

Cathryn Fox



HELL'S
ANGEL

Spice BRIEFS

Hell's Angel

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Spice
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Chapter One

Ribbons of acrid, sulfur residue curled through Lucifer's lair and wafted before Brand's face—the fiery black cinder a perfect match for his mood. With his arms folded behind his back, Brand faced his Master and inhaled the all too familiar smells, drawing them into his lungs and savoring them like a powerful aphrodisiac. The pungent aroma fed the anger in his soul, a continual reminder that many decades ago his best friend had escaped purgatory, leaving Brand behind to rot in Hell. Literally.

Flames raced up the stone wall as blistering heat played over his scarred and mutilated flesh, but Brand had learned long ago to distance himself from the discomfort and concentrate only on the raw anger whipping through his veins. It was that anger that kept him going, and gave him purpose as he awaited Gage's return.

Sure he and Gage had been best friends, relying solely on one another to make it through each gruelling day in Hell, and sure Brand had thought Gage would come back for him, but the passing of time, decades to be precise, had fleeced him of his last vestige of hope. Gage had been gone for nearly thirty years, but it might as well have been a millennium since one day in Hell felt like an eternity.

Brand hadn't wanted to believe that Gage and his newly found soul mate, Jadyn, had purposely left him behind, but years of torture and abuse at the hands of Lucifer had a way of changing one's perspective. Not to mention the sinister methods his Master used of drilling the venomous fact home, again and again.

Yeah, Hell really had a way of changing a guy, Brand mused.

Lucifer's cold amber eyes met his unflinchingly. Without softening his words to lessen the impact, he announced sharply, "Gage and Jadyn have a daughter. Her name is Kaylea."

Brand fisted both hands as rage ate at his insides like a thousand hungry rats. *Gage and Jadyn had a child.* The image of big blue eyes, round ruby cheeks and bubbling laughter erupted in his brain, eliciting a disconcerting mixture of sadness, joy, pain and elation.

Lucifer's voice pulled him back, anchoring him in this reality—a cold, harsh reality without love, companionship or...*loyalty*. "Like her name says, she's a pure soul. Born of goodness and touched by..." Lucifer paused, gave a slight shiver and glanced upward before saying, "*Him*." He then proceeded to tap sharpened black claws on his stone throne as he gave Brand a moment to digest and assimilate the information. His long, talonlike nails hammered in synch with Brand's accelerated heart beat. After a short respite, Lucifer added, "I want you to mark her for me."

Incredulous, Brand's head came up with a start, shocked at his Master's request. "If she's so pure, how am I supposed to mark her for Hell? She has to commit a crime, and since one born of purity rarely commits—"

Lucifer cut him off and swiped his hand through the heavy air, carrot flames

dancing on his fingertips. He scowled. "Have you learned nothing from your time here, Brand," he boomed out. After a long-suffering sigh, Lucifer countered, "Then perhaps you're not the man for the job." He let his glance race over the four warriors flanking his side, as though assessing their abilities for this very important mission.

"*I am* the man for the job." The eerie, calm in Brand's voice brought Lucifer's attention back around to him and left little doubt that he *was* the man for the job, capable of fulfilling any task Lucifer cared to saddle him with. Brand narrowed his eyes to mere slits, his nostrils flared. "Tell me what you want me to do."

Brand didn't miss the slight, victorious grin on Lucifer's face. A grin that enlightened Brand to the fact that not only did Lucifer want him for the job, but he also *needed* him for it. Was it because he—a man who had a vested interest in the case—was the only man who could get the job done. Or was it something else?

"It's a crime against her God to sleep with the devil's henchman," Lucifer elaborated, then stuck out his claws to study them, giving Brand time to digest the information.

Brand knew that Lucifer had been nothing short of enraged when Gage and Jadyn had miraculously escaped some decades ago. He carried that rage like an Olympic torch, nurturing the smoldering embers until fiery flames seeped from his every pore. Lucifer fed off the volatile energy, using it and manipulating it as he waited for the opportune moment to exact his revenge. And now, it seems, the time had come.

"So you want me to seduce her, then?"

Lucifer gave a slow side-to-side shake of his disfigured horned head. "My, but you are a quick one." Then his voice dropped, and took on a serious edge. He leaned forward, close enough that Brand could smell hot garbage on his breath. He snarled, and said, "I want her. And with the way your so-called friends had treated you, I'd hazard a guess that you're just the man to bring her to me." Amber eyes narrowed and stared down at Brand. "You must accomplish this mission in forty-eight hours. It's all the time you'll have. Beyond that my powers to keep you in human form fade, then your body will weaken and you'll materialize back here." A short pause and then, "So what do you say, Brand, a little tit for tat?" He nodded his head, gesturing to the guarded portal embedded in the blackened stone wall—a portal that carried souls from one realm to the other.

Brand studied the long, jagged opening in the rock before turning back to face his Lucifer. A sardonic grin curled up his lips as he echoed, "A little tit for tat, Master." Then under his breath, he added, "Payback is such a bitch."

Chapter Two

"Okay, I'm going to sleep with the next man who walks through that door," Kaylea West announced as she and her best friend Nicole James ate lunch at Halo, her parents' curbside cafe.

Nicole gave her a sceptical glance and took a sip of her steaming latte. She rolled one shoulder, relaxed back into her plush seat and said, "I'll believe it when I see it."

"Then prepare for me to make a believer out of you," Kaylea said, holding her chin—and her coffee mug—high in salute, even though her insides were a ridiculous mess of nerves just from thinking about seducing a stranger.

Nicole chuckled and smoothed down her midnight, poker-straight hair. Kaylea mimicked the action, and swatted at her flyaway blond frizz. Why was it that Nicole's hair remained cool and put together, despite the summer humidity, and Kaylea's short blond locks resembled dandelion fluff? Perhaps that's why Nicole had a date every other night and Kaylea was left home to live vicariously through one of her romance novels. Thank God they had air-conditioning at the library where they both worked. Otherwise the unruly ball of fluff that she passed off as hair would scare the patrons away. She made a mental note to tell her parents to install another cooling appliance, because the one they had was doing little to combat the sultry Chicago heat.

"Oh, I'm prepared, Kaylea. The question is, are you?"

Hell yeah, she was prepared.

She was a twenty-five-year-old virgin for Christ's sake. And sure she was ready to take a walk on the wild side, despite knowing *who* and *what* she was. Her parents, Gage and Jady, might have escaped Hell and given birth to a daughter who was born of purity and touched my "him," but Kaylea wasn't careless enough to make any mistakes that were classified as "sins." As a rare, pure soul—enlightened to this reality during her christening—landing in Hell wouldn't be a wise move.

Sleeping with a guy, however, really didn't qualify as a sin. But going twenty-five years and not sleeping with a guy sure as hell did.

Kaylea glimpsed the tall gorgeous man coming from the counter, a steaming mug of coffee in his hand. After a long perusal, she planted her elbows on the table and buried her face in her palms. "Why the heck can't I get laid?"

Nicole rolled a casual shoulder and stated, "Because you're too fussy."

Kaylea dropped her arms in time to see Mr. Leather Pants grab a seat in the corner. His long legs stretched out in front of him as Kaylea did a slow, leisurely scan of his scrumptious, athletic body.

Yummy...

