabbie was still shooting troubled looks in the mirror, and I couldn't help myself. The urge to mess with Quinlin was too strong to resist, and my demonic nature kicked in.

"I swear it wasn't what it looked like, love. That guy kissed me first. I was just about to push him away when you showed up, honest. You know you're the one person for me," I said, making my eyes go as big and innocent as they could and putting a little pleading and contrition in my voice.

Quinlin's head whipped around to stare at me, shock and confusion in his face. The cabbie's eyes widened before he snorted softly and turned his attention to the road, although he did cock his head to the side, waiting for whatever Quinlin said in reply.

Quinlin opened and closed his mouth several times before his eyes narrowed and a nasty little smirk graced his lips. Uh oh. Maybe I shouldn't have opened my mouth.

"Uh huh. Just like when I walked in on you with that couple, writhing around on your office floor? What, were you all looking for a lost contact lens without your clothes on? Or maybe it was a game of naked Twister. I let you out of my sight for a few days, and the next thing I know, you're playing slap and tickle with somebody else. You, sir, have the morals of an alley cat," Quinlin said, sarcasm and scorn heavy in his voice.

The cabbie coughed to cover a snicker. Yeah, I kinda figured that little scene in my office hadn't gone over very well with Quinlin. If Quinlin wanted to have this discussion with somebody else present, I didn't have a problem with that. He'd probably be mortified later, but at least I'd managed to get him talking about what made him so angry. Even if I'd been pretty sure what pissed him off to begin with.

"I'm not the one who got scared at the idea of commitment and left in the middle of the night. You didn't even leave me so much as a note, Quinlin. I was worried sick when I couldn't find you anywhere."

Quinlin narrowed his eyes. They took on that jewel-like glitter I associated with him studying an aura. He'd see nothing but truth in the last part of that statement. The best, most convincing lies always had a measure of truth to them.

The cabbie was flicking his glance between the road and the mirror again. I was positive this was turning out to be the most entertaining fare of his night.

"It was sunrise when I left," Quinlin muttered. "Besides, my aunt spoke to you later that day. I'm sure she told you where you could find me. You're trying to cover your ass. You never bothered to look for me."

Was that a sulky tone in his voice? I certainly hoped so. I took Quinlin's hand. "She did visit me. She said I'd better treat you right or she'd have a few words with my father about it. My father was also concerned when I couldn't find you."

Quinlin stared at me. He was still mad, but now curiosity was burning in his eyes. "Hildreth knows your father? Your father knows about me? You told him about me?"

"The world works in funny ways doesn't it? I didn't tell him about you. He has a way of finding things out. You know that."

Quinlin closed his eyes and swore softly under his breath. I'd noticed that the cabbie was driving slower than he should've been and had already circled the block where my apartment was, twice. Quinlin and I needed to finish this conversation in private.

I caught the cabbie's eyes in the mirror and gave him a look that said he'd better get us to our destination immediately. Within moments, we were pulling up to my building. I paid the fare and hustled Quinlin inside. I was reminded of the night I'd brought him to the hotel room when he remained silent during the ride up to the penthouse, and wondered if I had a good chance of getting him into bed this time as well. A demon could dream, after all.

"Were you bullshitting in the cab, Ryzel? Does my Aunt Hildreth really know your father, and does he actually know about me?" Quinlin asked as soon as I seated him on the couch.

"Hildreth said she knows my father. He confirmed it when he paid me a visit. She said she knows his True Name, too. She's one scary fucking lady, Quinlin." I kept the information that Hildreth also knew my True Name to myself. I wasn't about to give Quinlin any possible leverage to use against me.

"Wait until she psychoanalyzes your sex life. Then you'll know true terror. There's only one reason my aunt would know your father, isn't there? God, thinking about my aunt getting it on with your dad is just... there are no words for how wrong that mental image is," Quinlin said with a little shudder.

I kept my mouth shut on that score. My father was the true master of the erotic arts. Watching him or, better yet, being on the receiving end of his talents was a rare treat. Somehow, I didn't think Quinlin was ready to hear about that kind of thing.

"Why would your father give a damn about me? I'm just some guy you screwed. Okay, fine, I have a Gift, and I understand you guys really like the way we taste or whatever. Just because I slept with you doesn't mean I'd sleep with him. I'm not like a... a... vending machine for sexual snacks or something."

"I haven't told you who my father is, have I?" I asked, trying not to snicker at Quinlin's analogy.

Quinlin gave me a hard look and tightened his grip on his cane. "Should it matter?"

Oh boy. He was going to freak out over this one. I could see it in his body language. At least he wasn't familiar with the layout of my apartment and probably couldn't make his way to the elevator and out before I could stop him.

"Have you heard of the demon Asmodai?"

Quinlin's mouth dropped open, and the color drained out of his face. "You're joking, right? There's another Asmodai, isn't there?"

"No demon shares a name with another. I'm sure you know that."

"Oh, this is just perfect. Not only did I sleep with a demon, I slept with the son of one of the demon princes of Hell. The gods hate me. That's the only reason for this black hole of what-the-fuckery that has suddenly swallowed my nice, normal life."

"Actually, we're called spawnlings or the Prince's Children. Most of the time he never bothers with any of us. Unless something happens to draw his attention, that is. That's sort of the case here. It wasn't intentional. I swear it, Quinlin. We share equal responsibility here."

"What? How do you figure that? I thought I was sleeping with a hot guy. End of story. You knew exactly what you were getting with me," Quinlin said, anger creeping back into his tone.

I smiled at the "hot guy" description. Sure, I knew I was beautiful. There weren't any ugly sex demons. Hearing Quinlin say he thought I was hot did fantastic things to my ego, along with other parts of my body. Sexual urges aside, I needed to bring Quinlin up to speed.

"Here's the deal. There's this thing called the Sunaldar. It happens when a sex demon finds a Gifted human who is his opposite. I don't mean in temperament or personality, although that happens, too. If a Gifted human has some angelic blood in their lineage, there'll be an attraction between the demon and the human. If they become intimate, a... bond develops. This bond will increase the demon's power, and the human will get Otherworldly perks like a longer-than-normal life and excellent health."

"So you're saying I'm fated to sleep with you? That we each get some take-home prizes for fucking each other? That's lame, Ryzel."

I dragged a hand through my hair and sighed. This wasn't going well. I wondered why his gran or Aunt Hildreth hadn't told Quinlin about the Sunaldar. I'm sure he'd have been more accepting about the idea if anyone besides me had told him about it. I couldn't fault him for not believing me. It did sound kinda hokey when I said it out loud, and it wasn't exactly common knowledge even among those who knew Otherworldly things.

"No, that's not it. Look, I never expected this. Different demons have different names for it and different requirements for the whole process to start. I'm a sex demon. Everything comes down to sex with us. I didn't even know what was going on until my father dropped in on me the

morning after we had sex and told me. I'm sorry, Quinlin, but there's nothing we or anyone else can do to stop it."

"Beautiful. Just fucking beautiful. I bet my gran knew about this," Quinlin muttered as he drummed his fingers on the arm of the couch.

"There's one other thing."

"Of course there is. Let me guess, I have to swear fidelity to you for the rest of my days, forsaking all other partners. Am I close?" Quinlin snapped.

"No. You'll always want me, but you're free to take anyone you want to bed. The Sunaldar isn't a prison sentence. It's more like a way for demons to remember that we were originally angels and all that we gave up when we voluntarily left Heaven," I said softly.

"Excuse me?"

"Demons were once angels. There was a slight difference of opinion in Heaven, and we were given the choice of leaving or being destroyed. Apparently, God gave the demons that choice out of love for his children. He also arranged for the demons to personally experience love by instilling the Sunaldar in us. A demon can love, Quinlin."

"So now you're saying you're in love with me? I swear to god, Ryzel, just when I think you're telling me the truth, you spout total bullshit. I'd like to leave now, please," Quinlin said with ice in his voice.

"Damn it, Quinlin, I am telling the truth here. No, I'm not in love with you. That takes time. The Sunaldar is like a big shove in that direction. It makes us want to be with the other person. It only works if there was attraction there in the first place. It's a two-way street, Quinlin. The Sunaldar is working on you, too, because you have the blood of angels in your family tree. Hildreth admitted that much to me. She says Grigori a few generations back. That would make the pull between us very strong."

Quinlin slumped in his seat. He obviously knew of his family history. He mumbled a few choice swear words and closed his eyes. I remained quiet. I'd just dumped a hell of a lot of information into his lap. He seemed to be thinking about what I'd just told him. Maybe he was even replaying whatever he'd been told by his Gran and Hildreth about the person he was supposed to meet and be happy with.

"What now? I'm very not cool with you sleeping around if you're supposed to be with me. I'm not an open relationship kinda guy. It doesn't matter if you say it's just feeding to you. It looks like sex to me. I'm still not sure how I feel about you feeding from me, either. I don't want to be just a... food source. I deserve more respect than that."

Okay, this was progress of a sort. I could work with this. I was perfectly willing to have Quinlin as my regular lover. I'd enjoyed myself a hell of a lot when we had sex. Just thinking about it

was making me hard. Granted, part of that was the memory of feeding from him and how mind blowing that'd been, but even without that, Quinlin was a damn good lay. I hoped he didn't freak out over this next part.

"Putting my mark on you *is* a sign of respect and honor among demons. I need to do this so other demons won't try and steal you for themselves regardless of us being Sunaldar partners. It's not something we do for shits and giggles, either. Once it's done, it can't be undone. I'm dead serious about this, Quinlin. I want you to have my mark. I want other demons to know you're mine and they can't have you. It won't hurt... I don't think, and nobody but another Otherworldly creature or another human that's demon-marked will be able to see it."

Quinlin stood suddenly. His face was flushed, and he looked more ticked off at that moment than I'd seen him all night. I was at a complete loss as to what I'd done to set him off this time. He seriously needed to tone down the level of pissiness. It was starting to annoy me when I'd been more honest with him in the past hour than I'd been with any living thing in several centuries. Quinlin headed in the general direction of the elevator, and my patience snapped.

I was in front of him, gripping his arms before he'd even had the chance to realize I'd moved. He jerked in my hold, getting angrier and angrier when he couldn't break free. He tried to swing his cane at me, but I twisted his arm and forced him to drop it. He cursed me fluently, his eyes flashing fire at me. He was enraged, but I could also see fear in his eyes. I didn't want him to fear me, but at the same time, his fear was a powerful turn on.

I couldn't help myself. He was in my arms, wriggling and squirming and looking more fuckable than I could reasonably resist. Lust flooded my system to an almost painful degree. I kissed him hard, dominating his mouth with roughness and pushing some of that lust I was feeling into him.

He froze for half a heartbeat before kissing me back with a savagery that surprised me, but one I completely appreciated. I let go of his arms, confident from his reaction to the kiss that he wasn't going to go anywhere, and tackled his shirt. His hands were just as busy as mine. Buttons seemed beyond him, so he fisted the front of my shirt and yanked. Hearing fabric tear and buttons clatter as they hit the floor pushed my lust into overdrive and seemed to do the same thing for him.

I was breathing hard and felt beyond excited at his aggression. I did the same thing to his shirt, running my hands over the skin I exposed. He buried his fingers in my hair and jerked my head back. His breathing was as ragged as mine, his lips kiss-swollen, a trickle of blood winding down his chin from where I must have split his lip when I'd kissed him so hard.

An evil idea occurred to me. I leaned in against the pull on my hair and licked the blood away while murmuring words in the demon tongue against his skin. His hand tightened in my hair, arousing me more. I let the mask of humanity slip away and sliced my tongue open on a fang before pressing my lips against Quinlin's and sliding my tongue into his mouth.

My cock throbbed when Quinlin sucked on my tongue, swallowing the small amount of blood I'd drawn. He moaned into my mouth and ground his hips into mine. I pulled back from the kiss and spoke more words in demon. I drew a sharp claw quickly in a pattern over the left side of his

throat and down his chest, leaving a deep, red welt but drawing no blood. I rested my hand over his heart and spoke the final phrase. Heat radiated from my hand, making him arch his back, and a low sound, heavy with desire, left his throat. His cock was as hard as mine, and I couldn't stand the idea of cloth between us. Quinlin's eyes were glassy, and he was panting harshly. He was already on the edge, and I'd barely done anything to him. Damn, I was good.

"Ryzel, wha... so hot. Need... it hurts."

I kissed him again. His skin was fever hot, and the scent of lust was pouring off of him. I fumbled a little with our zippers before managing to get our pants undone, having to slap away his hands that were not helping at all. We both groaned when I managed to shove our pants to mid-thigh and our cocks rubbed together.

I slid my hands under his shirt and up his back, pulling him tight to me. He thrust his hips against me, grinding our cocks together and twisting his tongue with mine. Quinlin shifted his grip from my hair to the ends of my horns, keeping my head in place with a surprisingly strong hold for another rough kiss I found incredibly erotic. His skin burned almost painfully hot against mine, and his body stiffened when orgasm hit him. My heart crashed against my ribs at the erotic feel of his seed smearing across my belly and the sound of his moans, muffled by my mouth. The thick, musky smell of his release filled my head, triggering my own orgasm.

Quinlin shivered as my cock pulsed against his, and all his muscles suddenly went lax. If I'd been human, we would've fallen to the floor at the sudden dead weight in my arms. As it was, I barely managed to stay on my feet, swaying like a newly spawned demon after his first sexual feeding.

Hot damn, but Quinlin was an amazing fuck.

I somehow managed to get my pants off without falling over and scooped Quinlin into my arms, weaving my way to the bedroom. His head lolled against my arm, and he was making tiny sounds of pleasure in the back of his throat. I sat on the edge of the bed and shifted Quinlin around until he was lying on his back. He struggled against closing his eyes in exhaustion before mumbling softly and letting them stay closed.

My hands stung, and the skin on my chest felt tender. My back itched, and even my horns hurt. I was dead tired, and I didn't have a fucking clue why. I'd never heard of a demon feeling like I currently was from claiming someone. Then again, I'd never actually bothered to ask.

I forced myself to get up from the bed, pulling Quinlin's shoes, pants, socks, and underwear off before shedding the rest of my clothes. Quinlin muttered a protest when I tugged at the blankets under him, but was already halfway to sleep. I crawled into bed beside him and took a moment to look at him.

His face was still lightly flushed, and his ginger hair mussed. His lips were puffy from the rough kisses we'd shared. Down one side of his throat was a stylized swirl of black lines that looked like a wreath of barbed roses. A black hand print, reduced to half its normal size, was stamped over his heart, my common name written in demon across the palm.

