

Changeling Press

MINA
CARTER

Deception
& *Desire*

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

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Deception & Desire

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Being a demon prince ain't all it's cracked up to be. Caught between the human world and the demon one, Tiny, part-time bouncer at Moonlight & Magic, lives by his own rules. Mainly these rules revolve around keeping his head down and making sure none of his kind find out where he is... because Tiny's on the demons' most wanted list.

Not because he's done anything, but because of who he is. Prince Seren Di Lakai Telosa to be exact, heir apparent to the Demon throne. And a hunted man. If his father's men find him, he'll be dragged back to court to die of boredom. For the last three hundred years they've been grooming him to take over from dear old daddy. The only trouble is the stubborn old git could last at least another millennium.

So what's a Demon Prince to do? Get a job at Moonlight & Magic, of course, and keep his head down. Unfortunately Tiny has never been good at avoiding trouble, and when the delicate looking bounty hunter vampiress Cassia storms into his life, he finds himself tempted to break more than his personal rules...

Demonkind and the undead don't mix well, or rather, they mix too well, with explosive results.

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Chapter One

"Yeah? You and whose army, bloodsucker? Now piss off before I get irritated and decide to introduce you to a few friends of mine... They're a bit boring when it comes to conversation, but they really get the *point* across," Tiny snarled at the vampire facing him down. He flicked the side of his jacket open to reveal two short and businesslike stakes nestled along his ribcage, right under the Glock in the shoulder holster.

They weren't the rough hewn, chair-leg type stakes of the amateur vampire slayer either. These were iron-banded custom beauties, made to Tiny's precise specifications. When it came to weaponry, the demon believed in multiple redundancies so the wooden shaft dealt with the vamps, the iron bands put a crimp in the day of any Fae he had to sort out, and anything still standing with six inches of banded wood stabbed through their ribcage... well, that's what the Glock was for. To say Tiny was loaded for bear was an understatement. He was loaded for anything that breathed.

He needed to be. Working as a doorman at the city's premier paranormal nightclub, Tiny and the other guys on the security team saw most things in the course of a night. They'd had a dragon in last week. Well, a were-drake to be precise—one of the Keller brothers—and even the bosses, Jaren and Daelas, had come down onto the floor to make sure Mr. Keller got everything he wanted. No one wanted a pissed off dragon, not even Tiny, who was one of the tougher of the

paranormals on the staff, barring the head doorman Knuckles.

Dragons, though, were the exception rather than the rule. Normally the club got small fry, like the vampire glaring at Tiny because his pathetic attempt at a Jedi mind-trick had failed.

"Try it on someone with human blood, pal," Tiny advised with a small smile that was nowhere near pleasant. "But not on my watch. Now piss off."

"Fucking vampires... should be put down," the woman next to Tiny muttered as the vamp gave up to slink back into the shadows. He paused to cast a baleful glare over his shoulder at Tiny, who smiled and waved.

A long-suffering sigh sounded beside him. "Will you *please* stop pissing them off? You know it causes problems at chucking-out time."

The demon chuckled and slid a glance sideways at his partner. Misty was a walking, talking frat boy's wet dream. She was Amazonian tall, with pale ivory skin that made a man's mouth water, and masses of midnight hair which fell to curl lovingly about a waist small enough for Tiny to wrap his hands around. Add a stacked rack and full lips which gave any red-blooded male ideas about them running over his naked body and you had a woman capable of stopping men dead in their tracks at a hundred paces.

This was a useful skill on the front door of Moonlight & Magic, where the humans sometimes got a little out of hand, like the group of young males approaching them, an edge in

their laughter that said this was not the first stop of the evening.

"Yeah, yeah... whatever. You like a little rough and tumble just as much as I do, doll. Don't try and deny it," he threw back. He nodded towards the group approaching the door. "You're up. Work your magic, girl."