He had to be a tourist, she mused, because she'd yet to see a man that hot on her beloved streets of Chicago. Her gaze briefly met his, then suddenly, catching her off guard, her pulse jumped and heat pooled between her legs in a way it had never

pooled before. Good Lord, what was it about him that held her attention and, quite frankly, aroused her? Kaylea gulped air and casually said, "I'm not fussy. I'm selective."

"Selective?" Nicole arched a manicured eyebrow over deep green eyes. Amusement laced her voice as she added, "You dumped the last guy you went out with because he used too much tongue when he kissed you. And the guy before that didn't use enough."

Kaylea crinkled her nose. "Okay, okay, but there was no chemistry," she admitted, and stole another glance at Mr. Leather Pants, who'd just slunk down lower in his seat.

Talk about chemistry...

She'd just bet that he'd use the right amount of tongue, and with one touch from him she'd likely go off like a round of C-4.

Her sideways glance hadn't gone unnoticed by Nicole. Her friend twisted around to see where Kaylea's gaze had wandered to, then turned back and said, "I know you're waiting for Mr. Right, 'someone to complete you.'" Nicole paused to do air quotes around those four words. "But in the meantime you really need to get laid and loosen up." Nicole nodded toward the guy Kaylea had been checking out. "He looks like a guy who could help you work out the kinks."

Speaking of kink...

Her mind took her in an erotic direction, one involving leather, lace and metal restraint. Not to mention a smokin' hot guy with nothing on but a broken-in pair of biker chaps.

Oh, hell!

Kaylea groaned from sexual frustration then mocked herself. "Cripes, I really do fit the typical librarian persona, don't I?"

"Maybe, or maybe it has something to do with your name."

"My name?"

"Yeah, Kaylea means 'keeper of the key—pure,'" she elaborated, a testament that they'd both harvested an enormous amount of useless information as librarians.

"If that key has anything to do with my chastity belt then I sure as hell wish someone would tell me where it's hidden so I could unlock it."

With that both girls laughed out loud, the sound drawing attention from those around them. Still chuckling, Kaylea put her finger to her lips to hush her friend. The last thing she wanted was for everyone in the place to know she was a damn virgin who was completely clueless in the area of seduction.

"Then again, maybe it's your aura," Nicole suggested.

"How so?" Kaylea asked.

Nicole palmed the air. "You have this purity about you that probably scares men off."

Kaylea chewed on her bottom lip and considered her friend's astuteness. Naturally Nicole had no idea just how bang on she was with that observation, since Kaylea was careful to keep her family's secrets, well, a secret.

Her thoughts faded to the background as the heavy oak door slowly creaked open.

The two women turned and stared at the entrance, waiting to glimpse the man who was about to be gifted with Kaylea's virginity, but Kaylea couldn't seem to keep her focus, not when the man sitting in the corner of the coffee shop, with his head tilted downward, low enough to veil his identity, kept drawing her attention.

Yeah, he was good-looking. Damn good-looking, but she never was one to swoon over a man's good looks before. So she either really had a thing for guys in leather biker chaps, or this particular bad boy had the ability to play some mysterious alchemy with her libido.

When Kaylea's mother and father walked in, Kaylea let out a breath of relief and Nicole laughed. "Look at you. You look like you're about to faint. That's one hell of a way to make a believer out of me."

Without bothering to deny it, Kaylea grinned, then turned her attention to her parents as they stepped up to their table. They exchanged pleasantries before Gage and Jadyn disappeared into the back room to prepare for their shift. A moment later one of the waitresses came with their sandwiches.

As Kaylea examined her lunch, her lips tingled and her mouth salivated, but it certainly wasn't for the egg salad in front of her. She inconspicuously watched the man in the corner, as he in turn watched her parents pull on their aprons, relieve the counter staff and step up to serve the lineup of patrons.

Kaylea noted that her stranger seemed a little dark, a little brooding and a whole lot dangerous. As a shiver moved through her, something flashed in his eyes and gained her full focus. Something soft, kind and compassionate. Something that completely intrigued her.

Tempted her.

Shortly after her perusal, he pushed his chair back, the metal legs squealing across the floor like a broken fan belt. He vaulted to his feet and stalked out the front door, letting it slam behind him.

Biting into the sandwich, Kaylea contemplated his hasty exit. But before she even had time to swallow, the door swung back open, and Mr. Leather Pants stood here, darkening the archway. Intense brown eyes locked on hers and in that instant sexual energy leapt between them, bombarding her body with primal hunger.

Desire moved through her, sending heat all the way to the tips of her toes, stopping to warm every erogenous zone on the way. Kaylea gulped down her food, slid her fingers through her hair and nearly choked as a barrage of emotions overcame her. Everything from excitement and anticipation, to doubt and apprehension, whipped through her blood.

Mr. Leather Pants pulled his gaze away and catalogued the room, his glance settling on her parents as they shared an intimate moment at the counter.

From her peripheral vision, Kaylea caught the salacious grin on Nicole's face. Knowing exactly what her friend was thinking, Kaylea shifted restlessly in her chair and sucked in air, barely able to inflate her lungs. Her body fairly trembled as lust prowled through her and settled low in her stomach.

Kaylea wagged a finger in his direction, both excited and terrified by the prospect, she asked, "Uh, does he qualify?" Dammit, her voice came out squeakier than she would have liked.

Nicole cocked her head and assessed Mr. Leather Pants. Her mouth curved, a look of approval spreading over her face. "Why yes, Kaylea. I believe he does."

With her raging libido urging her on, demanding she answer her body's desires once and for all, she gathered her bravado, braced her palms on the wooden tabletop and forced herself upward, praying like hell her knees would cooperate.

Nicole licked her lips. "I'll cover for you at the library for the rest of the day, and since we both have tomorrow off you can take your good old time with Mr. Hot Pants. Oh, and don't do anything I wouldn't do," Nicole suggested.

Kaylea shot her a wry grin. "Well, in that case, I guess the sky's the limit."

Nicole laughed, dropped two condoms into Kaylea's handbag and pointed toward the door. "Don't you have a man to seduce?"

Yeah, she did. Now if only she wasn't so innocent in the ways of seduction...

Chapter Three

Brand had stormed from the coffee shop knowing he couldn't carry off Lucifer's plan. Not after glimpsing Kaylea. Christ, he hadn't expected that Gage and Jadyn's daughter would be such a bright, gorgeous, vivacious woman. One who made him feel things he hadn't felt in a long time. Something about the way her eyes glistened with love and laughter when she talked with her friend really got to him, down deep, awakening things he'd long ago buried. Everything from her feminine lilac scent, her smile and her mannerisms, to the melodic sound of her laughter was infectious, and for a brief moment she made him remember what it was like to love, not hate. He'd fled the cafe ready to call it off, ready to spend the rest of his time on Earth between the legs of someone who was already marked, but then, inexplicably, as if driven by a greater force, something compelled him to turn around. He wasn't sure why he'd turned back, when all he wanted to do was run away and fuck Kaylea out of his mind, but nevertheless, he'd ventured back into Halo. The second he'd flung open the door and glimpsed Gage and Jadyn sharing an intimate moment behind the counter, holding onto each other in a loving embrace like they hadn't a care in the world, his anger came back tenfold and reminded him that they'd left him behind to suffer at the hands of Lucifer. Turmoil reverberated through his blood, and urged him to carry forth with his mission.