I dragged my fingers through the drying come on his belly and brought them to my lips, smiling to myself at the combined taste of our seed as I sucked on my fingers. Impulse had me licking his belly clean, giving me a sense of deep satisfaction. I pulled him against me, dragged the covers over us, and closed my eyes, pleased with what I'd done.

Quinlin was mine now. Whether he wanted to be or not.

Chapter 10

I groaned softly and scrubbed a hand over my face. My bottom lip felt tender, and the skin from my jaw down to my nipple on the left side felt tight, like I'd gotten a really bad sunburn. My mouth was desert dry, and I urgently needed to take a piss. I frowned as I tried to think of what the fuck I'd done the night before. A headache started to creep up on me.

Everything snapped into place when I finally realized the warmth against my back and the arm around my waist meant I wasn't alone in bed. What the hell did Ryzel do to me last night?

I remembered feeling overwhelming lust. I'd wanted, no, needed to feel his hands on me, and my body had screamed for release. Just thinking about how desperate I'd been for him last night made my cock start to harden, and I scowled. God damned incubus. I needed to get away from Ryzel and think. He seemed to be able to short-circuit my brain any time I got within ten feet of him.

I shoved the covers back and was completely surprised when I was able to slide out of bed without waking Ryzel. I stood next to the bed and found myself at a loss. I had no idea where the bathroom was, where my clothes were, or where my cane had disappeared to.

God damn it to fucking Hell!

I settled for calling Ryzel every name I'd ever heard of in every language I could scrape out of my mind. I hated being put in the position of having to stumble around with my arms outstretched, praying that there wasn't something at floor level for me to trip over. I didn't even know where the god damned door to the room was. I fumed and ground my teeth together, shuffling my feet along a sinfully thick carpet as I edged beside the bed, reasoning that the head of the bed was against a wall.

My fingers made contact with the wall, and I started moving away from the bed with slow, careful steps. The last thing I wanted to do was walk into a piece of furniture. I reached a corner and turned, cursing softly when my hip connected with something. I ran my fingers along the edge of what might have been a dresser. I made contact with the wall again and stumbled a little when my feet tangled in fabric. I bent down and smirked when I recognized my pants through the tag sewn into the waistband. I slipped them on, feeling slightly better now that I wasn't wandering around a strange place buck naked.

I eventually found the door and stepped out of the bedroom. Habit had me checking the room for any signs of life. I froze when I saw an immense aura radiating blackness not more than fifteen feet away from me. Ryzel's words about other demons coming to steal me away zipped through my head and made my heart pound. I tried to swallow past the dryness of my throat.

"Even if you yell, Ryzel won't wake up. He'll stay asleep until I will it otherwise," said what I assumed was a demon.

Oh, shit. I was screwed if I couldn't count on Ryzel to give me a little backup. I wasn't stupid. I didn't stand a chance, unarmed, against a demon. Going by his aura, the demon didn't seem to be lying about Ryzel staying asleep, but I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of me calling for Ryzel, either. The last thing I wanted to do was appear helpless in front of a demon, even if I was. Nothing to do but try and brazen this out. Maybe, if I were enough of a prick, he'd think I was too much trouble and leave me the hell alone. Not a great plan, but it was all I had at the moment.

"Who the fuck are you, and what the hell do you want?" I said with all the belligerence I could put into my voice.

"My, my, how rude. I'd have thought Hildreth and Wilhelmina would've raised you better." The demon made a tsking noise but stayed in his seat.

My eyes widened, and fear settled like a cold lump in my gut. I doubted it was common knowledge who'd raised me. There was likely only one demon aside from Ryzel who knew who'd raised me; Ryzel's father. This demon could squash me like a bug without breaking a sweat if he wanted to. Hitting him with my cane, if I'd had it, would only piss off a demon of his stature.

At least I knew enough not to show fear. If I was gonna go down, at least I'd go down swinging. All I had to work with was attitude. Fortunately, I had a metric fuck-ton of that.

"They did, but I'm never my best when guests simply show up and I haven't had my morning coffee yet. It's also rather rude to drop in on somebody without warning this early in the day, so I guess we're even."

There was silence from Asmodai for several seconds before he started to laugh. The sound was warm and intimate and slid over my skin almost like a caress. My heart hammered in my chest from nerves and, surprisingly, excitement. Damn, he was good. I did my best to ignore the tendrils of desire starting to curl through my belly. I watched warily as he rose from his seat and approached me. It was pointless for me to try to run when I had no idea of the layout of the room. I was also sure that he'd be able to catch me before I'd taken more than two steps, even if I'd been able to see.

"You are most definitely Dre and Will's relation. Only one of their blood would dare to speak to me like you just have. You're quite lucky I'm feeling generous this morning," Asmodai said as he reached out and cupped my chin. He tilted my head to the side, exposing my throat and making the already tight skin pull painfully. "Good that Ryzel's got his mark on you. He's one of my favorites, and it'd be a bother, not to mention embarrassing to Ryzel, to have to take you back from another demon. Doesn't set a good precedent."

Asmodai allowed me to jerk my chin from his grip. "He what?" I ground out as I touched the skin along my neck. The skin under my fingers felt warmer than normal and slightly raised, as if it was scar tissue or a serious set of welts. I traced the design from just under my jaw, down my throat, and over my collarbone. I fingered the smallish outline of a hand above my left nipple and the jagged strokes that ran across the palm. I ground my teeth together before spinning on my heel and facing the doorway I'd recently walked through. I'd never been so pissed off in my entire life.

"Ryzel," I snarled. "Get your fucking ass up and explain what the hell you did before I twist your god damned head off with my bare hands and stab you through the heart with my cane."

"He won't wake..." Asmodai began before inhaling sharply when Ryzel groaned and called my name in a sleep-fogged voice.

"You fucking bastard! You put your god damned mark on me?" I snapped as I advanced into the room. I focused on Ryzel's aura, using it to guide me to the bed.

"Damn it, Quinlin, I just woke up," Ryzel said in a husky, sleepy voice that sounded like carnal sin. I so didn't need to hear him sound like that at the moment. I fell back into my tried and true pattern of bitchiness when dealing with things I had very little control over.

"I don't give a flying fuck. You did this without my permission," I snapped, pointing at the mark he'd given me. "God damn, lying, sneaky, son of a bitch demon!"

Ryzel grunted when I jumped on him and managed to land a hard punch to his shoulder. He hissed and swore as he tried to catch my hands. He growled at me when my fist grazed his jaw. I reeled back with a pained hiss when he head-butted me hard. My breath left me in a rush when he shoved me to the bed, landing on top of me. I struggled under him for several seconds before I realized it was pointless and that I was simply wearing myself out and arousing him, judging by the erection pressing against me. I ground my teeth in frustration when my cock, traitor that it was, rose to attention and strained against the front of my pants.

"Well, well, well. This is an interesting turn of events. I think I see now why Dre said I'd enjoy watching things develop between you two."

Ryzel and I looked to where Asmodai leaned against the doorframe. I felt Ryzel's body tense over mine and was a little surprised when I realized that Ryzel hadn't noticed his father. I had no idea what Asmodai was talking about, and it further pissed me off that everybody but me seemed to be in the loop of whatever the hell was going on between me and Ryzel. Somebody was going to have to start spitting some answers out for me soon.

"You're going to be watching us?" Ryzel said with a thread of nervousness in his voice.

"I am now," Asmodai said with humor in his voice. "I haven't been this amused in longer than I care to remember."

"I am *not* having sex or letting you feed from me or whatever while your father watches. No fucking way, Ryzel. I don't care what marks you put on me. It's not gonna happen," I growled.

"As entertaining as that'd be, that's not what I meant. I simply meant that I'll be watching your progress together as you both adjust to the Sunaldar. I'm assuming you're the one responsible for the changes in Ryzel's appearance," Asmodai said.

"Changes? What changes? I'm the wronged party here. He's the one who's left marks on me."

"What changes?" Ryzel asked with suspicion in his voice.

Asmodai sighed and pushed off from the doorframe. "For one of my first spawnlings, you can be incredibly dense, Ryzelmei."

I took advantage of Ryzel's distraction and shoved against his chest. He grunted in surprise and landed on his side next to me. I moved to scramble away, only to be brought up short by Ryzel's hand clamping onto my wrist. I swung my free hand at Ryzel's head, glaring at him when he caught that hand as well.

"Quite the temper he has. Dre and Quinlin seem to share that wonderful fire of a redhead," Asmodai chuckled. "He'll be keeping you on your toes, I think. Probably be good for you. Have you looked in a mirror since you marked him, Ryzel?"

"No. We ended up overwhelmed by lust and... that was your doing, wasn't it? I wondered why I didn't feel extra lust when I fed after you touched me," Ryzel said. He muttered something under his breath that I didn't quite catch, but sounded like *sneaky bastard*. "We basically fell into bed and went to sleep after everything. Why? What change are you talking about?"

"Look for yourself," Asmodai said with an amused tone. I could really get to hate Ryzel's father and the constant smugness in his voice. Thank god Ryzel didn't sound like that, or I really would stab him through the heart with my cane.

Ryzel growled at me to stay put and left the bed. I flipped him off, earning a snicker from Asmodai, and sat up. Ryzel's order to stay put was pretty useless. Where the fuck was I going to go? Asmodai was blocking the door, and I was completely outclassed by the two demons in the room. Although, if I was being honest with myself, I was curious about the changes Ryzel was supposed to have and how he'd gotten them. I sure as shit didn't remember doing anything to Ryzel. Then again, I didn't remember him marking me, either.

"What the fuck?" Ryzel said in a shocked voice.

"Interesting, isn't it? Rather unexpected, really. I'd say it's a very good thing you've marked Quinlin as your own."

"What's changed?" I asked, when nobody said anything for several minutes.

"My horns," Ryzel said. Surprise, and maybe a little awe, were in his voice and surging through his aura.

I waited, and when Ryzel didn't say anything further, I muttered under my breath about rude demons. "Buy me a clue, Ryzel. What's different and why does it matter?"

"The last four inches or so of my horns where you had your hands last night are now white. They were all black before." Ryzel sounded like he needed to sit down.

"So? I still don't get what the big deal is. Maybe it's payback for you marking me without my say so." I couldn't help the slightly smug tone in my voice. I liked not being the only one affected by our little encounter. Fair's fair, right?

"But, the tips are white. This is a big deal, Quinlin. How the hell did you do this?"

I frowned. So the tips of his horns were white. So fucking what? I had a decent working knowledge of demonology, but whatever it was about the color change that got Ryzel's underwear in a bunch, I was completely clueless. I wondered if there was a handbook or something that went along with this whole Sunaldar thing. If there wasn't, there sure as shit should be.

"I believe the title of Marquis of Hell will fit your newly elevated status quite nicely, Ryzelmei. This was entirely unexpected, but your growing power will add to mine, and that pleases me. You may want to check a few other things while you're staring at the mirror, child. I think some of it was Will's doing. She was a creature of gorgeous subtlety and careful, long-term planning."

Marquis of Hell? Elevated status? I'd have to drill Ryzel for the full story later. I noticed that was the second time Asmodai had called Ryzel by a fuller version of his name. I highly doubted it was an accident. Demons didn't casually float True Names out there for anybody to hear. Not that I was bitching, but I just couldn't figure out why he was doing it. I smiled when I realized that Ryzel was too rattled to have noticed.

Asmodai's comment about Gran rang true, and I wondered what other things he meant for Ryzel to check and how Gran would have been involved in it.

"What the... son of a bitch! When the hell did you do this, Quinlin?" I heard surprise and irritation in Ryzel's voice.

"Do what?" I asked. I had no idea what he was talking about or why he would sound pissed. I was the one with a demon mark on me. Some white-tipped horns were nothing compared to what he'd done to me. I was still the wronged party here.

"There's a small handprint over Ryzel's heart with what looks like a music note on the palm. Oh my, I do believe he's quite upset over that. He looks spectacular when he's angry, you know."

I could hear the laughter in Asmodai's voice, and this time I felt like snickering myself. I had no idea how something like that could've gotten on Ryzel, or, if I'd done it, how I'd done it. Turn-about was fair play in my book. I grinned, enjoying Ryzel's discomfort and the surprising beauty of his wildly fluctuating aura.

"Actually, I don't know. I'm blind. Least I'm not alone in this marked thing. Kinda seems fair to me. Payback's a bitch, eh, Ryzel?"

"Ah, yes. I forgot. You see auras, though, don't you? That is your Gift, correct?"

I highly doubted Asmodai had forgotten I was blind or that I saw auras. Demons didn't forget important pieces of information like that. Whatever his game was, I figured it wouldn't hurt to play along with him. Who knew? I might even be able to get more of Ryzel's Name out of his father or some other, equally useful information.

"Yeah, I do. Right now, Ryzel's is erratic in both color and pattern. It's really quite pretty."

"Is it? How about now?" Asmodai asked as he reached toward Ryzel and stroked a hand down Ryzel's chest.

Thick waves of energy swirled down the center of Ryzel's chest, and he groaned, sinking to his knees. His aura surged with arousal. He panted harshly, and his entire body shuddered. I opened my mouth to ask what was wrong and had desire slam into me so fast I actually whimpered. Asmodai laughed softly, and need twisted through me hard. My higher brain functions shut down, and all I could think of was getting to Ryzel so I could touch him, kiss him, fuck him senseless. I wanted him beyond all reason, and I didn't care that Asmodai was standing in the room with us. He could watch me bang Ryzel as long as he didn't interrupt. I slid from the bed and crawled on hands and knees to where Ryzel knelt.

I grabbed his horns and pulled him into a kiss that was all about the need I felt. I shoved my tongue against his lips, demanding entrance to his mouth. He opened to me, and a satisfied rumble sounded in my throat. Our tongues twisted together as we both tried to dominate the kiss, but surprisingly, I was winning. His arms wrapped around me, and the almost suffocating desire surrounding me dropped sharply. I still wanted Ryzel more than I'd wanted anyone in my entire life, but I didn't feel like I would die if I didn't have him right that very instant.

I pulled back from our nearly desperate kiss and rested my forehead against his, breathing hard and painfully aroused. The musky scent of his desire filled my nose, and I wanted to lick and nibble his skin.

"What the hell?" I rasped. Ryzel's naked chest was pressed to mine, and I thought it was terribly unfair that I was wearing pants and he wasn't. I wanted to feel his cock rubbing against mine.

"What the hell indeed. The two of you should be tearing into each other with uncontrolled lust. I could maybe see Quinlin resisting my power a little with the help of the Eyes, but Ryzel, you

should be almost mindless with the need to have Quinlin. You are my direct spawn, and I should have ultimate control over your desires."