Tiny stood back, his hands clasped loosely in front of him with the fingers of one wrapped around the wrist of the other as Misty swung into action. Dressed in the black slacks, shirt and jacket of the door staff, an outfit not known for its sex appeal, she still managed to garner the attention of every man in the vicinity as she made her way down the steps by the main doors.

How she did it, Tiny didn't know. She didn't sashay or roll her hips as she walked. In the heavy boots she marched more than walked, but it was all done with a sensual grace so unstudied it had to be natural.

However, that wasn't the appeal. What drew men to her wasn't her stunning looks, but the sense of danger clinging to her like a second skin as though to touch her would be to glimpse heaven, just for a moment, before the reaper moved in for the kill.

A rather accurate statement, Tiny mused, acknowledging wryly he'd had to resist temptation himself a few times. Resist he did because, unlike the young mortals ogling her with "God, I'd like a piece of that ass" looks, Tiny knew what Misty was. Brave he might be—indeed, he'd been called suicidal in some circles—but even he wasn't going to start messing about with a Valkyrie.

In her case, *la petite mort* might be too permanent for comfort.

"Now, now, lads, gonna need you to calm down a little before we let you in..."

After another glance to make sure she had the situation under control, Tiny looked away, eyes scanning the queue waiting to get in and the passersby in the street. A cold night, it seemed all the colder for a demon-born like Tiny.

Shuddering, he hunched into the turned-up collar of his thick jacket. His gaze swept the road. A rush of jealousy—sharp and immediate—rose as the vampires circled like sharks waiting for a meal. If any of them wore a coat, it was for effect rather than any need for warmth. They didn't feel the cold.

"Bastards," he muttered under his breath and wondered if he could crawl inside his jacket completely. Tiny hated being cold with a passion. But then, for any creature born and bred in the warmth of one of the seven hells, cold was pure torture. The fog put a layer of moisture in the air that coated everything, the dampness penetrating deep into Tiny's bones. He was never going to be warm again—no doubt a punishment for running away from his duties.

Shivering again, he muttered another curse about the weather as a bunch of vamps having a little tete-a-tete on the corner opposite caught his attention. He ignored his discomfort as the little group whispering between themselves didn't break up as he'd expected. Tiny flicked a glance at Misty, who had calmed down the group she had approached. The line moved quickly now.

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Feeling his gaze on her, she lifted her head, silent communication passing between the partners for a second before Tiny turned his attention back to the vamps. Misty would keep an eye on the line and call in backup if needed, whilst he dealt with the circling predators intent on picking off the weakest of the human herd.

He didn't move for a moment, just leaned against the wall, his eyes sharp and alert. Vamps were predictable creatures most of the time, but occasionally one would get a kick in their gallop and try to make a play for someone in the queue, a decision which ended with them having a little chat in a side alley with Tiny or one of his colleagues. There was a running book on how high they could get vamp blood and snot on the brickwork.

However vamps weren't normally pack animals and they didn't hunt together. This little group seemed to have missed that particular memo. Tiny's eyes narrowed as two of the group sauntered across the road and engaged a trio of young women in conversation. Human women, of course; they wouldn't bother with any of the paranormals in the line.

The third was slower to approach, piling on the vampire "glamour" as he did. The vampires moved in a slick routine, separating the women, who were easy marks. They herded the last girl toward an alley, the arm of her new "friend" wrapped around her shoulders. The tall demon sighed. Vampire charm was hypnotic and she was getting it full force, her head back against the vamp's shoulder as he gazed deep into her eyes.

"Great, just what I need tonight. A fucking synchronized vampire feeding squad." Pushing off from the wall, he rolled his shoulders, cracking his neck as he readied himself for action. There was going to be blood and snot on the walls again. Perhaps with three vamps to play with he'd beat Knuckles' record...

His lips compressed as yet another vamp moved to follow the others into the alley. What was this, an all you can eat until the meal drops dead buffet? He turned, angling his walk to intercept the new player as his heavy boots crunched over the road. Then he got a good look at the newcomer and his step faltered.

She was gorgeous. She was a vampire, but she was gorgeous.