Deciding to do just that, he hardened himself and caught Kaylea's glance. As her blue eyes blinked up at him, he noted the lust, desire and intrigue in her gaze. Oh yeah, seducing her, and marking her for Hell, would be like taking candy from a baby.

Concentrating only on the rage inside him as it went from simmer to inferno, he buried every emotion she brought out in him and backed out of the doorway. Brand knew he needed to expel his volatile energy before he went off like a supernova. He turned on the ball of his foot and left his Harley parked curbside. As his blood boiled, he briskly made his way down the sidewalk toward the hotel he'd secured earlier, and put together a plan of action. Tonight, after nightfall, he'd find her and then seduce the hell right out of her, or rather, seduce the Hell right into her.

Manoeuvring his way through the crowd, Brand nodded to the concierge and stepped into the massive lobby of his luxurious hotel. He damn well planned on spending every stolen moment on Earth in comfort, he mused.

It was past midday when he rode the elevator to the top floor and ventured into the plush lounge overlooking the city. He needed a drink.

He glanced around the establishment and noted the patrons—business people punching away on their BlackBerries or conversing privately in a secluded booth. Quick flashes and distant images of himself in a similar position passed through his mind. Had he been a businessman? If so, what on Earth could he have done to have landed in Hell? He struggled to remember, but since a day in Hell was like a lifetime,

those memories had long ago faded.

He ordered a beer and took a pull from the bottle, savoring the taste. Goddammit, it had been a long time since he'd tasted anything so fine. As he slammed the bottle onto the oaken bar top, the fine hairs on the back of his neck began tingling.

He didn't have to turn around to know she was there. He felt her presence long before he saw her, felt her sexual energy even from some twenty feet away.

He shook his head and scoffed. Fuck, she had no idea how easy she was making this for him.

She moved toward him. His body tightened, his pulse quickened, and perspiration broke out on his flesh. As his senses exploded, lust moved through his veins, and there was little he could do to conceal his erection. What was it about her that had him reacting so strangely?

As she approached, he shifted restlessly on his stool. She shimmied in next to him, her eyes alive with anticipation. When their gazes collided it did the weirdest things to his insides, and for the briefest of moments, her mere presence softened his anger.

He toyed with his beer bottle and studied her, taking note of her nervous gestures, and the trepidation in her voice as she ordered a strawberry daiquiri. After it arrived she swallowed half the drink in one gulp.

He arched a brow, amused. "Thirsty?" he asked, breaking the quiet.

"It's a warm day," she confessed, and fanned her face. As her big, innocent blue eyes stared up at him, his heart hammered and he felt like he'd been sucker punched.

Fuck! What the hell was that all about?

She held her hand out. "I'm Kaylea."

"Brand," he offered and worked hard to hold onto his anger and summon a defence against her charm. Unfortunately, his efforts proved futile.

Her knee pressed against his and a rush of sexual energy hit him like a wrecking ball. As her heat reached out to him, it was all he could do to form a coherent thought. With his blood pressure soaring, he leaned into her and felt her warm, strawberry-scented breath on his face. "The hotel has a pool, why don't you take a swim to cool off."

"Oh, I'm not staying here," she said quickly, then as if she'd given away too much information she began backpedaling. "I just stopped in for a drink." She got quiet for a moment, then something in her expression changed. She aimed a longing glance his way. "And, well..."

The angelic look on her face brought warmth to his darkest corners and despite his efforts, everything inside him turned to mush. He curled his fingers and resisted the urge to brush a wayward blond curl from her cheek when she tilted her head forward. "And well, what?" he asked, softening his tone.

She fiddled with her straw and moistened her bottom lip. Christ almighty, she had the nicest mouth. "Well, to be honest, I saw you at the cafe."

"Oh, yeah?" Her honesty was like a shot in the heart. As he studied her, he suspected she didn't have a dishonest bone in her body.

"And well, I though you noticed me, too."

After a long pause he said, "I noticed you."

Seemingly encouraged, her eyes widened, and she leaned forward, affording him a view of her cleavage. Her attempt, he supposed, to entice him. He studied her, sensing her discomfort with her flirtatious, come-hither actions. When dark lashes fluttered over naive eyes, his entire world shifted. He gulped air, suddenly hating himself. Hating that for one minute he'd considered marking this sweet innocent girl for Hell.

Fuck...

As his anger completely dissolved, he drew a long breath to center himself, then touched her shoulders to put a stop to her obviously uncomfortable seduction. He didn't want her exposing her body. Not to any man. Especially not to him. Because he wasn't worthy of her. "Kaylea, don't."

She pulled back, embarrassed. Her cheeks flushed pink, and her beautiful blue eyes widened. "I just thought—"

Oh, Christ. The mortified look on her face turned him inside out. His gut clenched and he fisted his hands. Dammit, he hadn't meant to hurt her, but it had been a hell of a long time since he'd dealt with people, or their emotions.

"I think I made a mistake." Kaylea climbed from the chair and bolted to the elevator.

Before she had a chance to round the corner and disappear from his line of sight, Brand vaulted out of his chair, chased after her and caught her as she climbed into the waiting lift.

He stepped on with her, reached for her and gathered her hand in his. "Kaylea..."

She turned toward him as the doors slid shut and the elevator began its descent. Glistening blue eyes stared up at him in confusion. "What?"

"You didn't make a mistake." He pitched his voice low and spoke in a soft tone. "It's just that..."

"Just what?"

Jesus, what the fuck was he supposed to tell her?

That he wanted her so badly his insides were shaking, but he couldn't fuck her because it would mark her for Hell and she was too sweet and innocent for a life in purgatory. And for some weird, mysterious reason he cared too much about her for that to happen. Brand shook his head and pounded the side of his fist on the elevator wall.

He watched the ways she studied him and suspected she'd read the conflicting emotions in his eyes. She moved closer and gently touched his cheek, fragmenting his thoughts. The intoxicating, feminine scent of her skin pulled him into a cocoon of need and desire. His head began spinning, and he struggled to keep himself upright. What the hell was happening to him?

She began moving, pressing against him. "Brand..." Her sweet yet seductive voice curled around him and his hands, as though moving of their own accord,

urgently began tracing the contours of her luscious body. Her heat reached out to him and his entire body shuddered with longing.

Oh God, he needed...

Suddenly, reality inched its way into his brain and he squared his shoulders and pulled back. He wouldn't—couldn't—do anything to hurt her. "Don't. I can't do this." Fighting an internal war, he eased away and drew a ragged breath.

She stepped into him again, giving him no reprieve. "Can't or don't want to?" she asked breathlessly, her voice a low velvet murmur. Her legs widened and as though she, too, was driven by a greater force, she shimmied against him.

"Oh, fuck," he groaned, completely unprepared for the emotions she brought out in him. Well past the point of thinking logically, he pressed the button for his floor, grabbed her wrist and pinned her against the mirrored wall. He positioned his lips close to her mouth. Never in his life had he felt so crazed or frantic.

"Kaylea..."

"I want you." She poised her lips open and the invitation proved too powerful for him to deny. His lips crashed down on hers and he sank into her warm wetness. As he found solace in the heat of her mouth, her kiss fuelled the hunger brewing inside him. When she moaned in pleasure, fire pitched through his veins, and his cock thickened, draining all the blood from his brain, along with his cognitive reasoning abilities. Pressure began building in his body and he couldn't think, he could only feel.