Fine tremors ran through Ryzel, and his aura flared sun bright. He gasped and hugged me tighter to him. Where his hands touched me, my skin tingled warmly. The Eyes burned icy hot on my back, and I groaned as desire surged and retreated through my body in waves.

I risked a glance over at Asmodai and saw tendrils of his aura reaching out toward me and Ryzel. His mask of humanity was gone, and my mouth fell open a little at the size of the horns spiraling from his forehead and huge shapes behind him that I assumed to be wings. Power surrounded him and slowly filled up the room. Ryzel groaned in my ear and clutched me so tight to him that I swore I could feel my bones creaking in protest.

"My Lord Father, I beg you, leave Quinlin out of this. Please," Ryzel said in a deep, gravelly voice. I'd never heard him sound so... submissive.

"I will not have one of my spawnlings rejecting my power over him," Asmodai replied in a deep voice that both scared and aroused me at the same time.

I was reminded again that this was no ordinary demon that Ryzel might have been able to protect me from, but one that could probably snuff us both out of existence as easily as breathing if he chose to. I was getting the idea that we'd somehow pissed off one of the most powerful demons in Hell. Even though Ryzel's arms were painfully tight around me, I was starting to hope like mad he wouldn't let me go. Asmodai plain scared the shit out of me.

"You do beg rather prettily, Ryzelmei. One of your better talents. How far will you go, I wonder, to keep your Sunaldar partner safe?"

I heard Ryzel swallow hard. Oh, this was so not good. How the fuck did this go south so damn fast?

Ryzel shifted his grip on me and held his right hand out toward Asmodai. I was starting to feel lightheaded from the crushing grip Ryzel had on me, but I saw Asmodai recoil slightly. The power filling the room seared over my skin and vanished. Asmodai chuckled dryly and shrugged his shoulders, his horns and wings disappearing in the blink of an eye.

"God damn, but Dre and Will are good. Dangerous as all hell, but amazing in their depth of planning," Asmodai said with reluctant respect in his voice. "Lower your hand, please, Ryzelmei. Now."

There was more request than command in that "now" that Asmodai uttered, which seemed a little strange given the display of power he'd shown not five minutes previously. Something weird was going on, but I'd more or less resigned myself to that being the new norm in my life.

I pushed against Ryzel's hold, and after a brief tightening, he relaxed his grip enough so that I wasn't in danger of passing out from lack of air. I could feel the bruises starting on my ribs from

how hard he'd squeezed me. As soon as I could move without wincing in pain, I was going to punch Ryzel for nearly squeezing me to death.

"My Lord?" Subservience was still in Ryzel's voice, along with confusion.

Asmodai stepped close to us, and Ryzel clutched me tight again, making me hiss with pain. Asmodai gripped Ryzel's chin and kissed him on the lips in a way that didn't seem fatherly at all. Ryzel groaned softly, and I felt his erect cock twitch against my thigh. Asmodai released Ryzel and grabbed my chin. I had no time to protest before Asmodai's lips were covering mine in a blatantly carnal kiss. Heat and lust rushed through my body, making me dig my fingers into Ryzel's shoulders and grind my hips into his. As suddenly as the kiss started, it was over, and Asmodai was moving away from us.

"Ryzel, I'd suggest you check your hands and back once you've taken care of your desire. Quinlin, Ryzel is a little off balance and in a submissive frame of mind. If you move quickly and aren't afraid of using a little violence, you may yet have the pleasure of his ass. Don't worry. He's a demon. He can take some rough handling. Enjoy my gift, children," Asmodai said, and vanished, a rich, sensual laugh lingering in the air and making my cock twitch with excitement.

Arousal seemed to be surging through my veins in time with the thumping of my heart. There was no mistaking the feel of Ryzel's erection pressing against my leg. My mind latched onto the idea Asmodai had planted in my head about having Ryzel's ass. Sure, he seemed a little unsettled over whatever the hell had happened between him and his father, and it was probably wrong on several levels to take advantage of that. I had sorta gotten permission from his father, though, and as much as I hated being pushed into things, I did still really want to get into Ryzel's pants. Besides, it'd be really rude and likely fatal to refuse a gift from a Prince of Hell and my kinda new father-in-law, wouldn't it?

I shook my head slightly and grabbed Ryzel by the horns again, kissing him roughly and dominating him. I knew my dick was doing the talking for me, and it had zero brains, but I couldn't think of one good reason not to shove Ryzel to the floor and have my wicked way with him. Going by the deep moan of pleasure and the absolutely lewd things he was doing with his tongue, neither could Ryzel.

I pulled back a little from Ryzel and smirked at him. I was going to take Asmodai at face value and do what he suggested. Let's see what Ryzel thought of playing the bottom for a human.

Payback was always such a bitch.

Chapter 11

Desire rushed through me, a parting gift from my father that increased the arousal I always felt for Quinlin. I also felt awash with heightened sensation to a level beyond what I'd normally feel as a sex demon, and that was saying something. Every touch of Quinlin's skin against mine felt like Heaven. The scent coming from him was intoxicating. I wanted to touch and taste him everywhere. I wanted him to touch and taste me everywhere. I was almost positive Quinlin was feeling what I was feeling. My father'd kissed him, too.

I wondered briefly what my father had meant when he said I needed to check my hands and back, but when Quinlin kissed me with heat and aggression, simple things like remembering my name slipped away from me. My hands encountered fabric when I smoothed them over Quinlin's ass. A whimper sounded in my throat. I needed to touch him skin on skin. Quinlin shoved hard against my chest, catching me by surprise. I landed on my back on the floor and reached for him to pull him close.

"Don't fucking move," Quinlin said in a low, commanding voice that only succeeded in making lust shoot straight to my cock.

His eyes glittered with arousal, and his chest heaved. I smiled slowly. I wasn't the only one feeling so turned on, and at that point, I didn't care that my father had demonically goosed our arousal. I got to have Quinlin again, so it was all good in my lust-hazed mind.

I stared as Quinlin yanked open his pants and shoved them down to his hips. My mouth watered when his cock sprang free. I started to push myself up when Quinlin stood, planted a foot firmly on my chest, and leaned some of his weight down, pinning me to the floor. I grunted a little at the unexpected move, desire slithering through me. Quinlin narrowed his eyes at me.

"I said don't fucking move, Ryzelmei."

I couldn't help it. I shivered with anticipation at the command in his voice. He sounded so... hot when he was all bossy. The rational voice in the back of my head was demanding to know how Quinlin knew part of my True Name, but it was being drowned out by lust. I should've pushed his foot off my chest and taken control, but my brain kept insisting how sexy it was to see Quinlin go into full top mode and pin me down. That I happened to like the hint of violence was a huge bonus. I slipped my hands under the cuffs of his pants and trailed my fingers over his skin. I smiled when he inhaled sharply.

"Lube and condoms. Where are they?" Quinlin demanded.

"Lube is on the night table, and we don't need condoms. I can't get or pass on any diseases. Don't you want to have sex without something between us? Come on, Quinlin, think of how good it'll feel with nothing but skin on skin contact," I said with a seductive smile.

Quinlin grunted at me and pressed his foot a little harder into my chest. Hot damn, but I was finding this exciting as all get out. "Where are the condoms?"

I groaned softly, my body responding to the rough authority in his actions and voice. I shouldn't be finding this so damn thrilling. Sunaldar or not, humans didn't top me. But this was so fucking hot. "Beside the lube," I finally managed to get out around a groan.

Quinlin removed his foot from my chest and headed for the bed. His leg brushed the edge as he moved cautiously toward the head. He groped a little on the table and snatched up the lube and condoms before making his way quickly back to where I lay on the floor. He dropped to his knees beside me and leaned down until his lips brushed feather light against my collarbone.

"Don't move unless I tell you to," Quinlin ordered between sharp, nipping kisses to my throat.

I shivered and arched my neck submissively, my body deciding that it very much liked this dominating side of Quinlin even as my mind was screaming that I shouldn't. Fortunately for me, my body knew better than my brain when it came to pleasure.

Quinlin took hold of my horns and held my head still for an aggressive kiss that involved plenty of tongue and teeth. He invaded my mouth, tasting and teasing me with forceful stabs and light strokes of his tongue. He shifted so that he straddled my leg and rubbed his partially exposed cock back and forth against me. I groaned into his mouth at the erotic feel of his dick sliding over my skin and the firm press of his denim covered thigh against my cock and balls.

Quinlin nipped my bottom lip before sucking on it lightly. The few functioning brain cells I had made me dig my claws into the carpet in an effort not grab him to me and possibly hurt him. My stomach muscles tightened, and my hips tilted automatically, rubbing myself against his leg. Damn, he felt amazing everywhere we touched. I wanted more and was damn near willing to promise him anything if he'd only touch me everywhere he could reach.

Quinlin let go of my horns and trailed his fingers down my throat and over my chest. He smirked a little when he traced the small handprint over my heart. He may have said he didn't know how he'd put a mark on me, but his expression said that he sure as hell was pleased with himself about it. Quinlin lowered his head and traced the outline of the handprint with his tongue. A strangled moan escaped me, and my hips bucked upward again. Pleasure so intense it was almost painful shot through my body. It felt like there was a direct connection between my cock and the mark on my chest when he did that.

"That really turns you on, doesn't it?"

"Fuck yeah. Do it again," I panted.

Quinlin's smile was positively wicked and made my already fast heartbeat double. He licked a broad, sweeping path back and forth over the handprint, making me writhe in delight before eventually moving down to my nipple. He took the tight bud between his teeth, worrying it and flicking the tip with his tongue. His hand was busy pinching my other nipple, sending lust rushing even faster through me. Unholy fucking Hell, but this was good. I might have to give serious consideration to letting Quinlin top me again if this time was anything to go by.

Quinlin sat back on his heels and stared at me for a few seconds before that wicked smile played across his lips again. The tiny part of my brain that was still fighting the idea of Quinlin topping me was yelling about how I should be worried about the smile. My body was all for the idea, and overruled my brain when he stretched himself out over me, rubbing our bodies together, and kissed me again. His scent was damn near drugging, and his skin sliding over mine made me want to hold him to me and never let go so I'd always feel this pleasure.

Quinlin sucked on my tongue briefly before he broke the kiss to trail his lips over my jaw in more of those brain-melting, nipping kisses. He shifted against me, and I started to whine a protest when he trailed his lips down my throat and over my chest. My stomach muscles tightened in anticipation when my lust-soaked brain figured out what he was aiming for. My breath left me in a rush when he licked a long, slow line over my cock.

My hips bucked, and my world narrowed down to the feel of Quinlin's mouth on my dick. The tip of his tongue teased the slit, making me gasp at how fucking fantastic that felt. When his lips slid smoothly around me, I groaned and dug my claws even further into the carpet. Quinlin bobbed his head and sucked, his hand rolling and tugging my balls until it felt like he was trying to pull an orgasm from me.

My eyes popped open when he suddenly backed off my cock and stopped playing with my balls. I almost felt like he'd left me hanging when I knew I wasn't that close to orgasm yet.

"Beg for it," Quinlin said in a soft voice filled with command and arousal.

"What?" I asked with a little confusion in a voice made thick with desire.

"You want more? Beg for it. Beg me to fuck you." Quinlin smirked while slowly stroking my cock. He stopped jerking me off and teased my balls with light touches, making my breath catch in pleasure.

"I..." My voice trailed off when he moved forward and slid his cock against mine, licking his lips and giving me a lust-filled look that made my cock twitch against my belly. Fuck, he was hot.

"Beg me to stuff my cock up your ass, or I'll continue to play with you and not let you come," Quinlin said, leaning over my body until his lips were inches from mine and I could see the heat burning in his pale green eyes. He wanted me, too. I knew lust when I saw it, but there was also rigid control and determination in his eyes, and as weird as it was, I found that a total turn on. "I know how bad you want it, Ryzelmei. I can see it in your aura. I'll torment you until you can't

even think straight, but I won't give you what you need until you beg me for my cock in your ass."

Beg? What sex demon has ever needed to beg for sex?

My eyes widened when I realized he was dead serious. I could see it in his face. I never would've guessed Quinlin could be so cruel. I moaned softly. The idea of being tormented for hours by Quinlin's talented mouth and hands just made me want him more. He was going to be stupidly easy to fall in love with. My breath stuttered in my chest at that sudden realization.

The thought completely flew from my mind before I had a chance to think about it when Quinlin turned his head and licked a long line along one of my horns. The wet heat of his tongue in such an intimate gesture made my brain short circuit and my body take over. I moaned in pleasure and closed my eyes, concentrating on not blowing my load. How the hell did he know I'd damn near lose it if he did that? Could he read that much from my aura?

My back arched, and I yelled in surprise when Quinlin wrapped his lips around the tip of my horn and sucked, his teeth scraping over the slight ridges. Desire slammed into me hard. My cock twitched against my belly, and the muscles in my ass clenched and released in pleasure. Fluid leaked from my cock and puddled on my belly. I whimpered at the waves of delight flowing through me from Quinlin's talented mouth and the gentle pulsing of my cock. What Quinlin was doing was fantastic, but I needed more. I wanted sex, and I wanted to feed from him while he did these absolutely sinful things to me.

It took a few lust-hazed moments for me to realize that begging for Quinlin to fuck me would cost me nothing but gain me everything. It wasn't like I hadn't begged demons for other things when a hell of a lot more was on the line than a few shreds of demon pride. Quinlin wasn't making me beg for the same reason that a demon would. He wasn't trying to prove he had more power than me. Quinlin wanted me, and was just playing a harmless bedroom game of one-upmanship.

I was exceptionally proud of myself for thinking all that through when I could barely remember my own damn name because of the utter delight he was treating me to. I was one hellishly lucky demon to have found Quinlin and marked him as mine.

"More," I said in a hoarse voice, even as shivers of delight started to travel over my skin.

"More what?" Quinlin asked as he backed off the gentle torture of my horn.

"Everything," I groaned.

"Everything can be an awful lot of things. What are you asking me for, Ryzelmei?" Quinlin asked with a little smirk as he sat back on his heels and trailed a hand down my chest.

"I want..." I started, only to suck in a breath when he stroked a hand over my cock.

"You want... what?" Quinlin asked in a cool, controlled voice that was completely at odds with the lust in his eyes. Something that simple from him was making me crazy with need.

"You," I said, my voice finally sliding into its natural, gravelly tone. "I want to feel you moving with me. In me. I want to feed from you while you fuck me senseless. I want you, Quinlin. More than I've wanted anything in a very long time. Please."