Tiny's eyes widened in surprise as his brain tried to reconcile the two words in one sentence, even as his body reacted. She was average height... the perfect height to wrap into his arms, slide his hand into her hair and tilt her lips up...

Tiny snapped out of his reverie, his eyes narrowing as he clamped down on the reaction of his body to a fine piece of female ass and forced himself to study her.

She didn't seem the "type" to be a vampire was the first thing to hit him after the immediate "I want" reaction. Vampires, especially the ones who hovered around Moonlight & Magic, played up to the stereotype: pale skin, dark hair, dark clothing... Goths with attitude, or Lestat knock-offs.

This one could have been the poster-girl for the wholesome, all-American, girl next door type. Not blonde, but in the light cast by the street lights, he could see her hair

wasn't the midnight black most vamps preferred, either. Instead, it contained a waterfall of autumn colors.

She had a tan, as well—not at all the norm for a vamp. When even a small dose of direct UV turned you into crispy critter, tanning was a high risk option. Fake tan, unless his instincts were fooling him.

Were they? Was she something other than a vampire?

For the first time in a couple of hundred years Tiny found himself holding back. He'd always been a player, watching his back and ready for action of any sort—although in the demon courts the more pleasurable kind always came with a price—but this was the first time he'd doubted his instincts.

Face set, he watched the vamp chick head into the alleyway after the couple and tried to ignore the seductive sway of her hips. He noticed anyway; his body had completely different ideas about the matter, his cock already at half mast in his pants. *Damn vampires, messing with a guy's head.* He glared at a couple of humans who cut in front of him, then walked into the alley.

Whatever Tiny had expected from tonight, it wasn't for the problem to be solved before it became a problem. As he entered the alley, he expected to find the vampires fang-deep in the girl's throat—or other appendage of choice. He expected to have to deal with them in short order whilst trying not to get the human killed. His hand was already reaching for one of the stakes along his ribcage when the woman's cool voice drifted on the night air to him.

"Okay, honey-bun, we can do this the easy way or the hard way... No, now that was just unpleasant, wasn't it? No

need for language like that at all, especially in front of a lady... Oh really? How about we don't and say we did..."

Tiny had barely a second to react as the human was thrust into his arms with a "Here, hold this," before all hell broke loose.

To say she was annoyed didn't begin to do justice to the emotions running high through her slender frame as Cassia watched the three musketeers do their "divide and conquer" routine yet again. "You guys never learn, do you?" she muttered as the vampires moved into action, each charming smile digging their graves deeper. New town, new threads... and looked like they'd been here a while, long enough to get themselves established.

No matter. It was too long. If the agency hadn't called her off in the last place... God, what had the town been called? She shrugged as the name eluded her memory. Second tumbleweed on the left and straight on until morning type of town, total Hicksville... If the agency hadn't called her off the trail to go join the hunt for a rogue angel, she'd have had these three under lock and key a month ago.

She automatically checked the chains hooked onto the loops of her belt. A buzz of power vibrated against her fingers as they brushed the restraints. The chains were intricately woven Fae-steel, enhanced with magic to make them far more powerful.

Fae-steel could hold almost any paranormal out there, essential for a woman with a delicate build like Cassia's. Yeah sure, she was a vampire, but contrary to human belief, vampires weren't the biggest badasses walking the dark.

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Some of the creatures Cassia dealt with in the course of her job were far nastier, so she needed every edge possible.

Cass was a bounty hunter, one specializing in paranormals. Bounty hunting was a dangerous game at the best of times, even if you dealt strictly with humans. When you didn't, you needed serious kick-ass weaponry... or a death wish.

A third vampire emerged from the shadows, engaging the lone female—the mark—in conversation. Cass felt the blast of charm as he dazzled his victim and started to draw her towards an alleyway. The two other vampires followed.