"Tell me you don't want this," she murmured, her lips moving to his neck, her tongue doing delicious things to his nerves.

The elevator stopped on his floor. With need ruling his actions, and well past the point of thinking rationally, he hauled her off. "I can't," was all he managed to get out as he ushered her down the hall.

Chapter Four

Kaylea's heart raced as Brand gathered her hand in his and guided her into his lavish suite. He turned to her, his mouth parted, his eyes dark, intense. Carnal. Oh Lord, he looked so wild and so out of control that it scared her and excited her at the same time.

Even though outwardly he seemed dark and dangerous, deep in her soul she instinctively knew she was safe with him. Intuitive intelligence told her that beneath the surface, he was a man of integrity and character, and had a fierce sense of protectiveness. And since she always trusted her intuition, as it had never guided her wrong before, she was going to give herself to this man in a way she'd never given herself to another. He might be rough and rugged on the outside but she'd glimpsed the softness, and the warmth underneath, which affirmed her belief that she was definitely in good hands.

Everything inside her told her that Brand was just the man to take away her virginity and give her a night of wild sex that she'd never ever forget.

She raised her gaze to his and his shaky thumb traced her lips, as his nostrils flared. "You're...so...beautiful." His words came out broken, fractured, and she sensed the urgency in his body.

She caught the hungry gleam in his eyes and her entire being began shaking with want, no...with *need*. The sexual pull between them was most powerful and did bizarre things to her insides.

"Brand—" Her words died when he pulled her against him, meshing her softness with his hardness. She relaxed into him, soaking in his warmth.

"Come here," he murmured. His deep sexy voice made her toes curl. Brand buried his face in her hair as his hands traced the pattern of her body. Gentle fingers glided over her skin with the utmost care. Her entire body flushed hotly and a thin sheen of perspiration broke out on her skin. Something about the way he touched her felt so damn good, so damn right. A low, erotic whimper bubbled up from the depth of her throat and her sexy sounds prompted him into action.

Her body softened against his as his trembling fingers found the buttons on her blouse. Slowly, one by one, he worked them free until he exposed her lace bra. The pleasure in his eyes excited her when his gaze latched upon her cleavage. As he licked his lips in eager anticipation, desire moved through her, forcing her to lock her knees to keep herself upright.

Good Lord, she couldn't believe how much she wanted him, this man, this stranger. Her depth of desire for him was most fascinating, and completely mind-boggling. She should be nervous, she knew, but the painstakingly gentle way he was touching her, and the tender way he was looking at her, put her at ease. As her inhibitions fled, and desire overtook her, she in turn tore at his clothes. Brand stepped

back and quickly shed his shirt, chaps and jeans, then stood before her bare naked, lacking modesty and completely comfortable in his own skin.

Her breath caught in her throat as she took pleasure in his gorgeous body. Roped muscles flexed and relaxed again under her scrutinizing gaze. She turned her attention to the juncture between his legs. Her eyes widened in surprise as her glance settled on his rock-hard cock, and she could feel her composure slipping away.

He closed the small gap between them and, taking her by surprise, his mouth crashed down on hers. His kiss was deep, needy, and so damn possessive it left her head spinning. Cushioned in his powerful arms, his mouth ravished hers with primal need. The soft blade of his tongue played and duelled with hers, then lashed against the inside of her mouth. His fingers moved to her jeans and in one quick motion he ripped them open. He pulled them to her knees and sank to the floor along with them. A low savage sound climbed out of his throat as his face met her pussy.

"Widen your legs for me, babe." His warm breath felt like fire on her skin. Using his tongue, he began at her inner thighs and worked his way up until he reached her sex. He buried his face in her pussy, lapping at her clit through her silk panties. Stars danced before her eyes, and his hot ragged breath on her flesh nearly drove her over the precipice. Gyrating and pressing against him, she raked her fingers through his hair and shamelessly held him to her. Jesus, it felt so damn good.

He pressed a kiss over her pussy, a promise of things to come, she hoped, before climbing to his feet and taking his warmth with him. With her body rebelling as it beckoned his heat, she moaned in protest. He grinned and began backing her up until her knees hit the bed. He unhooked her bra and let it fall to the floor, then none so gently ripped her panties from her hips until she stood before him completely exposed, completely vulnerable. Completely needy.

A gentle push had her falling onto the mattress. Brand moved right along with her until his body was positioned over hers. Her nipples tightened painfully and pressed into his hard chest. His beautiful, thick cock indented her leg, reminding her she was a woman with needs, but she was also a woman of little experience.

Her insides quivered with equal measures of excitement and nervousness, and her heady scent saturated the room. His cock seemed to grow against her leg, making her wonder how they would ever fit together.

As if he read her thoughts, he put his hands on either side of her head, lightly brushed his lips over hers and murmured into her mouth, "I'd never hurt you, babe." She swallowed hard when she heard the tenderness in his tone. Her brows knit together, shocked at the way his voice seeped under her skin and played magic with her soul. He tilted his head, his eyes full of urgent need when they met hers. When he caught her perplexed look he whispered in a barely there voice, "Tell me you want this...."

In response to his question, she thrust her pelvis forward, urging him on. "I need to feel you inside me, Brand. Please..." Impatience laced her voice as feral desire clawed to the surface.

Reading her needs, he took full possession of her body. He slid downward until his

mouth reached her breasts. The first flick of his tongue over her pink nipple had her writhing on the bed like a wanton woman.

Fire licked over her thighs when he greedily pulled her taut bud into his mouth and sucked, long and hard. His touch sent shockwaves through her and her skin came alive, burning with a need so fierce she thought she'd ignite. The intense, direct pleasure on her pebbled nipples made her wild with need. How on Earth would she ever survive this frantic, sexual encounter if he buried his face between her legs?

Brand groaned low in his throat and it thrilled her that he wanted her as much as she wanted him. Once he'd had his fill of her breasts he shimmied lower, gripped her legs and spread them wide. His nostrils flared and he remained motionless, his eyes caressing her pussy in mute pleasure. It surprised her how comfortable she felt with her body naked and open to him. Kaylea slid her hand down her stomach, and parted her twin lips, offering herself up to him. Her pussy clenched and throbbed in anticipation and she grew slick with arousal.

His eyes, so full of want, shot to hers, and in that instant they connected in a way she'd never connected with another. As her body called out to him, begging for his touch, her hand touched his shoulder. Her pulse raced and she bit back a breathy moan. She skimmed his sinewy muscles, taking joy in the feel of his sculpted physique. Her skin moistened and she began shaking with need, her body conveying without words what she wanted. "Brand..."

Without preamble, Brand insinuated himself between her open thighs and dipped his head. He inhaled her tangy, aroused scent before he buried his face in her drenched pussy.

She shivered under his invasive touch. "Oh. My. God," she cried out and bucked against his hot, probing tongue. Every nerve ending in her body came alive as he unleashed himself on her. In a touch that was both commanding and soft, his thumb moved to her clit, where he drew slow, sinuous circles. Teetering on the edge of ecstasy, Kaylea gripped the bedsheets and hung on for dear life.

He slipped one thick finger into her pussy and she heard his breath catch. "Jesus you're so tight and wet, babe. I'll never last when I put my cock in you."