Quinlin gave me a slightly surprised look at my admission before that wicked smile of his appeared again. He groped for the lube, squirting a generous amount over his fingers. A shudder worked its way down my spine, and lust surged through my veins at what I knew was coming. I was a little surprised at how badly I wanted to feel Quinlin's cock in my ass, but I wasn't fighting that need anymore. Desire wasn't the only hunger twisting in my belly. I drew in a deep breath, forcing my brain to think beyond my need for a few precious moments, and snagged his wrist before he could slip his hands between my legs.

"Will you let me feed from you, Quinlin? Not just now, but when I need to from this point on?"

His answer was important. I knew he didn't like the idea of being a food source for me, but I needed to feed sexually to stay alive unless I chose to live in Hell, and that was something I'd rather not do. If Quinlin wasn't going to let me feed from him, and then got all pissed off at me when I went to someone else, we were gonna have a big fucking problem, Sunaldar or not. Not only did I want to feed from Quinlin, but I didn't want to fuck up what I thought we could have, what the Sunaldar had set into motion. I knew this could be good for both of us if he'd let the Sunaldar take its course.

"What if I only let you feed from me when I fuck you? You willing to make that kind of deal with me, Ryzel? Will you bottom for me every time you feed from me?" Quinlin asked with a tiny smirk.

"Done. I accept the terms of your deal," I said without a second's hesitation, and with what was probably a smug grin.

Quinlin's eyes widened in surprise. He obviously hadn't expected me to give in so easily or so quickly. He really had no idea how good a feed he gave me or how much I enjoyed sex with him. Agreeing to bottom for him when I fed was a damn small price to pay for the absolute feast he gave me in return. Quinlin was doing one fine fucking job as a top in my opinion, and I knew a good top when I was under one. Because he was my Sunaldar partner, I was even willing to overlook the fact that he was human. Besides, I'd only agreed to bottom when I fed from him. I could still top him when we had sex and I didn't feed. He hadn't said shit about that.

"Why do I get the feeling I just got screwed here?" Quinlin asked, with annoyance and suspicion plain in his voice.

I laughed and pulled him to me for a fast kiss, feeling a little more in control now that Quinlin was the one off balance. I'd still let him fuck me. I wanted to feed from him, and demons never went back on the deals they made. Of course, nothing in our deal said I couldn't immediately

spread Quinlin's legs and sink into his tight ass once I'd fed. I could finish my feed, have the pleasure of Quinlin's orgasm, and then do his tight ass before he'd even started to come down from his pleasure high. Seemed like a damn fine deal to me.

Quinlin shoved away from me and narrowed his eyes. I spread my legs apart and let go of the last little bit of control I'd been clinging to. Lust surged through me, and sexual pheromones seeped from my skin, perfuming the air with arousal. I sub-vocalized my desires, knowing that those sounds would be heard on a level Quinlin wasn't even aware he could hear, and he'd respond to them unconsciously. I couldn't rely on my beauty to entrance Quinlin, since he couldn't see it, but he could see what was going on with my aura, and he'd already said that he thought that was beautiful. I hoped what I was feeling and wanting were coming through loud and clear in my aura.

Considering the scents and sounds I was pumping out, I was expecting Quinlin to smear the lube around my hole, maybe do a little stretching before the lust got to be too much for him to resist, and stuff his dick up my ass. I wasn't expecting him to tease the ever-loving hell out of me with slow and gentle preparation. His lube-slicked fingers circled my hole over and over until I was thrusting my hips in time with his rhythm, trying to get him to do something more. A drawn-out moan left me when that first finger slid smoothly inside me. Quinlin started again with slow, easy thrusts that had me biting my lip and digging my claws back into the carpet. I nearly whimpered with relief when he pushed another finger in. He was slowly killing me with the pleasure, and I was loving every damn minute of it.

"Something I can do for you, Ryzel?" Quinlin asked with a knowing smile and a little breathlessness in his voice. He may have been trying to look like he was unaffected, but I could smell desire coming off him in waves. "You have to tell me what you want, Ryzelmei. Otherwise, how will I know?"

I groaned when his fingers pressed hard on my sweet spot. God damned bastard knew exactly what he was doing and enjoyed driving me nuts. Oh yeah, Quinlin and I were going to work out better than fine as Sunaldar partners. If he wanted to hear me beg, I'd beg. The words cost me nothing, and I'd get what I wanted and then some. I could also beg rather nicely. Even my father said so.

"I want your cock in my ass. Now. I want you to fuck me hard while I feed from you. I want to feel your cock spurting in my ass when you come. Will you give me what I want, Quinlin?"

He moved between my legs and groped on the floor beside me almost before I'd finished begging. I covered his hand just as his fingers closed on a condom. His gaze swung to me, a question and mild annoyance in his eyes.

"You don't need that. I'm telling you the truth that you can't catch or give me any kind of disease."

"You can feed even if I use a condom, can't you?"

"Well, yeah, but..."

"Then we use a condom until I say different, got it?" Quinlin said firmly.

I released his hand. He didn't fully trust me, and I couldn't exactly call him on it. I was a demon, and we were kinda notorious for lying. We'd work on the trust issues later when we weren't so damn horny.

Quinlin rolled the condom on and pressed his cock to my hole. We both groaned as he sank in smoothly to the hilt. He was still only for a few moments before he started to move. I decided to take a chance that I wouldn't claw him and brought my hands to his ass, urging him to set a rougher pace than the one he was using. Quinlin did what I was wordlessly asking him to and really started to pound into my body. I opened to him and let the sexual energy building between us flood me.

I gasped, and my back arched, the richness of what Quinlin was giving me making my head spin. His hand slipped between our bodies and wrapped around my cock, jerking me in time with his hip thrusts. He licked a line from the tip of my horn to the base, and I lost whatever miniscule restraint I'd been holding on to. Instinct took over, and I started to forcefully suck the sexual energy from him instead of letting it flow into me at its own pace. Quinlin moaned, his voice rising at the end until he was screaming his pleasure. He ground his hips into me, his energy peaking sharply when his cock pulsed in my ass. His hand tightened on my dick, and his lips brushed my ear, his breathing harsh.

"Come for me, Ryzelmei," he demanded in a hoarse voice filled with pleasure, desire, and a subtle command.

I growled as my body obeyed what Quinlin ordered me to do. My cock spurted in his fist, the pleasure of my orgasm cutting my feeding off. I felt full almost to bursting from the energy I'd taken from Quinlin. I'd never had my hunger so completely satisfied even when I'd killed my meal by draining him dry.

My eyes slipped to half-mast, and I grunted a little when Quinlin collapsed bonelessly on top of me. He was breathing hard, and his face looked a little paler than normal, but he seemed fine. Tiny shivers travelled over his body, and he made soft sounds of contentment in his throat. I ran my hands over his back in soothing circles and waited for my own breathing to settle back down to normal. Bottoming for Quinlin was so worth it; I didn't even have words to describe how good I felt. I'd definitely gotten the better end of the deal, in my opinion.

Quinlin groaned softly and shifted against my chest. I sucked in a quick breath and almost protested when his cock slipped from my ass. As much of a surprise as it was, I liked the way his cock felt in my ass. I liked the way mine felt in his even better, although it was a close contest. I think if I hadn't felt so full and lazy, I probably would've flipped him to his back and given him as good a fucking as he'd just given me.

Quinlin yawned hugely and rubbed his cheek against my jaw. I gave him a gentle nudge until he rolled off me and onto his back on the floor beside me.

"Christ, I feel like I could sleep for an entire day. Am I supposed to feel like this after you feed? I don't remember feeling this tired the first time we had sex. You did say you'd fed then, right?"

"Yeah. Sorry, I got a little greedy there. You tasted so damn fine; I just couldn't help myself and sorta gorged a little."

Quinlin hummed a non-answer. I turned my head to look at him and saw a faint blush on his cheeks. His breathing was starting to even out and get deeper. He was on the verge of falling asleep, and we were still on the floor of my bedroom.

I groaned softly and forced myself to move, even though it was the last thing I wanted to do. The only thing motivating me to get my ass off the floor was the fact that, once I got Quinlin into bed and both of us cleaned up, I could fall asleep wrapped around him.

I picked Quinlin up easily over his half-hearted, sleepy protest and put him on my bed. The trip to the washroom to toss away the used condom and get a warm washcloth had me dragging my feet. I started to climb into bed and was surprised when Quinlin opened his eyes and looked at me.

"Check your hands and back, Ryzel. Your father said to, and he made it sound kinda important. And tell me what the hell you see this time before I have to drag it out of you. I don't have the energy for that right now, thanks to you."

I think that was supposed to sound all pissy, but it came out more as a soft reminder. Trust Quinlin to remember something like that when he was on the verge of a sleep brought on by a really intense bout of sex. The guy had a mind like a steel trap. I'd have to remember that and watch my step with him.

I smiled and turned my hands palms up. My mouth fell open in shock at what I saw. The Eyes that Quinlin had tattooed on his back were now burned into the palms of my hand in thin, silvery lines like old scars. How that'd happened... I didn't have the faintest clue.

It now made sense, though, sort of, that Asmodai had said I was rejecting his power over me even when I hadn't been. The Eyes were responsible for that little bit of resistance that nearly got me on Asmodai's Need To Die List. The Eyes were just doing their job in protecting the bearer from harm.

I laughed softly when I realized what Asmodai had meant when he said Quinlin's gran and great-aunt were devious and masters of long-range planning. They really would have made very fine demons. I think I was also starting to be a little bit scared of Quinlin's Aunt Hildreth.

"What's on your hands, and why are you laughing?" Quinlin asked, sounding half-asleep.

"The Eyes you have on your back seem to have been burned into the palms of my hands. Probably at the same time that you managed to put a mark on me. I've got a real edge now against just about any demon that tries to step on me. I'd still really like to know how the hell that happened. The Eyes even made Asmodai pause for a second or two, and he's only one rung from the top of the demon ladder. This is freaking incredible, Quinlin."

"Uhhh... you're welcome?" Quinlin said, with a little uncertainty and a lot less sleepiness in his voice. He frowned and seemed to be thinking before a satisfied smile touched his lips. "I reserve the right to claim something in compensation from you at some point for that... gift, Ryzelmei."

I raised an eyebrow at Quinlin. Either he wasn't nearly as sleepy as I thought, or he was a lot sharper when he was half-asleep than I'd given him credit for being. He was smart enough to realize that if he'd given me something of his own free will, even if it was unintentional, following demon rules of etiquette, he was entitled to ask for something of equal value from me. Color me impressed with him all over again.

There was also the little detail of him using part of my True Name. It hadn't been the first time he'd done that, and I highly doubted it'd be his last. "Do I even dare to ask how you happen to know that's part of my name?"

"Your father mentioned it a few times. That was mighty nice of him, don't you think? Should I send him flowers or something for that? I'm not sure what the etiquette is on partial reveals of a demon's True Name."

I snorted and rolled my eyes. I should have guessed Asmodai would have something to do with that. At least he hadn't told Quinlin my whole name. I couldn't figure out why he'd told Quinlin even the little bit he had, but knowing Asmodai, there was a reason behind what he'd done even if I didn't understand it.

I moved to stand with my back to the full-length mirror in the corner of the room and pulled my hair over my shoulder to see what other surprises Quinlin had gifted me with. My breath caught, and I had the sudden urge to sit down.

From my shoulders to my ass were the same silvery, scar-like lines that made up the Eyes on the palms of my hands. The difference was that the lines on my back were in the shape of skeletal wings. Only truly high-level demons had full wings; demons like my father or the ones that commanded the armies of Hell. Wings were a sign of some type of power for the demon sporting them. What that power was varied widely in both strength and type, although the appearance of the wings might not be all that different from demon to demon.

What I had weren't wings, but the scar-like markings were a sign that I'd just gained some type of power that put me in a class above the average incubus. The marks probably put me above the average demon in general, for that matter. No wonder Asmodai had elevated my status to Marquis of Hell. Damn, I owed Quinlin big time for this, even if he said he didn't have any idea how the marks had gotten on my body.

This was serious shit, though. Like *"Here's my full, True Name. Use it wisely"* kinda serious.

"Ryzel? What's on your back?" Quinlin asked, irritation plain in his voice when I didn't say anything about what I saw.

"The outline of skeletal wings," I said with a touch of awe in my voice. I turned this way and that to try and get a better, more complete view of the marks on my back.

"And this means... what? This is gonna be another holy shit moment, isn't it? I can hear it in your voice."

"It means that my personal power has been boosted. I don't know how yet, so don't even bother to ask. I'll have to pay a visit to my father to find out. Hopefully, he'll know what this new power is or be able to tell me how to find out. When I know more, I'll tell you, I swear. For now, I'd just like to go to sleep. I think my brain has taken about all the unholy fuck it can at the moment."

Quinlin was quiet for a moment as I stared with a weird fascination at the lines on my back. "Then come to bed. We're both tired, and I'd say we've had one hell of a trying day, and it's barely even started."

I turned a startled gaze on Quinlin. I hadn't expected him to tell me to come join him in bed, even if that's what we both knew was going to happen. Warmth settled in my chest. I moved to the bed and slid under the sheets, pulling Quinlin into my arms and nuzzling his hair. I felt incredibly happy when he let me do that and snuggled close. The same feeling of rightness I'd felt before when I'd held Quinlin washed over me, and I closed my eyes. Things were moving quickly between us, but I was now confident that we'd somehow work things out.

Chapter 12

I hadn't been asleep for long before certain body parts woke me up, screaming about interrupted trips to the bathroom. I grumbled and tried to ignore the need to take a leak, but my body had other plans.

I shoved the covers back and had to wriggle out from under Ryzel's arms and legs. Figures that I'd end up with an incubus who was a snuggler. He mumbled a protest and swept his arm across the bed for me, but it wasn't that hard to avoid him when he wasn't even awake. Free from the tangle of Ryzel's arms, I stood next to the bed and frowned. I still had no freaking idea where the bathroom was.

I was tempted to grab Ryzel by the shoulder and demand he show me, but Ryzel also deserved sleep just as much as I did, and I found myself wanting to think in peace about everything that'd happened in the past few hours. My whole life seemed to have been turned upside down, and I needed to sort through all the stuff bouncing around my head and figure out what I was going to do about me and Ryzel and this Sunaldar thing.

I managed to find my pants on the floor, more through luck than knowing where they'd been tossed earlier, and I put them on before heading for the direction I remembered the doorway being. I stopped and scanned the room cautiously, blowing out a relieved breath when there wasn't anyone lying in wait this time. Unfortunately, I still had no damn idea which way to go to find the bathroom, and my cane was... somewhere.

I scowled and muttered under my breath. Fucking Ryzel. I was going to have to break him of that habit of ditching my cane.