"Thank you, handsome. Dead end alley. That makes my job easier," Cassia muttered, and pushed off the wall. Her heels clicked against the tarmac as she followed, single-minded on her objective despite the tantalizing scents in the air. Human blood, contained within skin and veins but so close to the surface, called to her. She ignored the rumble in her stomach. Work first, then a snack. She could get lucky later and find someone in the club who wasn't opposed to supplying both her needs; blood and sex.

Her long strides ate up the tarmac as she crossed the road, hugging the leather biker jacket close about her slender form. Her shiver was automatic and almost authentic. Cass didn't feel the cold. It was an act, and one she was good at.

Some vampires couldn't fake human. It was all in the details. Most lost the ability once they'd been "dead" a while. A couple of decades later, vampires forget things like breathing and that humans couldn't go statue-still for an hour as they thought about something.

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Cass, though, had been playing human far longer than she'd been one. It helped that she was a turned vampire. Some born-kyn never worked it out, never really understood the minute differences in human and vampire behavior.

Then there were the ones who knew the differences and knew the rules—there were a fair set of those when you were turned: *Don't harm when you feed. Be considerate to your donor. Clean the skin up and don't leave a mark*, Cass listed as she turned the corner into the alleyway. Some people knew the rules and broke them anyway.

Like the three musketeers here.

She paused a step inside the alley, her eyes narrowing as she took in the scene. Just as she'd suspected, Charmer, her least favorite of this oily little trio, had his fangs gum-deep in the girl's neck. His arm was locked around her in a no-nonsense hold, snaking under one arm and crosswise across her body to the other shoulder, and one of his hands forced her head over to one side so he could feed. The others watched from the shadows.

Even from her position at the entrance to the alley Cass could see the girl's face paling, her hands scratching at her captor's arm. The muscles of the vamp's throat worked as he swallowed, his eyes half closed in bliss. A deep sigh escaped Cassia as she flicked her jacket open. "Okay, honey-bun, we can do this the easy way or the hard way."

The vampire lifted his head, lips stained with blood. "Fuck off and get your own food." He bared his fangs before biting the girl again, a savage strike that made the girl's body jerk like a puppet. The other two moved to his side.

Cass didn't let her worry for the human show on her face or in her voice. "Now that was just unpleasant. No need for language like that, especially in front of a lady."

She made her move, her hand reaching past the short stakes holstered at her hip and going straight for the warded chain. The bounty on these three was high so she didn't want to dust the guy. A girl had expenses. The streaks in her hair alone cost a fortune and the specialized vampire tanning booths? She might as well re-mortgage her condo.

The vamp chuckled, his eyes raking her slender figure, and he disengaged his fangs for a moment. "Hold your horses, sweetheart, plenty enough for everyone. If you're good, I'll do you while you feed... You look like you need to get laid, help calm you down a bit."

"Oh, really? How about we don't and say we did..." Cassia glided across the ground between her and the vamp, the movement taking less than a heartbeat.

"Wha..." Her quarry blinked in surprise. It was obvious he hadn't expected Cass to move so fast, nor the Fae-steel in her hand. Cass suppressed the small smile on her lips. They thought she was a newbie, a baby vamp barely out of her grave.

She didn't blame them. The human-like coloring, the tan and the streaks in her hair were all designed to give that impression. Surprise was one of her best weapons—no paranormal expected a near-human to be hunting them.

Stepping back, he thrust the girl at her. Cass took it in stride, sidestepping to catch the human with her free arm. She sensed rather than saw someone enter the alley behind

her. The aura, the buzz against her skin was of power, but it didn't have the sharp, zippy feel of another vamp. Taking a chance she spun the girl under her arm and pushed her that way. "Here, hold this."

The girl taken care of, Cass's attention snapped back to the vamp. He backpedaled, eyes frantic as they moved between her face and the length of chain in her hand. Cass flicked her wrist, snapping the chain out like a whip.

"You... you..." he stammered, reaching the back of the dead-end alley and looking around for an escape, desperation on his face. Cass had seen it all before. A previously docile paranormal could go skitz at the mere sight of a Fae-steel chain, like the dryad she'd brought in the other week.