She smiled at him, loving the easy, sexy way he talked to her. But that smile turned to a heated moan when he began pushing his finger in and out, stirring her heat and raising her passion to never before known heights. So attuned with her needs, he touched her just right, adding the perfect amount of pressure to her G-spot as he skillfully pleased her entire body. She threw her head to the side and concentrated on the barrage of sensations rushing through her.

"Do you like that, sweetheart?"

Well past the point of vocalizing anything intelligent, she gyrated against him. He inserted another finger for a snug fit and brushed his tongue over her clit. The duel assault pushed her over the precipice.

Pressure began building, coming to a peak. She grew slicker with each delicious stroke. Kaylea began panting, her hips coming off the bed.

"I'm—"

"Yeah, baby, that's it. Come for me. Let me taste your cream."

Her body began spasming, overcome with erotic pleasure. Her pussy muscles clenched and throbbed as she let go and tumbled into an orgasm. "Oh. God. Brand," she cried out. Gripping his shoulders, she rode out every delicious wave of ecstasy.

After her tremors subsided, he slid up her body. As though needing the connection at all times, he never allowed his body to break contact with her. He brushed her damp bangs from her forehead, and put his mouth close to hers. "I've never tasted anything sweeter," he murmured.

Her gaze locked with his and her pulse skyrocketed. Everything in the way he talked to her, touched her and made love to her with his fingers and his mouth got to her on another level. She honestly couldn't believe how close she was to losing herself in him. This man, this stranger. A guy she'd simply picked up to take her virginity and give her a night of wild, unforgettable sex. It never occurred to her how easily she could fall for him.

She felt his cock press into her and warmth move through her blood. "Inside me. Please," she murmured into his mouth. For some strange reason she needed him inside her, to join them as one as though her very life, her very existence, depended on it. As though they were destined to be together.

"Brand..."

"Kaylea..." His voice wavered. He touched her face, a silent communication that he felt the same way. God, could he be the one, the one she'd been waiting for. The one and only man meant for her.

She turned her head and spotted her handbag. "Condom. My bag."

With shaky hands, Brand grabbed her bag and quickly sheathed himself. He climbed back over her and cradled her face in his palms. His touch was so achingly gentle it caused her heart to miss a beat.

Their gazes locked as his rock-hard cock breached her opening. With need ruling her actions, she pitched her hips forward, driving him in deeper. He shut his eyes, his hands fisted in her hair, and in one quick thrust he pushed all the way into her. Crazy with lust, he drove past her hymen in one fluid movement, and she was thankful that he was too far gone to have noticed.

Not wanting anything to break this magical moment, Kaylea bit down on her lips and blocked her mind to the sharp stab of pain. Panting hard, Brand remained inside her for a moment, as though giving her time to get used to his girth.

When she began moving, he quickly joined her. His long easy thrusts became deeper, harder, faster and soon her pain segued to pleasure.

"Babe," he said and angled his body to keep the bulk of his weight off her. "So good..."

Warmth flooded her system as he took them both to a deeper level of intimacy. Together they began to establish a rhythm, both giving and taking until every nerve in her body was on fire.

"So good," she murmured back as she rode him with wild abandon. Blindsided by

lust, she scratched her nails over his back when she felt another clench of fulfillment. His body responded with a shudder.

"I want you to come all over my cock, babe. Will you do that for me?"

"Yes," she cried out. Suddenly her blood pressure soared, and another climax tore through her. Oh God, so perfect. So damn perfect.

"Jesus, you're so hot." He stroked her deeper and harder, then stilled inside her. She felt his muscles tense. His eyes locked with hers. "Babe..." he murmured. The way he looked at her made her insides shiver with unfamiliar longing.

Cripes, they were supposed to be having sex, wild "bang me up against the wall" sex, but what he was doing didn't seem like sex with a stranger at all. It seemed more like lovemaking. The way he took such painstaking care of her body left a deep contentment in her soul. Everything about him felt right. In her heart and in her head.

"Come inside me," she murmured. With that she felt his cock jump as he released high inside her. He buried his face in her neck and grabbed a fistful of her hair as his cock pulsed and spasmed. She held him tight and squeezed her muscles, wanting to make it as good for him as he'd made it for her.

A short while later, he collapsed on top of her, their perspiration melding their bodies as one. She stroked her fingers through his hair, enjoying the feel of his body weight on top of her, and the feel of his hot breath on her neck. After his breathing finally returned to normal, he removed his condom, rolled beside her and pulled her in close.

"Hey, baby." When his dark eyes locked on hers it was possible to forget every sane thought. And for some peculiar reason, the gentle, loving, tender way this man touched her seeped under her skin and cradled her heart.

"Hey, yourself," she said, then closed her lids to listen to his heartbeat as he drifted off to sleep. As she rolled into him it suddenly occurred to her she wasn't the kind of girl who could love casually. Not with him. Not with Brand.

She wanted more.

Hovering somewhere between consciousness and sleep Brand stirred, then automatically pulled Kaylea in tighter. He felt her body shift and melt into his. He blinked his eyes open in time to see her glance up at him. She gave him a seductive, half smile and then began kissing his mouth, his neck and his chest. Her beaded nipples pressed into his skin and alerted him to her growing arousal. Her silky blond hair spilled forward and brushed against his flesh, teasing his senses. Warm fingers moved to his cock, and began stroking gently. As she acquainted herself with his body, her touch sent heat charging to his dick, and his legs widened in invitation.

"I love the feel of your cock," she murmured. Her voice was darkly seductive and had his body reacting with urgent demands. She leaned forward and gave him a light lick. "I love the texture, the taste, the length and the way it fills me..." One hand slipped lower to cradle his balls and he nearly lost his mind then and there.

Her soft moans of pleasure, and her long, lazy caresses fuelled his lust and deepened his need. His cock thickened and his body began humming with renewed

excitement. Jesus, he couldn't seem to get enough of her. He needed her again. Needed to take her. Everywhere.

Greedy with want, he pulled her to him, gripped her hips and flipped her over. Her surprised yet excited gasp was smothered by the cushiony mattress. Brand grabbed his pillow and positioned it under her hips.

As he tipped her beautiful, heart-shaped ass up to him, she twisted her head. His nostrils flared, and his jaw clenched and unclenched as primal need unfurled inside her. Her gaze appraised his face and she blinked at him with eyes that were aroused and full of emotions. The warmth, trust and vulnerability in her glance pulled an emotional reaction from the depths of his core.

"Brand," she asked, "are you okay?"

Tenderness stole over him. He swallowed hard and worked to find his voice. "I need to fuck you, Kaylea. Everywhere." He felt her entire body shiver.

In a bid to relax her, he cupped her ass cheeks and gave her a gentle massage while his tongue made a slow, skilled pass over her puckered opening.

Her muscles clenched and she nearly jumped off the bed. "Easy, baby," he coaxed, wanting to ensure she was relaxed and comfortable so she could enjoy everything he had to offer. "I want you to trust that I'm going to make this perfect for you."

"I do trust you, Brand," she whispered in such a gentle voice it has his insides quaking.

Desperately needing to give her an insurmountable sum of pleasure, he made another slow pass with his tongue and felt her body open for him. A riot of emotions overcame him with the way she so freely handed herself over to him. "That's a girl. How does that feel?"

She wiggled her hips him. "So nice..." she murmured into the sheets. "Warm, and nice."