With my hands held out, I started shuffling along the wall, praying that I wouldn't hit anything hard or, god forbid, a cactus garden or some equally stupid shit. I nearly landed on my ass when I somehow managed to step on my cane and had it roll under my foot. Cane in hand, I felt a measure of relief and confidence and moved a little quicker around the room, even though I had no freaking idea where I was going. I was sure I'd eventually find the bathroom. After all, how big could Ryzel's apartment be?

Pretty fucking big was the answer. I damn near cried in relief when I finally found the bathroom. Urgent needs taken care of, I debated about hitting the shower for all of ten seconds before rejecting the idea. I was pretty sure a noise like that would wake Ryzel up, and I still hadn't gotten a chance think about what was going on between us, and how that was probably going to change everything. He said it wouldn't, but he lied. Maybe not intentionally, but Gran wouldn't have insisted on all the things she had if she hadn't seen me with Ryzel for the long haul. I knew myself enough to know that I typically didn't do casual, and things sure as fuck didn't feel casual with Ryzel.

I was headed for where I vaguely remembered the couch being so I could think in peace, away from Ryzel's distracting scent and feel, when my cell started ringing. I swore softly and hurried toward the sound, fumbling with my crumpled jacket as I tried to get the cell out of the pocket. I had my phone programmed to ring with a different tone for each contact, and the Peter Gunn theme was Haskell's. If ever I had needed to talk to my best friend, now was the time. I caught it just before it would have gone to voice mail.

"Kell, am I glad you called. Where are you? Can you talk?"

"Uhhh, do I have the right number? I mean, you sound like Quin, but where's the 'what?' you usually snarl into the phone?" Haskell asked with humor in his voice.

"Fuck off, Kell. I need to talk to you. Serious shit here. No pissing around," I said in a low voice, sitting on the couch I'd been trying to find earlier. I was hoping the ringing hadn't woken up Ryzel.

"You okay? Is this about that Ryzel guy again? It is, isn't it? I was on my way home, but I can swing by your place and pick you up," Haskell offered, his teasing vanishing at the serious tone in my voice.

"I'm fine. More or less. I'm not hurt or anything. Things are just... complicated right now. I'm at Ryzel's place. I don't know the address. I was pretty pissed at him and Adrial when he stuffed me in the cab and gave the driver his address. I wasn't paying attention to what he said at the time. I was trying to figure out how I could kill him without getting caught."

"Adrial? What the hell does he have to do with anything? You avoid him like the plague. What the fuck has been going on since I left for Ireland?" I heard a subtle demand for more information in Haskell's voice.

"I got pissed off when I went to Ryzel's club and saw him doing some people in his office. I went back to the studio to grab some of my things and ran into Adrial there. Adrial was kissing me when Ryzel walked in. Ryzel tossed Adrial into a wall, and they almost started to beat the snot out of each other over who'd get to take me to bed. I got pissed off and went to leave. Adrial said something stupid, and I broke his elbow with my cane. Ryzel hustled me out of there and back to his place, saying we needed to talk. We ended up having sex, and then his dad showed up and... You can stop laughing any fucking time now, Kell."

Haskell's laughter continued. When I replayed in my head what I'd just said, it did sound kind of funny in that cheesy, soap opera kind of way. Eventually, he wound down and managed to get himself under control, although the occasional snicker still escaped now and again. I said nothing. Haskell knew me enough to understand when I was joking and when I wasn't.

"You're not shitting me, are you? All that really happened? And you busted Adrial's elbow? Quin, you're going to be in deep trouble for that. Seriously deep trouble. Like, maybe getting your ass canned. Adrial is, to coin a phrase, bigger than Jesus right now. No matter how good

you are as a studio musician, they're going to hang you out to dry for that little stunt. He's got a concert coming up soon, and having your arm in a cast is not exactly uber sexy. Fuck, Quin, you know better than to let him get to you."

I snorted. I did know better, but finding out Adrial was a Nephilim changed everything. I was sure he'd be perfectly fine in a day or so. Even though he wasn't part of the Heavenly host, he still got some of the perks, like near-immortality and faster healing than any human could dream possible. At least, that's what I'd been led to believe by my gran and Aunt Hildreth, and they were damn near experts about freaky supernatural crap like that.

"You sitting down, Kell? You're going to love this one."

"I'm in a cab coming back from the airport, so yeah, I'm good."

"Adrial is a Nephilim."

Silence greeted me. I waited, looking around the living room and giving Haskell time to wrap his head around that one. He'd been around me and my family enough to get a little used to weirdness, and he'd seen a few things that most people would swear didn't exist. Haskell also knew that I didn't kid around when it came to the supernatural or Otherworldly things. Not knowing the basics about them was dangerous when they kept cropping up in my life, and I did my best to make sure Haskell had the bare essentials of information down. It was the least I could do to try and protect my best friend.

As I waited for Haskell to digest that little bombshell, I noticed a hazy glow off in a corner of the room and focused on it, puzzled at the size and shape of the object. I knew it wasn't a person or an animal; the glow was completely wrong for that, but I couldn't figure out what it was for the life of me. Once I was done with the conversation with Haskell, I was going to have to check out just what the hell that thing was.

"You sure about that, Quin? I mean, stuff kinda makes more sense if that's the case but... damn. I got fucked by an angel," Haskell said with a little pride and awe in his voice.

"Nephilim, Kell, Nephilim. He's not quite an angel, and I'm very sure. I saw his aura when he dropped his disguise of humanity, and Ryzel confirmed it."

"Wait, what? How the hell would Ryzel know what a Nephilim is? I didn't know until you explained it to me. I didn't even know Adrial was one, and I had the guy's cock up my ass for half the damn night. That's pretty intimate to not clue into what a person really is, and yet you say Ryzel knew after meeting him for the first time. What the fuck is going on, Quin?"

"Uhh, that's the other thing, and why I was freaking out a little when I spoke to you before you went to Ireland. Ryzel isn't human, either."

"He's not hu... Jesus, Quin, what the fuck are you doing? Do you have a neon sign over your head saying 'Otherworldly creatures apply here'? Didn't you warn me about doing things that

attracted stuff and tell me how stupid that was? What in god's name were you thinking? Is Ryzel a Nephilim, too? Is that why he's so completely gorgeous?"

"No, Ryzel is..." I trailed off with a sigh. Haskell was going to love this. "He's an incubus." I could almost feel the shock travelling down the phone line.

"You're banging a sex demon? Holy fucking Christ on a crutch! Go big or go home, eh, Quin? You are officially my new hero. Is he as good as I'm thinking? Please tell me he's as good as I'm thinking. Please share all those lovely details with your best friend."

I laughed. I couldn't help it. Haskell was worried for me, but he was also looking for a way to ease the tension I'm sure he could hear in my voice. "Even better, and maybe the next time I see you, I'll tell you a little about it."

Haskell made a juvenile woohoo sound before he went quiet again for a few moments, and I wondered if I'd lost the connection. When he did speak, all teasing was gone from his voice, and he was the deadly serious friend I'd wanted and needed to speak with. Years ago I'd told Haskell what my gran had said about the Eyes, and I was sure he was replaying that conversation in his head and connecting the dots. For all that Haskell was a very pretty face, he actually had brains to back him up and could be coldly logical when he needed to be.

"Are you okay, Quinlin? I mean, seriously okay. Mentally and physically. I'm assuming that when your aunt Touched you after that first roll in the hay, she found out what you'd been sleeping with. If she didn't raise a stink over it, my guess is, as close as your gran and Hildreth were, your aunt probably already knew about you getting it on in the future with a demon."

"Yeah, she admitted as much to me that first time. You know, I'm not sure what pisses me off more: the fact that she knew I was going to sleep with a sex demon at some point and never said shit to me, or the fact that she used her Gift to poke around in my private sex life. As far as me and Ryzel, I'm fine, Kell. Really. All this stuff is still sinking into my head, but I'm mostly okay with it. I think."

"He's not like, slowly killing you or anything, is he? Would you even know if he was? You told me that's what they do to people. Do we need to get a priest and have you exorcised or something? I mean, great lay or not, sex isn't worth dying over."

"They feed off sexual energy, and sometimes that kills a person if they take too much. Apparently, humans with a Gift are like a primo meal for them, and they don't need as much from us to get the same results. He says it's feeding and not sex, but I can't tell the fucking difference. I still feel a little weird when I think of being a meal for Ryzel, but good god, Kell, the sex is amazing."

"Well, duh. He's an incubus, Quin. Are you really okay with all this?" Haskell asked softly.

Haskell knew me better than almost anybody else. He could hear all the things I wasn't saying. He'd keep prodding and poking at me until we were both satisfied with what was going on in my

head. It was one of the things that made him such a good friend and why I loved him like I did. He was the brother I never had... if you ignored the fact that we sometimes fucked each other.

"Yes. No. I... I think so. Maybe. Fuck, this isn't easy for me, Kell. Before I found out what he was, I wanted to see him again. As in, start dating him and only him. You know me, Kell. I never make snap decisions about who I date exclusively. Right from the very beginning, there was this incredibly strong attraction between us. He said he felt it, too. I know demons lie all the fucking time, but I don't think he's lying about that."

"He only had eyes for you when he came up to us in the bar. I swear to god, Quin, it was like I didn't even exist. That's a mighty powerful whack to my ego, you know. He looked at me like I was that drab little friend that you always see in the movies that hangs out with the drop-dead gorgeous lead. I'm supposed to be the gorgeous one," Haskell said with a haughty sniff. He was back to teasing me, and I'd generally appreciate that, but I needed to work stuff out in my head regarding me and Ryzel.

"Now that boosts my ego something fierce," I said with a soft laugh before turning serious again. "He says I'm beautiful, Kell. He means it, too. He's absolutely dead serious when he tells me that. I don't get it. I'm okay-looking, but not beautiful."

Haskell sighed softly. "Taking the chance that I'm going to inflate your ego even more, you may not have the classic model look like I do, but you are one damn fine-looking piece of man, Quin. You're also beautiful on the inside... once you work past all that pissy attitude. And you're a really good lay."

"Stop. You're going to turn my head with all this glamorous talk and flattery," I snorted, a blush creeping into my cheeks. "Of course I'm a good lay. So good, in fact, that I attracted an incubus to play in my pants, didn't I?"

"You're a dick, Quin," Haskell said with warm affection in his voice. "So what're you going to do? You said you were considering him as exclusive dating material before finding out he's one of the minions of Hell. Are you still heading in that direction? 'Cause, you know, if you aren't, I'll take him off your hands. I've had an angel, sort of, so trying the other side of the fence seems like an interesting idea."

"No!" I snapped into the phone, the note of finality in my voice surprising even me.

Haskell was quiet for a moment before he made a speculative sound in his throat. I sighed heavily and passed a hand over my face. I hadn't meant to jump on Haskell like that for what I knew was a teasing comment. Obviously, the Sunaldar was playing a bigger role in my decisions than I thought. Or maybe I just really liked Ryzel and enjoyed sharing his bed. I scowled and muttered several downright nasty things about Ryzel, his father, his mother, and the arrogance and attraction of angels turned demon.

"Ah, so it's like that already. You're not telling me everything, are you, Quinlin? Spill it. How the hell can I help you work this through if I only have half the fucking story?"

I tipped my head back and frowned. Haskell was right. If he could take knowing about me and my family and our Gifts, along with the fact that Ryzel was an incubus and Adrial was a Nephilim, then a few little details like the Sunaldar, the marks we both had now, and who Ryzel's father was shouldn't be a brain breaker. I hoped.

I launched into what Ryzel had told me about everything and the more-than-strange turn my life had taken since Haskell had been gone on his photo shoot. The silence was quite a bit longer this time after I finished.

"Mother-fucking Jesus H. Christ! You don't have any idea how to do things in small measures, do you, Quin?" Haskell sighed heavily. "Going by the fact that you damn near bit my head off when I joked about taking Ryzel off your hands, I'd say you've already made your decision. You just wanted to talk it out with somebody. Your gran green-lighted this relationship years ago, and you respect the hell out of her visions and opinions. I say you go with your gut feeling. You want him. He wants you. It doesn't have to be more complicated than that."

"Yeah, I guess so. He did say the Sunaldar wouldn't keep me from other partners if that's what I wanted. Right now, I don't want other partners. I want him," I said softly, a little bemused that, somewhere in my brain, I'd already decided I wanted to be with Ryzel. When the fuck had that happened?

"I kinda got that from the way you spoke about him. You need anything, Quin, absolutely anything, you call me and I'll be there. Remember, friends help you move. Good friends help you move a body. Best friends bring their own shovel. You say the word, and I'll be there with a brand-spanking new shovel. Or holy water and an exorcism ritual. Whatever works."

"Thanks, Kell. I'll keep that in mind and remind you of it should a Prince of Hell come looking for his wayward child."

Haskell laughed, but I was serious. "Glad we got all that settled for you. Here I was thinking that I could entertain you with my tale of meeting a drop-dead gorgeous guy and an absolutely beautiful horse while on location. I swear to god, Quin, if I could have figured out how to get him into the country, I'd have done it. I have pictures of him, too. He was beautiful, Quin," Haskell said in a wistful tone.

If Haskell had been in front of me, I'd have kissed him for changing the subject to something more light-hearted. Sure, I'd made the decision to stick with Ryzel, but I still needed to let the idea really settle in my head before I would be comfortable with my decision. Dating a demon was pretty high on the serious decision list. I still wasn't one-hundred percent sure this was the smartest possible move I could make, but it felt right. Considering my family, I tended to go with my feelings whenever possible. I'd never been led wrong by them.

"A plane ticket and a passport usually work. Were you that addled by his good looks?" I asked with a soft chuckle.

"Passport? For a horse? Don't be stupid. 'Sides, I'm not even sure who owned him. He just showed up on the beach one morning, and then every morning and evening after that, if I went to the beach, he was there like he was waiting for me."

"The horse? You were more interested in the horse? What about the beautiful guy you met?"

"I work with models on a daily basis. I see beautiful people all the damn time. They're a dime a dozen. But this horse... He was the most breathtaking creature I've ever seen, Quin. He was a work of art. I can't believe that he was just wandering around like that, either. Somebody had to be missing him, but when I asked around, nobody knew a damn thing about a lost horse."

"I still can't believe you were more excited about the horse," I snickered.

"The guy was charming, but aggressive as all get out. He kinda made my what-the-fuck radar perk up and say back away nice and slow. I dunno, Quin, it was almost like he was staking some kind of territory with me in the middle of it. I was waiting for him to start pissing on the bushes and buildings or something. I don't need that kind of shit in my life."

"Well, he's all the way across the ocean. I think your dubious chastity is safe."