She'd had a very pleasant conversation with her about the money she owed to certain people, and she'd been very cooperative—right up to the point where Cass had pulled out the warded chains. Then she'd gone bat-shit on her. It was like the sight of the Fae-steel had brought it all home.

"You expected someone else? Maybe the Easter Bunny? Kinky... Sorry, guys, roleplay costs you extra." The chatter rolled off her tongue easily as she stalked them. Cass was far older than she appeared, and she'd been tracking and bringing marks in since before this guy had been born, in either of his incarnations.

Charmer's gaze latched onto Cass as she stood blocking their path, a lazy flick of her wrist snapping the chain in her hand every so often. All she had to do was get the chain on him and the wards would do the rest. It didn't matter where;

just one closed loop of chain would be enough, then the enchantments would lock and seal the loop into place.

"Bitch," he snarled and made a break for it. He feinted right but darted to the left instead quick as a snake. Cass was ready for him. Another snap of her wrist and the chain whipped out lasso-like. Catching him around his wrist, the Fae-steel went from fluid to a solid manacle in a heartbeat.

"That's Ms. Bitch to you." She yanked on the chain, hauling him to her in a quick movement that belied her appearance as a newbie vamp. New vampires only had such strength just after they were turned, then the high of the conversion drained off and it took years to build up again.

Ignored his struggles, Cass snagged the other two, and reached for the charms set into the chains. A practiced flick of her thumb triggered each of them. She smiled and waved as the magic expanded out from the warded beads and enveloped her captives in glowing orbs reminiscent of a sci-fi transporter.

Beam me up, Scotty. The orbs shrank back to nothing, taking the chains and the vamps with them. They would reappear in holding cells back at base, ready for processing, and in three days' time, her money would appear in her account. Minimal fuss and no paperwork. "God, I love my job." She turned to thank her impromptu helper and stopped dead in her tracks.

Still holding the girl she'd thrust into his arms was the hottest looking guy she'd ever seen. Well over six feet, he had a build yummy enough to make her mouth water and the face of a dark angel. Her eyes skipped over him, from the top

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of his shaven head—a look she'd never considered hot before—picked up the silver ring in his brow and flicked down to check out the package before she looked back at his face.

Everything female in her went tight, a yearning she'd never felt before drawing her to him as her vampire side went cold. He was her ideal man. Just one problem...

No way was she fucking a demon.

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Chapter Two

She was amazing, more than amazing. Tiny's heart still raced from watching the no-nonsense way she'd dealt with the vamp. He had a healthy respect for a woman who could take charge of a situation. In Hell women were as capable as men. They had to be. A person had to look out for number one down there, end of story. However, of all the things she could have been, a bounty hunter hadn't even crossed his mind. He eyed the delicate chains hanging from her belt with trepidation.

Warded Fae-steel with a hunter's mark, they were the kind of thing even he'd be hard pressed to get out of. Well, he could, but that would require a shit-load more power than the low-level, part demon he appeared to be should have. Using that much juice would ripple across the witching, alerting every warden and demon in the area, not to mention cluing the other staff at the club into the fact he wasn't who he said he was.

Hell, the amount of power he'd have to use to break those chains would burn an image of his face into the witching for all to see. Like the paranormal version of "Tiny wuz here." He smiled to himself. Perhaps he should drop his trousers and leave an imprint of his ass instead, flick the bird to the universe.

"Something's amused you at least. Glad I could provide the night's entertainment, but hadn't you best check on sleeping beauty? She isn't looking so hot."

Her voice pulled Tiny out of his reverie and he blinked. As the words penetrated the thick fog clouding his brain, he looked quickly at the girl in his arms—the unconscious girl in his arms. "Fuck."

"Short and succinct." The female vamp's lips curled into a smile as Tiny tried to find a pulse. He swore when he couldn't locate one. His fingers were too big for delicate work like this.

"Don't worry. I'm picking up a heartbeat, and her heart isn't laboring, so he didn't take too much blood. You might want to get her checked out at the local emergency room to be on the safe side though. Humans can be weird when shock sets in."