He slipped one hand around her legs and brushed his thumb over her clit while he worked his tongue into her puckered opening in an effort to relax her tight, ringed passage. She bucked against his hand and his mouth, moving restlessly against him as excitement surged inside her. After he acknowledged the flare of desire between her thighs, he pressed on. Using her cream to lubricate her, he soaked her back passage and gently worked one finger inside.

"Ohmigod," she cried out.

As basic elemental need took hold, she began pressing against his finger, pushing him in deeper. Electricity whipped between them and his blood flowed heavy in his veins, desperate to plunge into her. He glided one hand over her skin and, fighting down the raw ache of longing, forced himself to slow down. Once he'd worked his way inside her, he removed his fingers, quickly sheathed himself again and positioned his cock at her entrance.

He drew a ragged breath and willed his lust-drunk brain to form a coherent sentence. "Tell me you want me." For some inexplicable reason he needed to hear her say it again.

"I want you, Brand," she whispered. "I wanted you the second I laid eyes on you." She lifted her hips higher, encouraging him to feed his cock into her body.

He began pressing, moving inside, slowly offering her one inch at a time until he was buried so deep he nearly blacked out from pleasure. Her muscles gripped him hard and it was sheer torture to hang on.

Brand reached around her, and brushed his fingers over her clit. Her low moans told him how much she was enjoying his ministrations. In no time at all his senses exploded and urged him to completion. He brushed his fingers over her clit, then pushed one inside her.

"God, yes, Brand...." she cried out.

Passion and possessiveness raced through him as she called out his name during her climax. Her ass muscles clenched around his cock, and her sweet nectar pooled in his hand.

His tongue darted out to wet his lips, then he stilled, his hot flow of release coming on the heels of hers. He threw his head back, let out a deep savage sound and splashed his seed high inside her.

He remained buried deep within her for a long time, not daring to move or breath. When his cock grew flaccid and slipped out, he dropped to the mattress and circled his arms around her still quaking body. He smoothed her hair off her face and looked deep into her eyes. God, she was so perfect she took his breath away. She curled into him and he pulled her warm, familiar scent into his lungs.

As he lay there basking in the afterglow of great sex, something kept niggling at the back of his mind, something about their lovemaking, something about the first time he thrust inside her warm, welcoming pussy. As exhaustion pulled at him, he blocked his mind to it. He really didn't want to *think* at this particular moment, he only wanted to feel.

Her lips brushed over his cheek, and her eyelashes tickled his flesh when she blinked. "God, I can't believe what I've been missing all these years," she said, her voice a low, velvet whisper.

Brand's head jerked back with a start and his stomach knotted. "Missing?" A shiver of unease crawled over his skin like an insect as he waited for her to elaborate. The niggling sensation came back full force and he had a feeling he already knew what she was about to tell him.

She tilted her head and blinked up at him sheepishly. Kaylea nibbled on her bottom lip, and then admitted, "I, uh, I'm a virgin. Or rather I was a virgin."

A virgin!

His memories and his mission came pouring back. She was a goddamn virgin—a virginal sacrifice—and now that he'd been inside her, he'd marked her for Hell. He began inching away, feeling suddenly ill.

Kaylea touched his arm and stopped him. "It's okay, Brand. I wanted you to be the guy to take my virginity."

He pressed his palms to his forehead and shook his head. "Oh, Jesus Christ,

Kaylea. What have I done?"

"Brand." She caressed his cheek in an effort to reassure him. "It's fine. It's what I wanted. In fact, I think it's what we both wanted, maybe even needed," she said with a smile in an attempt to lighten his mood.

The emotions passing over her glistening blue eyes made his stomach clench and tighten with apprehension. His throat dried and his hands began to shake uncontrollably.

He'd been greedy. So goddamn greedy with lust and need, he'd forgotten all about his mission. Could that have been what landed him in Hell in the first place? Greed—one of the seven deadly sins. Perhaps he *had* been a businessman and greed had been his downfall, and perhaps that's why Lucifer had known he'd get the job done? Because, undoubtedly, greed would rule his actions and cause him to forget any rational thought?

Oh fuck!

What the hell had he gone and done?

Chapter Five

Kaylea's heart pounded in her chest when Brand jumped from the bed and stepped away from, leaving cold where there was once warmth. What the hell was going on? One minute he was gentle and loving, and the next, as soon as he'd discovered he'd taken her virginity, he was acting like she had the plague. As she stared at him in mute fascination, silence fell like a death sentence.

Feeling suddenly very naked and exposed, Kaylea climbed from the bed and scurried around the room in search of her clothes. She hastily pulled on her jeans and blouse then turned her attention to Brand. Dark tortured eyes met hers and practically weakened her knees.

"What's going on?" she demanded, despite the knot in her stomach telling her she'd rather not know.

"Kaylea..." Brand reached for her. A carefully placed hand on her shoulder had her inching closer in search of his heat. "Kaylea, I'm so fucking sorry. I got carried away. I never meant for any of this to happen." Thick fingers tightened on her shoulder; his head dropped. "I never meant to be so goddamn greedy that I couldn't control myself or my actions."

He wasn't making any sense. "Brand, please. What are you talking about? Never meant for any of what to happen?"

His chest rose and fell as he drew in a sharp breath. "I never meant to seduce you."

"Brand, I was the one who seduced you." She jabbed her finger into his chest to drive home the point. "I was the one who chased you into the lounge, and tired to entice you into my bed. In fact, it was you who seemed reluctant in the elevator, and it was me who pushed. Not the other way around. I wanted you to be the man to take my virginity, and I don't regret a second of it."

Everything in his eyes softened when they met hers. For one long drawn-out moment he just stared into the depth of her eyes. Pain etched his featured and his breathing deepened. He swallowed hard then broke the quiet. In a low, barely there voice, he said, "You're about to."

She was completely confused here. "What does that mean?"

"It means I'm not who you think I am." He opened his arms and showcased his body.

Kaylea's skin prickled as her eyes raced over his flesh and she looked at him, really looked at him. Faded scars and rope burns marred his skin—deep, purple blemishes that had been inflicted many, many ages ago. Her stomach plummeted.

"I was sent here by Lucifer, to find you and..." His words fell off as though he was unable to finish the sentence.

Her pulse skyrocketed. Oh God, how could this be happening? Why hadn't she

noticed the lacerations earlier? Had she been too far gone in a haze of lust to recognize those familiar scars?

"I wanted stop, Kaylea. I tried to stop, but then I don't know what happened, it was like I was being controlled by another force, and couldn't remember anything. And for some inexplicable reason I needed you more than I needed my next breath. I'm so sorry. I'm so goddamn sorry."

She slowly backed away from him.

He raked his fingers through his hair and shook his head. "Kaylea, do you understand what this means?"

Her head bobbed slowly. She, of all people, knew the repercussions of sleeping with the devil's henchman.

She felt her face pale like cream. "It's too late for sorry, Brand." Her voice was as shaky as her legs. "It's too late for anything."

He reached for her and she flinched away. "We need to figure this out. We need to stop this from happening."

"Not ~~we~~. *Me*. You've done enough as it is."

"Kaylea, wait."

Spinning around, Kaylea bolted out the door. She bypassed the elevator and ran into the stairwell. She rushed to the main lobby, taking the carpeted steps two at a time. She bit back the prick of tears as her mind raced. Oh Jesus, what had she gone and gotten herself into?