"Fuck you, Quin. Look, I'm just pulling up to my place. I'm bagged from the flight, so I'm going to probably crash hard, but I'll leave my cell on, and it'll wake me if you need... anything. I mean it, Quinlin. You need me to go toe-to-toe with your demon lover to win your soul back or whatever and I'll be there."

I smiled into the phone, my chest tight with emotion. He probably knew that, even if he showed up loaded for bear, he still wouldn't be able to beat Ryzel in a fight. Humans weren't a match for demons on a physical level, and Haskell knew that. He would do it, though, because he was my best friend, horrible odds or not.

"Thanks, Kell. Get some sleep, and we can get together for a beer when you're not jet-lagged, and you can tell me all about this pretty horse you fell for."

Haskell laughed, said good-bye, and hung up. I stayed where I was on the couch for a few more minutes, letting my mind replay some of the key points of my conversation with him. I felt a little flutter of nerves in my gut when I thought of telling Ryzel what I'd decided about the thing between us. He needed to know. I'd make it clear to him that I wasn't moving in with him or anything, but that I was going to consider what was between us as exclusive, and if he had a problem with that, the whole deal was off.

The idea of being a meal for him was still weird, but he'd been a fantastic fuck, and I had to admit that I was looking forward to doing that again. I hadn't really felt any different after he fed. Maybe a little more tired, but incredibly satisfied sexually. A smile tugged up the corners of my mouth when I thought about the next time Ryzel fed from me.

I stood, and my attention was caught again by the strange glow where there shouldn't be any.

I approached the object cautiously. There was no good reason I could think of for whatever it was to be glowing ever-so-slightly like it was. Non-living things didn't have auras. If I concentrated really hard, I could sometimes see the fading aura of someone who'd died recently, but I was pretty sure Ryzel wouldn't have a fresh corpse in his apartment.

I still had to muster up a shit-load of courage to touch whatever was giving off the glow in front of me. My fingers touched a smooth, polished surface. I frowned and ran my hands along the surface and sides. My eyes widened when I realized what I was touching. I walked the entire length just to make sure I was right.

Weird as it was, Ryzel had a grand piano in his apartment. He didn't seem the type to play. Why the piano was glowing softly was a total mystery to me, but the urge to sit and play something on it was almost overpowering.

I said fuck it and sat down in front of the keyboard. I lifted the cover and glided my fingers over the keys. There were a few less than I was used to playing with, so I assumed the piano was an old model, possibly even pre-dating the twentieth century. A curl of excitement unfurled in my belly. I'd never had the chance to play an instrument this old. I hoped like mad that it actually worked and was in tune. I rested my fingers on the keyboard for a moment and took a deep breath before launching into Nocturne Number 1 by Chopin.

The sound that came from the piano at my touch made me suck in my breath. I'd never heard anything like it. My fingers kept moving over the keys, pulling the most exquisite music I'd ever played in my life from any instrument. The more I played, the more I wanted to play. The Nocturne ended, and I moved into another piece without pause. Everything narrowed down to the piano and the music I was making. Sweat rolled down my face, but I didn't bother to wipe it away. The need to play more swept through me.

I abandoned the classical pieces and let the music flow from me. What I played had no name. Bits and pieces of melodies and harmonics that I'd stored away in my head for future use poured out through my fingers. My breath rasped in my throat as my fingers moved faster over the keys. I groaned softly in almost orgasmic delight as the music rushed through me, my skin warming with arousal.

My cock was hard and seemed to be throbbing in time with the music I played. A blush burned across my face when I realized that I was close to blowing my load from playing the piano, but I couldn't stop. The pleasure was too intense. I *wanted* to come from the sheer joy of creating such beauty. I was panting harshly and balanced right on the edge of orgasm. A few more glorious bars and I was sure I'd climax.

A scream of denial was wrenched from me when strong hands yanked mine from the keyboard. I'd been so close. My back arched, and I moaned, my cock painfully hard in my pants. I struggled against the strong hold, ragged little sobs coming between sharp breaths. My fingers flexed and twitched as if still playing the piano, the last notes finally dying away. Tears of

frustration and overwhelming sadness slid down my cheeks. It was then that I heard Ryzel calling my name in a shaky voice over and over, his lips moving against my ear.

"Quinlin, stop. You can't play anymore."

My back was pressed to Ryzel's chest. He had both my hands in one of his, his free hand wiping the tears from my cheeks. The driving urge to play the magnificent piano ebbed, and I sagged against Ryzel.

My breathing eventually slowed back down to normal, and I blinked in confusion. What the hell had just happened? I'd never, ever, gotten hard from playing music to the point that I could've orgasmed from it. That was way too fucking weird for words. I could still faintly hear the incredible music in my head, and now wanted to write it down before I lost it.

I turned my head and looked back at Ryzel. Worry colored his aura, and his breathing wasn't very steady, either. I was sure he knew how aroused I'd been, but he wasn't making any move on me. Unease settled in my stomach. What sex demon wouldn't jump at the chance to get a little action when he had a very willing partner in his arms?

"Ryzel, what the fuck just happened?" I wasn't surprised to find that my voice shook a little.

"Quinlin, humor me here, but were you considered really good at the piano when you were a kid? Like, child prodigy good?"

Ryzel still wasn't doing anything that could even remotely be considered sexual. In fact, he was being careful *not* to do anything that might be sexual. I wasn't right at the point of orgasm anymore, but it wouldn't take much to put me back there again. A couple of kisses and a few strokes and I'd probably come all over Ryzel's hand. He had to know that. Why wasn't he taking advantage of it? Something seriously weird was going on.

"Yeah. I started picking out simple tunes when I was about two or so. I did some concerts when I was a kid. I stopped when I was a teenager because I didn't like the way people went on and on about how talented I was for a blind person. That really pissed me off. Being able to see or not doesn't mean dick. I'm fucking gifted musically, and whether or not I can see has zero bearing on my talent."

"I had no idea you could play like that. I knew you worked as a studio musician, but I had no idea... Quinlin, please don't play this piano again," Ryzel said with a little pleading in his voice.

"What? Why? I've never heard any piano sound so... so... enchanting. I know it's old, but I wouldn't do anything to damage it," I replied, a little anger creeping into my voice as I tugged on my hands, still trapped in Ryzel's hold.

I wanted to play a few more bars, just one or three more before I lost the wonderful music soaring through my mind. I wanted to play the piano with almost frightening intensity and couldn't seem to stop myself from trying to get free.

"It's a demonic instrument, Quinlin. Anybody who sits and plays it will play as if he's a master musician. If somebody who can play well sits down, he'll play until he passes out from exhaustion. If a master sits down and plays, the piano will eventually steal his soul, trapping it in the instrument and using his skills and talent to add to the beauty of the sounds. I was afraid I was going to have to break your fingers to get you to stop playing."

"Why the fuck do you have a demonic piano in your apartment?" I asked, feeling a chill slide down my spine at the idea of Ryzel breaking my fingers to get me to stop playing. I pressed my back tightly to Ryzel's chest, even as I continued to try and get my hands loose so I could play the piano just one more time. One more time to move my fingers over the keys couldn't be that bad if Ryzel was right there with me, could it?

"I won it off another demon in a card game. I'll get it out of here. I won't put you at risk like that. Uhhh, do you play any other instruments?"

"It's not a problem, Ryzel," I said, trying to ignore the sick feeling in my stomach at how badly I still wanted to put my hands on the keyboard and play even after what Ryzel had told me. "I play several instruments, why?"

"I have a few other demonic items that it would probably be a bad idea for you to get your hands on if you're even half as good with those as you are on the piano. I'm going to move them to another location. I want you to be safe when you're here."

I cocked an eyebrow at Ryzel, thinking that was mighty fucking presumptuous of him to assume I was going to be coming back to his apartment. The fact that I would was beside the point.

He sighed when I scowled at him, and pulled me away from the piano to sit next to him on the couch. I couldn't help my little noise of protest at leaving the piano. As soon as the sound left me, I scowled. I didn't like the fact that I was being compelled to play the piano, no matter how spectacular it sounded. Now that I wasn't actually sitting in front of it, the desire to play the piano dropped off to almost nothing.

"About my being here. I've thought about this thing between us. We need to get a few things straight so there's no confusion on down the road. If you can't agree on this, then we'll have a problem," I said as I shifted a little to face Ryzel as I spoke to him. I wanted to watch his aura, and try to judge his reactions to what I had to say about our possible relationship.

Surprise and nervousness flared through Ryzel's aura, in contradiction to the light tone of his voice when he spoke. "The last time you said that, shit worked out just fine between us. Let's hear it."

"I'm willing to cautiously give this thing, this Sunaldar, a try. To do that, I need a commitment of sorts from you. I don't play well with others, Ryzel. I've never liked sharing my toys, and I certainly don't like sharing my boyfriend."

"What about that friend of yours? Haskell, wasn't it? You were all ready to go to bed with him when I stole you away that night in the bar. Don't you guys have a thing going on?" Ryzel asked, stroking my bare arm in a way that made me shiver with pleasure.

"Stop that, Ryzelmei. We need to agree on this stuff, or I say fuck it and walk." I scowled at him, but couldn't quite bring myself to pull my arm away from his touch. "Haskell is my best friend, and we scratch each other's mutual itches. But, if either of us is involved with someone else, we don't. We're more best friends than lovers."

"So, you want exclusive rights to my wicked body in return for my exclusive rights to yours? Done. For so long as I'm your only lover and you feed my needs, you will be my only lover," Ryzel said in a satisfied tone, before leaning in for a quick kiss. I tasted a faint, coppery tang of blood and licked my lips.

"Did you just make a deal with me? A deal sealed with a blood kiss? What the fuck were you thinking, Ryzel? This'll mean no sex with anyone besides me, demons, humans or Others included," I said, shock making my voice rise embarrassingly at the end.

"I know what it means, Quinlin. We already have one deal between us when it comes to how I feed from you. You seriously underestimate your appeal if you think limiting myself to you for sex and feeding is going to be a hardship. Sure, it might take a little getting used to, but I'm positive I'll manage. What I've tasted so far has only made me want more."

A blush colored my cheeks. Ryzel making a blood deal with me using his own blood had been the very last thing I expected. It put the ball firmly in my court when it came to keeping or breaking the deal without penalties, and I had no fucking idea why he'd done that. Demons always worked every last angle to get the best possible deal for themselves. Maybe Ryzel was working a secret agenda, but until I could figure out what that was, I was going to take what he'd agreed to at face value. Who knew, maybe I'd lucked out and gotten myself an honest demon. Weirder things had happened.

Chapter 13

Going through the proper channels was an invention of Hell, and I hated it with a passion. People thought Earthly governments were agony on that issue. They had no fucking idea. The minions of Hell had it down to the true, torturous art form that it was meant to be. I wanted to see Asmodai, and even though I was one of his favored children at the moment, I still had to go through all the bullshit of filling out forms and playing message tag with his personal secretary. Just getting the appointment had taken me an entire frustrating week. I was not a happy camper to find out that the appointment in question was another two weeks away, but I'd learned ages ago not to bitch or my appointment would mysteriously get lost in the shuffle.

Even though I had an appointment scheduled, I still ended up cooling my heels in the tastefully decorated waiting room of the office my father kept. I'd never sat in chairs that looked so nice yet were so damn uncomfortable. Kudos to whatever sick and twisted demon came up with the design. If I hadn't wanted to see Asmodai so bad, I'd have gone up to the demon secretary and punched the crap out of her just to get rid of the annoying smirk on her face at my discomfort. I somehow managed to stifle my sigh of relief when the snotty secretary finally said I could see my father.

"How are things working out for you and your Sunaldar partner? You should have brought him with you for a visit. Formally meet the family, so to speak," my father said, leaning back in his chair, power radiating off him.

"He wanted to come, but his Aunt Hildreth nixed the idea. She made some kind of tscking noise and said she expected better of you. She said to tell you that she may be re-thinking her position on letting you into her private life again. Frankly, Quinlin's Aunt Hildreth scares the crap out of me, my Lord Father."

Asmodai scowled for a moment before a sly grin spread across his face. "I always knew you were one of my brighter spawn, Ryzelmei. Hildreth scares a lot of things that have more than two working brain cells. You're here to find out what power you've received from your connection with Quinlin, aren't you?"

I nodded. While it would have been perfectly acceptable to lie, almost expected, really, I wanted to know what new power I had and didn't want to dick around. I could have possibly asked a demon who specialized in revealing that kind of thing to try and find out for me, but the demon would've wanted something in return. Asmodai would likely want something as well, but I thought I had a bargaining chip with him.

"And what will you give me for revealing this new power of yours, Ryzelmei?"

"I thought you might like to give me a freebie on this one because whatever my power is will ultimately benefit you as well." I gave Asmodai a hopeful look, complete with big, innocent, blue eyes.

I could've used up the personal favor Asmodai had granted me, but I wanted to save that for when I really had my nuts in a bind. Having a personal favor from a demon Prince of Hell wasn't something to waste on simply finding out what power I'd been given. If I was willing to wait long enough, say a year or so, I could probably stumble onto what my power was through trial and error or sheer dumb luck. I wasn't willing to wait.

"As pretty as you look when you do that, Ryzelmei, no. You know I don't do freebies. A reduction in what that payment is, fine. Shall we get down to negotiating?" Asmodai asked with a grin that showed an awful lot of sharp, pointy teeth, even for a demon.

I'd expected to have to give up something in return. The degree of sacrifice Asmodai would want was the only question in my mind. Asmodai actually surprised me with the small nature of his request. I turned his offer over in my mind, looking for the loop-hole that would screw me, and couldn't find it. I smiled and sliced a line along my forearm with a claw and waited for blood to collect in the palm of my hand. Asmodai copied my gesture, clasping our bloodied palms together to seal the deal. He may have demanded a payment, but it was a token thing. It still gave him the appearance of not doing something for free, and appearances of control and power were everything among demons.

"Close your eyes, Ryzelmei," Asmodai ordered, placing his unbloodied palm to my forehead, his pinky and thumb resting over my eyes.

He chanted some words in the Demon tongue, and I felt power flow from him to me. For the briefest of moments, it felt good, like warm sunshine on my face. The heat quickly turned into searing pain like nothing I'd ever experienced before. I felt wetness trickling down my cheeks and was almost positive it was my eyes melting out of the sockets. It took a hell of a lot to make me scream in pain, but I wanted to at that moment. Only the fact that I seemed to be completely paralyzed kept me from doing it.

Asmodai's hand left me, and I could suddenly move again. I was sure that if I'd been standing, I would've fallen to my knees at the very least. I wasn't embarrassed over the low whimpers that escaped my throat. My eyes felt like hot pokers had been shoved into them. If this is what finding out what a power was like, I never wanted to do it again.