Tiny breathed a sigh of relief as he found a pulse, confirming the vamp's words. The last thing he needed was a death on his watch, particularly a vampire kill. His boss Knuckles would go insane. If there was anything Knuckles hated, it was vampires. Tiny couldn't blame him. The guy had nearly lost his wife to a bloodsucker, so it was understandable.

Then the tone in her voice struck him, the caring, concerned note threading through the honeyed timbre. He looked up to find her closer and stiffened at the buzz of power emanating from her. The wrongness he always felt in the presence of a vampire brushed against his skin. Unlike before, though, this didn't feel too bad. Just different, like the zip of electricity in the air before a storm, but not the sick to the stomach feeling he normally got.

Focus, he told himself as his cock twitched. Getting a hard-on with an unconscious girl in his arms was just crass, even if

she wasn't the object of interest. It wouldn't make any difference; the guys—and Misty—on the door crew would still give him shit over it.

His brows snapped together into a frown, and he took his frustration out on the only available target. "What do you care? Or do you get attached? Sort of like keeping a pet pig to fatten up for Christmas?"

The tension in the alley mounted as he stared into deep, chocolate brown eyes. Flecks of gold danced in their depths and the tiny lines in the corners—she must have gotten those before she was turned, he mused absently—indicated she smiled a lot. Not at him though. For him her eyes were cold, and her anger swirled around her like a cloak. "I don't play with my food. I'm strictly a takeout sort of girl." Head held high, she stalked out of the alley.

The image of her autumnal curls bouncing across her shoulders, her straight back and the siren's curve of her ass—oh, God, what an ass—stayed with Tiny all evening. The girl was quickly seen to, checked out behind the top bar by Jac, a siren with healer training, then bundled off to the nearest emergency room to comply with human regulations the club had to abide by to keep their license.

It was one of the ways humanity tried to put a leash on the Night Races; the only way they could. Force wouldn't work, and there was the saying the pen was mightier than the sword. If that was the case then bureaucracy was a Challenger tank.

Tiny stood behind the main desk for a while and watched the stragglers wander in. There were always a few who

decided late in the evening that a night in Moonlight & Magic was what the doctor ordered. This meant someone had to be on the door to make sure nothing... undesirable snuck in under the radar.

On a normal night Tiny didn't mind. It was indoors and out of the cold, always a bonus as far as the demon was concerned. Tonight though, he was edgy and fractious, and he didn't know why.

A sigh escaped him as he admitted the lie. That vamp chick had messed up his karma today, what with her attitude, mouth-watering figure and not sitting nicely in the little box he'd mentally put her in.

Vamps needed to stay the bad guy, not start beating up other—admittedly asshole—vampires and being someone he could get to like. They were the enemy. Demons and vampires didn't get on. Ever. There was an enmity between the two races that had been running so long no one questioned it anymore.

He didn't need to get soft and start seeing vamps as people. That way led to madness and somebody getting killed, something his conscience wouldn't allow. Especially if it was him. No, vamps were the bad guys and he couldn't let his guard slip because of a pretty face, or a hot body. *Bloody women, trouble whatever their species*, Tiny grumbled to himself and pushed off from the heater. Perhaps a patrol outside would help settle him down...

The doors next to him burst open and Misty piled through. "Tiny!" Relief flashed stark across her face. "We need you on

the floor. Knuckles is on the warpath. We got a vamp inside somewhere."

A vampire. In the club.

"Crap! How the fuck did she get in..." It had to be her. He didn't know any other vampire who had the ability to get past the door controls. Certainly none he'd seen recently could, but this one... She walked and talked human, too human. Most people, even paranormals, would have taken her to be mortal.

He flicked a glance at Janie, the girl on the desk. "Ring up and get someone on the door," he ordered and followed Misty back into the club.

"She?" Misty asked, as they made their way through the crowded club to the top bar where head bouncer Knuckles was pacing. Tiny took one look at him and grimaced. Knuckles was furious, the Gargoyle's rage all but setting the air around him ablaze.