How could she have been so easily drawn in by the devil's henchman? Then another thought suddenly struck her and her steps slowed. Brand *had* tried to pull back, but she was the one that had really forced the issue. Could he simply have been playing her? Making her beg for it out of sheer amusement?

Or, like her, had he been too far gone in a haze of lust to control the situation. Could they have stopped even if they wanted to? Was there a greater force at work here?

Kaylea reached the lobby, pushed through the stairwell doors and ran outside. Early morning was upon her as she hurried down the sidewalk to Halo, knowing it wasn't open yet, but her parents would be inside preparing for the day.

Breathing hard, she rushed in the front door. Her parents took one look at her, stopped what they were doing and guided her to a chair.

"Kaylea, what is it?" Gage asked, his eyes assessing her.

"I made a mistake. A big mistake."

"What kind of mistake," her mother questioned, putting a placating hand on her shoulder as she dropped into the chair beside her.

"I slept with the devil's henchman."

Her parents exchanged a knowing look.

Kaylea's brain raced. Why weren't they panicking? Why were they so calm? "What?" Kaylea asked, surprised by their reaction.

"Was his name Brand?" Gage asked.

Flustered and confused, Kaylea stiffened in her seat. "How do you know Brand?"

"Because we go way back," a deep tortured voice sounded at the door and pulled her focus.

Kaylea spun around to see Brand standing just inside the archway. His mere presence made her breathless. Despite everything that had just happened between them, the sight of him had her heart pounding, and her body longing, needing.

Her father stood to his full height. Although he'd greyed, and aged thirty years since he'd escaped Hell, his stature still commanded the room. "Brand," he said cautiously. "It's good to see you."

In a combative action, Brand widened his stance, his thick muscles shifted. He cocked his head, dubious. "Is it?" Pain and darkness flashed in Brand's eyes, his jaw clenched.

Gage took an easy step forward. With his strides determined, Brand matched him with a step of his own.

"We've been waiting for you," Jadyn whispered in a soft voice meant to soothe as she stepped up beside Gage and held her hand out to Brand.

Brand's gaze shot to Jadyn's, a perplexed look on his face. "Waiting for me?" Brand's glance went from Jadyn, to Kaylea, to Gage. He pinned him with a glare. "What do you mean you were waiting for me?"

"Brand—" Gage began, but Brand cut him off.

His eyes turned dangerous and intense, his fingers fisted at his sides and he growled, "You escaped, and left me behind to rot in Hell."

Gage softened his voice. "It wasn't like that, Brand." He gathered Jadyn into his arms. "We both sacrificed ourselves to save each other, and before we knew what was happening we were both pulled from Hell. If I could have taken you with me, I would have. You need to believe that." A short pause and then, "I love you, my friend."

Brand lowered his head and swallowed. Kaylea could almost hear his mind racing, sorting and compartmentalizing, struggling to unlock the truth. As she studied him, understanding dawned in small increments. He was the man, the one her mother had told her about. The one man who'd sacrificed himself to save them, which made her care about him so much more.

An invisible band tightened around her heart as she watched a barrage of emotions play over Brand's face. He looked so lost, so forlorn, and every ounce of anger she held dissolved in a flash.

After a long moment of silence his fingers loosened and he scoffed. "I wanted to believe that, in fact, I did believe that at first, but Hell, and years of torture, have a way of distorting a guy's views."

"I understand, Brand. Believe me, I understand," Gage offered, cursing Lucifer under his breath. "I knew he'd do this to you, but I also know that if you dig deep, you'll get past the lies and discover the truth."

Kaylea took in the tension of Brand's posture and the paleness in his face as he battled his way out of the fog. After taking a moment to reflect on everything that had happened, Brand let out a heavy sigh and met Gage's glance. "You said you've been

waiting for me?"

Gage visibly relaxed, and touched Brands arm. "Yes, we've been waiting for you, Brand."

Brand relaxed into Gage's touch and Kaylea could feel his anger softening as the truth warmed his darkest corners. She let out a breath she hadn't even realized she was holding.

"How?" Brand furrowed his brow, confused. "How did you know I'd come?"

Her father opened his hand and gestured toward Kaylea. "Because of Kaylea. She was born of goodness and purity and I always suspected she was the key to drawing you from Hell and freeing your soul. Now that you're here, my suspicions are confirmed."

Kaylea's pulse leapt. Brand ~~was~~ the one meant for her. He ~~was~~ her destiny.

A low tortured groan sounded in his throat. In a voice that was regretful and sad, he said, "It's too late for that Gage. I marked her."

The dark grieving look in Brand's eyes twisted Kaylea's heart and pulled her from her seat. Everything inside her reached out to him as she climbed from her chair and walked over to Brand. When she moved in close, until only inches remained between their bodies, he let out an anguished breath and hauled her into his arms. His warm, familiar scent curled around her and filled her with solace. "Kaylea, oh God, Kaylea what have I done to you?" His voice was merely a strangled whisper.

After a long moment, Brand turned to Gage, his breathing labored, erratic. In a tone that was almost frantic, he barked out, "What do we do to fix this? What do we do to save Kaylea?"

Gage shook his head, worry lines creasing his forehead. "We don't have all the answers, Brand. We're as much in the dark here as you are."

Kaylea looked at Brand's hands, which for a brief moment appeared almost translucent. Her legs weakened beneath her. "What is it?" she asked, taking his hands into hers for a closer examination.

"I only have forty-eight hours on Earth. My body will continue to weaken until I'm gone. If we don't figure this out by midnight, I'll be back in Hell and you'll follow upon your death."

Kaylea's mind raced, searching for a solution and finding none. "The library," she blurted out, fighting down her own panic. "We need to do research." She locked her fingers through Brand's and tugged.

Jadyn touched Kaylea's arm, her panic apparent in her expression. "Your father and I will seek answers at the church. And we'll pray."

Less than twenty minutes later, Kaylea inserted her key into the lock and ushered Brand into the closed library, where the two immediately went to work, pouring through years and years of research books.

Soon the library opened and patrons poured inside, but Kaylea and Brand remained oblivious to the hustle and bustle around them. Hours later, after nightfall, the old building had finally cleared out save for Kaylea and Brand, who were still in the

back room flipping through pages.

Dizzy and tired, Kaylea stopped to pinch her eyes. She pushed her chair back from the long table, and stretched out her stiff limbs. She angled her head to see Brand. He had a stack of open books in front of him, and another stack at his feet. Exhaustion lines bracketed his eyes, and his dark hair fell forward as he read the passages.

Her voice broke his concentration and he glanced up at her. "All these books talk of a child being the key, but I am that child. I am that key. Aren't I?" She shook her head in confusion. His hand crept across the table and grabbed hers. "What other child could they be talking about? I don't understand it, Brand. I drew you from Hell but I don't know how to break Lucifer's mark and keep you here."

She let out a slow breath and for a moment her eyes slipped shut. Cripes, they'd been pouring through books for hours and had yet to find any solid answers. Kaylea shook her head wearily, suspecting they were fighting a losing battle.

Brand slipped his arm around her. He pulled her in close and she inhaled his warm scent as she melted against him. Scooping her into his arms, he carried her to the staff room sofa and gently laid her out. "You need to rest, Kaylea. I'll keep searching." His voice was a low strained whisper. She made a move to protest, but the intensity in his gaze stopped her. Taking her by surprise, his lips closed down on hers. A shiver wracked her body and his kiss left her yearning for so much more.