I sucked in huge gulps of air and cautiously opened my eyes, not sure if I'd be able to see or not. I could regenerate my eyes, but it would hurt like fuck and leave me and Quinlin vulnerable to attacks I couldn't see coming or defend against. My breath hitched in my chest with relief when I found that I could see the blurry shape of Asmodai sitting in his chair behind his desk.

"Interesting. This new power will prove quite useful to me, Ryzelmei. I am pleased."

I blinked to clear my vision. "Okay. Could you clue me into what it is?"

"Quinlin's abrupt manners are rubbing off on you, Ryzelmei. It's fortunate for you that that amuses me," Asmodai said with a chuckle. "You have been given the Gift of Sight."

"Excuse me? I could already see just fine. Quinlin is the one who's blind and would benefit from getting a gift like this, not me."

Asmodai sighed. "Not ordinary sight, Ryzelmei. You may see through the eyes of any of your spawn, regardless of where they are. If you have any human thralls, you'll be able to see through their eyes as well. "

My eyes widened fractionally. I'd been handed one kick-ass Gift. I could see why Asmodai said that he was pleased. He could see whatever he wanted to see, within the limits of the spawn and thralls I had. All he only needed to do was tell me to have a look for him and poof, instant knowledge.

"By extension, you will also be able to see through Quinlin's eyes, since he is your Sunaldar partner," Asmodai said with a smug look as he steepled his fingers and tapped his lips.

"But Quinlin's blind. I don't see how that helps."

"True, he doesn't see things as most people do, but he can see after a fashion, can't he?"

My mouth dropped open in a little "oh" of surprise when the meaning of what Asmodai said penetrated my brain. With Quinlin's ability to see auras, what he could see would further stretch my power in ways I hadn't even thought about. Asmodai was right. This Gift would prove useful to both me and Asmodai.

I had one last question for my Lord Father before I left his presence. "So how do I make this work?"

"Simple is always best, Ryzelmei. Think of whomever you want to see from. Concentrate on him and you will see what he does. I'd suggest you practice. There's nothing as wasteful as a good power that goes unused or underdeveloped. I'm sure that Will must have Seen something of this happening and, with her sister's help, nudged things along. You may want to speak to Dre about it, although I doubt she'll tell you anything useful. It amuses her to be as cryptic as any demon, and she's twice as crafty. She'd make a damn fine demon," Asmodai said with a wistful little smile.

I smirked a little, bowed to Asmodai, and left Hell. Quinlin had been just as curious as me about what new power I'd gotten, and I was anxious to tell him. I checked my watch and saw that it was getting close to quitting time for him. I could probably convince him to leave early. If he really was determined to stay until quitting time, I could always appeal to his boss. It pissed Quinlin off that I had her eating out of my hand after meeting her just once, but I was very charming when I wanted or needed to be.

I entered the lobby of the studio and waved at the receptionist. She giggled and blushed and told me Quinlin was in studio five. I smiled in thanks and kept walking. Because he was my Sunaldar partner, I could find Quinlin anywhere now with a little concentration. I'd thought he was going to blow a gasket when he found that out. He'd been a little less pissed off when he found out he could do the same thing for me. He'd muttered something about being better able to keep tabs on my lecherous ass before kissing me nearly senseless and having that lecherous ass of mine. Feeding from Quinlin when he was slightly pissed off was a damn fine feast for me, and I sincerely hoped he didn't find out anytime soon that I sometimes pissed him off on purpose just for that effect.

What can I say? I'm a demon. I do bad things.

My good mood went south when I peeked into the studio and saw Quinlin with Adrial. That was one Otherworldly creature who couldn't take a fucking hint if you beat him over the head with it. I couldn't win against him physically in a fight unless I was willing to pull out all the stops and go for broke. Even then, I wasn't one hundred percent sure I'd be able to take Adrial down, and if I died, that would leave Quinlin unprotected from Adrial and whatever other Otherworldly things came sniffing at his heels. Incubi simply weren't heavy fighters and bred to it like Nephilim were. That wouldn't stop me from fighting Adrial for Quinlin if I had to, though.

I opened the door and slipped into the room. Quinlin was obviously working, and I'd gotten myself banned from his bed for twenty-four hours the last time I'd interrupted and physically dragged him away from his work. I learned fast and knew not to do that again. He knew I was there. I'd seen him look up at me, and the flash-quick thawing of the ice in his eyes when he recognized who I was, before he turned to look at Adrial again.

In the weeks since we became Sunaldar partners, Quinlin had warmed up considerably. He was a damn nice guy once I worked past his hard, crusty exterior and he started letting me inside. I felt slightly better when I noticed that Adrial wasn't being his usually smarmy self and trying to hang all over Quinlin. Adrial actually looked pissed as hell. I smirked. My news could wait in favor of seeing Quinlin smack Adrial down.

"No. That's not how it should go. I'm telling you that it's all wrong for the piece. I don't give a flying fuck what you think it should sound like. That's not how you play the piece, and I refuse to pander to your over-inflated ego and destroy a magnificent work of art."

"It's going to be a ballad about love lost and regained. You have to slow the timing down, or it doesn't work."

"I don't have to do a fucking thing. If you want to butcher one of my favorite pieces of all time, I'm not going to be the one to help you do it. No, Adrial. Forget it," Quinlin said, crossing his arms over his chest, a mulish expression appearing on his face.

"I want to use this piece. It's perfect for what I have in mind. You're being an asshole, Quin," Adrial spat out, his fists clenching and unclenching at his sides.

"Go find some other guy to play it for you. I'm not going to fuck it up just to make you happy."

"I want you to play it. There's passion and feeling in it when you play it. Some other random musician isn't going to get it right. Don't make me go over your head and haul your boss in here to make you play it."

Quinlin scowled at Adrial, and his mouth thinned into a look I'd come to recognize. He was supremely pissed off and hanging onto his temper by the barest thread. If Adrial wasn't careful, Quinlin was going to crack him in the skull with that damn iron bound cane.

Of course, I wasn't about to say shit. I liked seeing Adrial, the pompous prick, getting his ass knocked down a peg or three.

"Hey, Ryzel, tell Quin to play the damn piece like I want him to. He does what you say, right?" Adrial said as he glared at Quinlin and tried to drag me into his problem.

Quinlin turned his head in my direction and gave me a look that said I'd better not, or else. It was probably really, really wrong that the first thought I had at seeing him so close to committing homicide was that feeding from Quinlin right at that very moment would be pure ecstasy. I'd never seen him that mad and *not* swinging his cane around to brain everybody within a five-foot radius.

I held up my hands and shook my head. I was not stepping into that argument at all. Aside from not wanting Quinlin pissed off at me, he was a true genius when it came to music. If he said it'd ruin a piece, I believed him.

"Incubi wuss," Adrial snorted. "He's got you whipped. Guess I know who wears the pants in your relationship. Some demon you are."

I was saved from doing something stupid, like attacking Adrial in my demon form, when Quinlin made a sound deep in his throat and jabbed Adrial hard in the thigh with his cane. Adrial staggered sideways and hissed, his hand covering the spot where the cane had tagged him. Going from personal experience, I knew it was more than just the sharp poke with the cane that had hurt. I smirked when I saw that Quinlin had hit the annoying Nephilim dangerously high on the inner thigh. An inch or two to the left and Quinlin would have nailed Adrial square in the balls. I snickered and leaned back against the wall.

"I work with you because I have to, not because I like to. Don't ever speak about Ryzel or my personal life again, Adrial, or next time I *will* aim for your balls and castrate you. I know you're wrong about this piece, but you're too much of an ass to admit it. Ryzel, you can decide as an impartial third party."

Quinlin took a seat at the piano and rested his fingers on the keys for a moment, drawing in a deep breath. The first few notes started out slowly and built in momentum. Quinlin's eyes closed, and the tempo picked up. He moved his upper body in time with the music he played, his hair

swaying back and forth with the effort he was putting into his performance. The notes crashed through the room with a power I'd only heard come from demonic instruments.

Adrial was utterly silent, and I could see him swaying slightly with the force of the music that flooded the room. In that moment, I could clearly see the angel in him and understood what made him so popular with his fans.

The beauty of the music was making me rock my body back and forth, just like Quinlin and Adrial. I couldn't have stopped myself if I'd wanted to. The notes crested and broke through the room until with one final flourish, the music suddenly stopped. I made a noise of protest in my throat. I wanted to hear more and wasn't ready for it to end yet. I'd thought Quinlin's playing on the possessed piano in my apartment had been beyond good, but I'd assumed that most of that was because of what the instrument was. I'd been very wrong.

"And that is why I want Quin to be the one to play the modified piece for my new song," Adrial said softly. "It has to be him. I haven't heard it played like that in a very long time. Possibly since Mozart himself."

Quinlin made a noise of frustration and stood. "Flattery will get you nowhere with me, Adrial. I'm done here. I won't do what you want. That is how Requiem For A Dream is supposed to sound, and that is how I will always play it. Find someone else to slash it to bits for you. Come on, Ryzel, we're leaving."

I followed Quinlin from the studio, the beautiful music he'd played still echoing in my head. I touched Quinlin's arm lightly and took his elbow when he offered it. We left the studio, and I steered him to my car.

Maybe he was worried about supporting himself if he quit a regular paying job while he tried to make it big. Money wasn't a problem for him anymore, but I'm not sure he realized that. I had more than I'd ever know what to do with and easy access to more than anyone could imagine. After all, money was often said to be the root of all evil.

"Quinlin, why are you a studio musician? You're massively talented and could be out on your own, playing concert stages all over the world. If you're worried about cash until you make it big, don't be. I've got plenty," I said as I pulled out into traffic.

"I told you, I tried the concert thing a long time ago. I didn't like the feel of people only coming out to see what the blind guy could do. Besides, my music gets to a lot more people as a studio musician. I'm also not going to sponge off my lover, Ryzel."

"But they don't know who you are, Quinlin. They only know the singer you're providing the music for. Don't you want more than that? And you wouldn't be sponging off me if I'm offering it to you. It's just money. I've got tons and can always get more."

"I don't have any desire to be in the public eye, Ryzel. I'm well known in music circles and happy with my professional life, dealing with pricks like Adrial aside. Drop it, Ryzelmei," Quinlin said with a note of finality in his voice.

I sighed softly. Quinlin was just as difficult as the very first day I'd met him. It was a damn good thing I liked that about him. I'd considered it a major victory in getting him to agree to stay at my place as often as he did when he still stubbornly insisted on keeping his own apartment. I knew I'd eventually wear him down and get him to move in with me. He already had half his clothes at my place and had completely taken over the corner of my apartment where the possessed piano used to sit, filling it with his own instruments, music sheets, and books. I smirked. He'd eventually have almost all his shit at my house and come around to the idea that it was stupid to keep two separate apartments when we were practically living together already.

Although we hadn't really known each other long, the Sunaldar made it feel like I'd known and had Quinlin in my life much longer. I was a little surprised at how comfortable and right that felt, but I wasn't about to question one of the better things that had happened to me. I think, going by Quinlin's body language and attitude, it was safe to say that he felt the same way.

I pulled into the underground garage and cut the engine. Quinlin didn't need my help getting from the car to the elevator, having made the trip frequently, but I took his hand anyway because I liked touching him. Warmth always curled in my belly when he didn't shrug off my hand like he would've when we first met.

Quinlin said nothing in the elevator. He waited until we were in the privacy of my apartment to hear about this new power of mine. "I assume you now know what power you got. How much did you have to give up, and was it worth it?" Quinlin asked as soon as the apartment door closed behind us.

"I didn't have to give up much, and yeah, I'd say it's worth it. It's pretty fucking cool."

Quinlin raised an eyebrow, but didn't say anything. He had far more patience than I did, so I didn't even bother trying to stretch out the suspense. I joined him on the couch and pulled him close. He protested, more out of habit than anything else, and eventually leaned against me, his fingers tracing a distracting, erotic pattern on my thigh. It took a sharp poke to my thigh to get my mind out of Quinlin's pants and to remember I was going to tell him what Asmodai told me about my new power and how to use it.

"That is pretty cool. So, does this mean you owe me again? 'Cause, you know, you wouldn't even have this power if it wasn't for me."

I laughed, turned, and pressed Quinlin down into the cushions of the couch, kissing him hard and rocking my hips lightly against his. He made pleased noises in his throat and pushed his hips up against me. I pulled back from the kiss to see desire flare brightly in his pale green eyes.

"You hungry?" Quinlin asked with a not-so-subtle thrust of his hips.

"I'll eat later," I said, before nibbling on his earlobe and tonguing the sensitive spot just behind his ear.

"Who said you get that option? Maybe this is your one chance at grabbing a meal today."

I pulled back to stare at Quinlin in surprise. He'd never put any kind of condition on when I could feed from him before. I hadn't counted on him pulling a fast one on me. Making the blood deal to only feed from him had seemed like a fantastic idea at the time.

Not that I didn't enjoy Quinlin having my ass. I liked it more than I thought I would, but I wanted to have Quinlin's ass this time. I wanted the pleasure of sliding into his body and making him moan and gasp as I pushed him to orgasm. I was not happy with the idea that Quinlin was going to try to restrict my feeding times. I narrowed my eyes at him.

Quinlin laughed and pulled my head down for a fast kiss with plenty of tongue action. "Sweet. I can bluff a demon."

My mouth opened in shock after Quinlin broke the kiss, and I snapped it shut and scowled at him. Fucking prick was playing with me. Feeding or not feeding was serious business. I huffed out an annoyed breath, making Quinlin laugh even harder. I poked him in the ribs, making him squirm and break out into giggles when I hit a ticklish spot. I grinned wolfishly. Quinlin was incredibly ticklish if I caught him in just the right mood. It was looking like the right mood was now.

I grabbed Quinlin's hands in one of mine and used my strength against him to hold him down while I snaked a hand under the hem of his shirt, dragging my nails lightly over his upper ribs. Quinlin squirmed and swore at me between breathless laughter. His hips bucked up against mine and rubbed our fabric-covered erections together. We were both getting exciting from the intimate contact.

"S... stop... Ryzel. Mercy," Quinlin gasped as he tried to shift away from my hands.

"I dunno. You tried to play me. That deserves some kind of punishment."

"It was a joke, Ryzel. Stop. For the love of god, stop!" Quinlin panted and laughed as he tried to squirm away from my tickling.

I pretended to consider it. Quinlin's face was flushed, and strands of his auburn hair, damp with sweat, clung to his forehead and cheek. Except for the desire I could still see in his eyes, he looked like a man who'd been thoroughly fucked. I was so going to make that look a reality and had a delicious idea of how to do it.