Her heart pounded erratically and she gripped his shirt when he made a move to leave her. "Don't leave me." She inched back, released his lips and whispered into his mouth, "We don't have the answers, Brand. They're not here, not in any of these books and your time is running out."

Silence met her words. He lowered his head and let out a heavy breath, knowing she was right.

Blood pounded through her veins as he sagged against her. "There is nothing more we can do tonight," she whispered, her throat closing over. "You know it and I know it."

He lifted his head and with his voice full of conviction he said, "I might go back to Hell, but you'll still have time, Kaylea. Time to find the answers and fix this. Time to save yourself."

"I don't want you to go back. I want you to stay with me here, forever." She took note of his pale, almost translucent skin, and gripped his arm, needing to anchor him in this time, this place. Everything inside her reached out to him and her heart ached in a way it had never ached before. "Make love to me, Brand. Please, while we still have time."

Need fired between them as he sent her a look of intimacy and promise. Before she could speak his lips crashed down on hers again. Visibly shaken, he pillaged her mouth, his hands racing over her flesh.

She touched his face and absorbed his warmth. "No barriers this time. I need to feel your flesh inside me and I don't want anything separating your body from mine."

His eyes glistened and he smiled tentatively. "Are you sure?" His raspy voice

seeped under her skin and flooded her with longing.

Kaylea moistened her lips and noticed the quickening of his pulse. "I've never been surer of anything."

Brand climbed to his feet. She listened to the soft rustle of his clothes as he removed them. Kaylea stood and made short work of her own clothes and then spread out on the sofa. Once they were both completely naked, he moved in beside her and gathered her into his arms. Heat pooled between her thighs as his gaze held her captive.

Urgent hands trailed her body, and aroused all her senses. "You are so beautiful."

Kaylea twisted until Brand was beneath her. "I want to ride you," she whispered and undulated against him. She shimmied lower and teased his cock between her damp lips, delicious warmth spread out over her skin. Their gazes held and locked and in one fluid motion she lowered herself down on his beautiful, rock-hard cock.

"Oh, Brand," she murmured, savoring the feel of his girth between her legs. She bit her lip and felt her skin flush. They stayed locked together, moving gently and methodically as their bodies joined as one. A perfect fit. Kaylea's erotic whimpers filled the empty room, and the titillating scent of their lovemaking curled around them.

Kaylea glanced out the window, and glimpsed the moon, a reminder that his time was almost up. She looked at the clock. It was nearing midnight. She squeezed her pussy muscles to keep him inside her, not wanting to let go.

He groaned in pleasure. A warm palm cupped her face and his voice turned serious. "I'll go back and offer myself to Lucifer in any way he wants me, and beg for him to release his mark on you. I'll do whatever it takes. I promise. And I swear I won't let Lucifer touch one hair on your head."

Kaylea pitched forward and her body convulsed in pleasure. "That's very selfless of you Brand, but I don't think it will be enough."

She rotated her hips, and thought out loud. "If I was the key to getting you out of Hell, then shouldn't I also be the key to keeping you here and breaking Lucifer's mark on both of us?"

Brand gathered her breasts into his palms and brushed his thumbs over her engorged nipples, making them pucker and tighten with need. Instinctively, she placed her hands over his, threw her head back and moaned in erotic delight.

Brand began panting and moisture broke out on his forehead. Their bodies continued to bump together, their passion climbing higher and higher. "I don't know the answers, babe. I just don't know." He powered his hips upward and stilled. "Fuck, why did I have to be so damn greedy?"

Kaylea ran her fingers over his body, palming his muscles and revelling in the feel of him beneath her fingertips. "Do you think it was greed that landed you in Hell in the first place?"

He shook his head and she watched his throat work as he swallowed. Heavy-lidded eyes met hers. "And it's that same greed that has become your downfall too, Kaylea."

She leaned forward and dropped a gentle kiss onto his mouth. "Greed might have been what landed you in Hell, but when it comes to us, I think there was a greater force at hand, one that neither of us had control over. And you were never greedy with me. You took your time to pleasure me, putting my needs and desires ahead of your own."

A smile softened his features and stirred all her emotions. Brand gripped her hips and pounded into her, his thick fingers burning and branding her skin.

Breathing hampered, and ever determined to figure this out, she asked, "Maybe we need to conquer what sent you to Hell in the first place." She thought for a moment. "So what conquers greed?" His thumb moved to her clit, where he stroked her gently, the sweet friction filled her with unbridled desire. She loved how he touched her in such a familiar way. A tremor raced through her and her muscles clenched around his cock and drew her focus. "Oh, good God," she cried out. A powerful orgasm took her by surprise and she erupted all over his thrusting shaft.

As her hot cream poured down the length of him, he pulled a breath and watched her climax. Suddenly the clock struck twelve, and his body shook all over. "I don't know. All I know is we're out of time." He gripped her head and pulled her to him. His powerful muscles bunched as his lips found hers for a deep, soul-searching kiss. As she gyrated on his cock, his eyes opened wide, overwhelmed with emotions.

"No matter what happens, baby, remember I love you and always will." With that he released high inside her.

When she looked into his eyes, the love she saw there filled her with warmth and her heart nearly exploded with all the love she felt for him. "I love you too, Brand."

As need consumed them both, his seed rushed through her body, and she felt an odd tingling in her bloodstream. Ohmigod! Something was happening inside her. Something wonderful. Something beautiful.

Something magical.

Trembling all over, she cradled her stomach and became almost giddy.

Brand's brows knit together in concern. "What is it, sweetheart?"

Her pulse leapt. She worked to find her voice as she choked on her emotions. "It's love."

He narrowed his eyes, and brushed his thumb over her cheek. "What are you talking about?"

"You're still here, Brand."

He held his hands out and looked at them. No longer were they transparent. Disbelief marred his features. His glance shot to the clock, and surprise registered on his face. "Kaylea, how?" His voice cracked with raw emotions.

"Love conquers greed." She took his hand and placed it on her stomach. "I was the key to drawing you from Hell, Brand, but this beautiful child we just created out of love is the key to keeping us both here. This is the child the books were talking about."

Incredulous, he said, "We made a baby? Oh my God, Kaylea. We made a baby..." His eyes glistened with joy as his voice trailed off.

She gave him a moment to digest the information then said, "That's right, Brand."

We made a baby." Elated, she looked heavenward, trying to wrap her brain around what had just happened. "And oh my God, is right. There was definitely a higher power at work here. Which is probably why we couldn't control our primal need for one another. We needed to join as one, emotionally and physically, so we could create this beautiful child."

"I love you, Kaylea." A wicked grin crossed his face. "And I plan on proving that to you every day for the rest of our lives, sweetheart." He brushed a loving hand over her stomach before he gripped her shoulders and flipped her over until she was pinned beneath him on the sofa. His hands raced over her bare skin like he couldn't get enough. When he positioned his lips close to hers, her heart soared like a leaf caught in an updraft. She opened her mouth, offering herself up to him, heart, body and soul.

Tears filled her eyes. "We did it, Brand."

"We sure did." He winked at her, breached her pussy with his cock and said, "And I think we should do it again...and again...and again."

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Hell's Angel

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