I let go of his hands and backed off Quinlin, pulling him into a seated position. Laughter, desire, and a question lurked in his eyes at my suddenly stopping the tickling. He was so damn beautiful when he looked at me like that; it was a freaking miracle that I didn't have him flat on his back all the time.

I smirked a little before I grabbed the edges of his shirt and yanked. Quinlin's eyes went wide, and he swore when the fabric tore and buttons went flying everywhere. He grabbed my hands in a strong grip and scowled at me.

"Asshole, that was a new shirt."

"Don't fucking care. I'll buy you a new one. I want to see you naked. I have an idea..."

Quinlin tried to keep the scowl, but we both knew what happened when I got ideas. Mind-melting sex was what happened. He still gave a put-upon sigh and muttered about finding the most expensive shirt he could to replace it. I chuckled and decided that I'd fly him out to see Giorgio for a personal fitting and get him something nice. I had one hell of a time trying to spoil Quinlin with gifts, so I wasn't about to waste this opportunity. Quinlin would bitch about the cost at first, but a little high altitude sex in a private jet would probably take care of that. Besides, what man wouldn't kill for a suit fitted by Giorgio Armani himself?

"Stand up, Quinlin."

He sighed again, but did what I demanded. I didn't buy his pretend reluctance for a second. He had a very nice boner in his pants, and I aimed to do something about that. I moved Quinlin to stand between my spread legs and unzipped his pants. He caught me a little by surprise when he leaned forward and scooped up a handful of my hip-length hair. The smile on his face was wicked as he brushed the ends of my hair over his chest and teased his nipples into hard little points. My cock throbbed at the erotic picture he was showing me. Quinlin was one damn fast learner when it came to finding out what pressed my sexual buttons.

I pushed his pants and underwear to his knees, hobbling him, and licked him from his balls to the tip of his cock. A whole-body shudder travelled through Quinlin, and he groaned. I tongued the slit, enjoying the taste of him and the way his breath caught. I closed my mouth around the head of his cock and sucked hard before sliding the length of him down my throat.

I was faced with a real problem when I realized I needed to stop sucking Quinlin's cock to get my pants off for what I had planned. I made an annoyed noise in my throat and backed off his cock briefly to twist and yank my pants off. I was very glad of my demon speed and strength when the entire job took only seconds. Going by Quinlin's groaning when I swallowed him back down, he was pretty fucking happy about that, too.

"Fuck, Ryzel," Quinlin gasped, letting go of my hair to rest his hands on my head.

His thumbs rubbed erotic circles over the place where my horns grew. A shiver chased over my skin. After only a few weeks of sharing my bed, Quinlin knew exactly where and how to touch me to give me the most pleasure. He hadn't been kidding when he'd said his sense of touch was highly developed. He had a kick-ass memory, too, and I swear he remembered every single thing that he did to me that made me moan for him. I started moving my mouth faster up and down the length of his cock, taking great pleasure in the little groans and sighs I was pulling from him.

"Let me see you, Ryzelmei," Quinlin demanded in a lust-heavy voice.

I let my mask of humanity drop and closed my eyes in pleasure when Quinlin trailed his fingers over my horns. His hum of approval whenever I switched to my true form never failed to send heat through me. Once he'd gotten over the initial shock of my being a demon, and what he could see and feel of what I looked like, he'd found the idea of sex with me in demon form damn kinky. I was always willing to oblige him and was happier than shit that he'd have sex with me in my true form as often as when I looked human. Granted, I still looked relatively human in my demon form, but that wasn't the point. I didn't think it had anything to do with him being blind, either. Quinlin truly didn't seem to care what form I had, and I knew how rare that was in a human. I think I could even go so far as to say I think he was starting to fall for me.

"Take your pants off," I ordered between strokes to his cock.

"You get so bossy when you go all demon," Quinlin teased in a breathless voice as he quickly shoved his pants the rest of the way down his legs and kicked them off.

"Price you pay for inviting a demon to your bed. You still took your pants off," I pointed out as I trailed a finger over his inner thigh.

"I'm horny and about to be fucked by an incubus. Getting naked is a no-brainer," Quinlin said, with a haughty little sniff that turned into a softly exhaled breath when the backs of my fingers brushed against his balls.

I laughed and pulled Quinlin into my lap, nuzzling and licking his neck over the demon marks I'd given him. We'd discovered that the marks we now had were sensitive to each other's erotic touches. I used it to my advantage as often as possible. There was nothing I liked better, or found more arousing, than Quinlin wriggling and panting in my arms, begging me for more.

Quinlin moaned softly at the teasing touch of my tongue on his demon marks. His fingers tightened on my horns, making me whine in pleasure. The heavy musk of arousal was filling my nose, and I suddenly couldn't wait any more. I had to have him now.

I groped between the couch cushions. A smirk teased across my lips when I found the small bottle of lube from our last adventure on the couch. I fumbled a little with the bottle one-handed until I finally managed to pop the top. I stopped moving for a moment, frustrated when I realized I couldn't pour out the lube with only one hand. Quinlin snickered and took the bottle from me, pouring a healthy amount into the palm of my hand.

I slicked my cock and lined it up to his ass. I'd have loved to tease him half the night, but I'd be teasing myself just as much, and I was never big on the idea of delayed gratification. He wriggled his hips, and we both groaned as my cock slid into him. Quinlin rested his forehead against mine and shivered in my arms from the pleasure.

"How do you make me like playing the bottom so much?" Quinlin asked in a low voice as he ground his ass down in my lap.

"It's mutual, Quinlin," I said, closing my eyes and taking a few deep breaths to try and calm the urge to flip him to his back and pound his ass hard. That desire wasn't being helped by the fact that I knew he'd like it and encourage me to do it.

"Good, 'cause I have every intention of doing you later. Now, get moving and give me the demon fucking we both want," Quinlin said as he dropped a hand to his lap and started to stroke his cock.

"And you called me bossy," I said with a gravelly laugh, my hands settling on his hips to give him what he'd just asked for.

Quinlin grinned at me, and the muscles in his ass clenched tight on my cock. Whatever control I'd been hanging onto shattered. My fingers dug into his hips, and I started moving him in a fast, hard rhythm over my cock. Sounds of pleasure started to flow from Quinlin, and I looked down to watch him jerk himself off. Pre-come leaked from his slit, the smell of it hitting me hard and spiking my desire.

My mouth watered. I wanted to taste him, but he was still a little funny about that, and I'd only gotten him to stop insisting on using condoms every time we had sex in the last few days. I didn't count that little taste I'd sneaked the first time we'd been together or when he'd been nearly asleep. That hadn't been anything more than a tease, and I wanted more than that now. If I played my cards right, I could get what I wanted, since he was in the perfect position for me to steal a taste. Even though I wasn't feeding from him, I could still feel exactly how close he was to blowing his load.

I moved him faster over my cock and smirked as his breath became ragged and his hand moved quicker over his cock. He had a gorgeous flush to his face, and lust surged through me from knowing that I was the one responsible for him looking like that.

"Ryzel," Quinlin groaned, his body tightening around mine as his ass rippled over my cock when he orgasmed.

I jerked him tight to my lap, burying myself inside him to enjoy every single squeeze of his ass. I leaned my head down as far as I could and opened my mouth to catch as much of his seed as possible on my tongue. A satisfied growl left my throat when several spurts landed square in my mouth. The taste of him was even better than I remembered, and had the unexpected bonus of sending a rush of energy through me. I was gasping and calling his name, coming before I was ready for it, the delicious feel of Quinlin's sexual energy and my own orgasm making my head spin pleasantly.

Quinlin slumped forward, his harsh breaths ticklish against the skin of my neck. I let my head fall against the back of the couch and closed my eyes, a satisfied smile on my face. A shiver

travelled over me when Quinlin's lips brushed against the curve of my horn. I wrapped my arms around him and sighed contentedly.

Even without the Sunaldar, I would have wanted to keep Quinlin to myself. Aside from the great sex and fantastic feed I got from him, I actually liked him a hell of a lot; even when he was being a prickly, pissy bastard. Given time, I could see myself falling in love with him. Oddly, that felt right. Like it'd already been decided that's what was going to happen, and I was an idiot for taking so long to realize it.

I grinned and wondered if it actually had been decided by Quinlin's gran and Aunt Hildreth. I couldn't speak for his gran, but I wouldn't have put it past Hildreth at all.

I grunted in surprise and pain when Quinlin suddenly yanked my head to the side using the grip he'd taken of one of my horns. "You'd better hope like hell that grin is because of the excellent sex we just had and not because of the fact that I think you just fed from me while fucking me," Quinlin said, with a thread of annoyance in his voice.

Oh, shit. Sex with an angry Quinlin was hot. Quinlin angry after sex was fatal to my meal schedule, and possibly dangerous to some dear bits of my anatomy.

"That was an accident, Quinlin. I didn't think anything like that would happen if I tasted your come. It didn't happen the first time," I defended.

Quinlin's eyebrows rose. "The first time? And when exactly was that? I don't seem to recall coming in your mouth before. I'm pretty sure I'd remember something that hot. Talk and make it good, Ryzelmei, or you might be going hungry for a while. I'm sure you're aware I could use this little 'accident' to break our deal."

I was startled at the feeling of dread that shot through me at the idea of him nullifying our deal. I think I was already way more into Quinlin than I was conscious of. In any case, I needed to do some damage control. I was taking it as a good sign that he was still sitting on my lap with my cock stuffed up his ass, and that he'd said it'd been hot to come in my mouth. If he was really as pissed off as his voice sounded, he would have gotten up, found his cane, and tried to take my head off with it. I relaxed slightly.

"The first time we had sex, I snuck a quick taste when I was cleaning you up. I liked it then and wanted to really taste you, but you kept insisting on using condoms and always stopped before you came in my mouth. I swear, Quinlin, I didn't get anything from that first taste but the flavor of you on my tongue. This time, I saw an opportunity with the position we were in and decided to go for it. I'm just as surprised as you are that I got energy from you that way. It's never happened before with anyone I've ever had. It's probably related to being Sunaldar partners. I can ask Asmodai about it," I offered.

Quinlin seemed to study me for several seconds before a slow smile spread over his face, making me suddenly very wary. I'd seen Asmodai smile like that, and things never worked out well for whoever was being smiled at. I licked my lips and swallowed nervously. A tiny groan left me,

and my cock twitched in Quinlin's ass at the lingering taste of his come on my lips. Quinlin's smile got wider. I think I was about to be officially fucked, and not in a way I could appreciate.

"You will have to be made to pay for that, Ryzelmei. Our deal was that you'd only feed from me when I fucked you. Accident or not, that isn't what happened here. I can't let you get away with something of this magnitude without some kind of punishment."

I cringed inwardly. I knew Quinlin didn't have any problems denying me. It was the only leverage he had against me, and I was impressed he'd figured it out so quickly. Quinlin was turning out to be damn sharp when it came to demonic power games, and I could respect that. His willingness to play dirty with something so important to me put him on equal ground with me in my mind. Most humans, Gifted or not, would be afraid to try something like that, but Quinlin wasn't most humans.

I'd also found out that if I tried to use any demonic wiles on him to change his mind, I'd end up even more screwed than when I started out. He knew he could deny me a few feedings and, as long as I got my fill when he relented, I'd be fine. He called it demon training. I called it very twisted BDSM play, and damn if I didn't really get off on it when he finally let me feed from him. Gorging myself on him after being denied for a few days fell into the same, unbelievably rich category as feeding from him when he was pissed off. Not that I let him know that.

I exhaled slowly and took a chance on touching his face lightly.

"I'm sorry, Quinlin. I didn't mean to feed from you. I wouldn't do anything to break our deal," I said sincerely.

"I believe you, Ryzelmei. That doesn't get you out of being punished for what you did. I think I'll get a lot of pleasure out of putting a collar on you and tanning your ass before fucking you into next Tuesday. You're not going to be allowed to feed from me then, either. That'll also be part of your punishment. As soon as I find a new shirt, which you still owe me for by the way, you're going to drive me to my apartment so I can get the stuff I need," Quinlin said in a matter-of-fact voice as he moved off me.

I stared at him for several seconds as he ran his hands down the front of his destroyed shirt and muttered to himself about impatient demons ruining perfectly good shirts. When my brain finally processed what Quinlin was talking about, and that he wasn't mad at what I'd done accidentally, I grinned and yanked him down into my lap, planting a sloppy kiss on his mouth and cutting off his squawk of protest. I could handle and would intensely enjoy his idea of punishment. Hell, I still wanted my chance to tie him to the bed and have my very wicked way with him.

"Why bother leaving when I have everything you could possibly need here? And just for the record, Quinlin, I look stunning in a collar and tied up with my own hair."

"I'll take your word on that, Ryzelmei," Quinlin said with a wry laugh.

Quinlin snorted and rolled his eyes before smiling and pushing against my chest. I let him go and stood, taking his hand and pulling him toward the bedroom. I stopped at the doorway and faced him. He looked at me with a question in his eyes. I placed a hand over the palm print on his chest and brought his hand up to cover the matching one on mine. He was a smart cookie, so I thought he'd understand the importance of the gesture I was making.

"I swear, Quinlin, I won't do anything to purposely hurt you or break our deal. I like you too much to risk losing you."

I was surprised at the words that came out of my mouth. It wasn't what I'd intended to say, but it certainly was what I felt. Nerves attacked me again when Quinlin just stared at me intently and said nothing. I started to wonder if I'd just fucked up things between us by saying more than Quinlin was ready to hear or accept right now.

"I like you, too, Ryzelmei. Probably more than I should or more than is sane. I don't really understand it. Even though you're a demon, and I know demons lie all the fucking time, I believe you. I trust you."

Quinlin leaned into me and kissed me gently on the lips. There was a subtle difference to the kiss. It felt like we'd taken another step down the path the Sunaldar had started us on. I liked the way that made me feel, and going by Quinlin's kiss, he liked the way it made him feel, too. I was also coming to realize why some of the demons who'd experienced the Sunaldar spoke about it in a softly wondrous tone.

"And, Ryzel, don't think that just because I said I like you, that means I won't tan your ass for that little 'accident' of yours."

I threw back my head and laughed, grabbing Quinlin and hugging him hard. "You have no idea how much I'm looking forward to that."

Quinlin snorted and kissed me again before giving me a push toward the bedroom, swatting my ass hard enough to make the cheek sting. I grinned and shrugged out of my shirt as I walked to an armoire that held some of my more interesting toys that I hadn't shown to Quinlin yet. I just knew playing with Quinlin was going to be so much fun. We may have started off under slightly strange circumstances, but I had the feeling that we could really have something good together.

I think he knew that, too, and it made me feel... blessed that he was willing to give this thing between us a chance.