"Yeah, caught a vamp hunter dealing with a bloodsucker in an alley earlier." His voice low, he guided her around a group of clubbers, his hand settling in the small of her back in a protective gesture. As she flicked her hair over her shoulder, she looked up into his face, a wry smile of amusement on her face.

Tiny winced. Of all the women in the club, Misty was one of the few who didn't need protection. From anything. "Sorry, force of habit. My mother did try and instill some manners in me."

"Not a problem..." Her tone was dismissive. "Tell me about the vamp. She took out another vampire? I thought only their warrior caste were allowed to do that."

Tiny's shoulder lifted in a small shrug. "Didn't see the huge-ass tats those guys normally have so guess not. I'm no expert on vamps. Listen..." He glanced at Knuckles wearing a groove in the floor behind the top bar. "Head the big guy off for me, would you? I want to catch this chick and get her out of here. She might be a vamp, but she did us a favor by taking out that bloodsucker, and I'd rather not explain why we had to clean a hunter's blood off the walls."

Surprise flickered in Misty's eyes. Hunters were one of the few "police" forces in the paranormal world, and very much creatures of urban myth. Most people went all their lives without seeing one, but everyone knew someone who'd had dealings with one. They seemed to be everywhere and nowhere all at the same time.

"Yeah, sure," she sighed. "Make it snappy though, because he'll see through me in about three minutes flat, okay?"

One of the few men in the place tall enough, Tiny dropped a kiss on the Valkyrie's temple. "Misty, you're a star, love you to bits."

"Yeah, yeah whatever..." She flicked her fingers in dismissal, but he could see the pleasure in her eyes as he turned to disappear into the crowd.

They were a couple, had to be. Cassia watched the little interchange between the demon bouncer she'd seen earlier and a woman, also one of the security team, from the other side of the club.

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Not just a woman though. Cass recognized a Valkyrie when she saw one. Which meant tall, dark and demony was spoken for and, interesting as he might be, Cass was not pissing about with a Valkyrie's property. Her lifespan may have been extended until she was virtually immortal, but unlike a true immortal, Cass was still allergic to having her head ripped off.

Doomed is the kyn who ever fell under the lying demon's spell...

The old chant running through her mind, Cass sipped her drink, secure in the darkness of her booth. A minor aversion charm dangled from the bracelet around her wrist, the soft lavender light telling her it was active and keeping the cattle away as she watched the goings-on. She didn't want to be bothered, and the way she was dressed—knee-high black boots, mid-thigh black leather skirt and a black leather top under her fitted black leather jacket—would gather too much attention.

The outfit wasn't intended to be alluring. The boots were sensible heels, not stilettos. The skirt was slightly flared in case she had to run, and the jacket only there to conceal she was packing heat.

"Maybe someone threw a lust spell in the water or something," she mused, studying the bar with interest as yet another guy paused for a second to look at her. She ignored him, watching the bar staff to see if she could spot any charms or spells being slipped into the drinks. A girl never knew her luck; she might be able to pick up more than the

bounty on the three vamps if she could uncover an establishment like this breaking the law.

Snagging one of the cards off the table, she checked the name... Moonlight & Magic. She'd heard of this place. Something about a club for paranormals run by paranormals, but mainstream rather than the usual seedy dives warded six ways to Sunday to keep the humans out. No, this place actively encouraged humans, allowed them to see the Night Races up close and personal...

Everything but vampires. Cassia's memory kicked in and provided the little detail which had been tugging at the back of her mind, trying like hell to get her attention. This place didn't allow vampires in any way, shape or form. Cass swallowed, feeling a chill go up her spine. Not only that, they were reputed to enforce their rules with violence.

"Crap." Tipping her head back, Cass drained the last of her drink and shivered as the whiskey burned all the way down. There was something about a good whiskey she couldn't give up, even though she couldn't get drunk anymore, which was a pain in the ass—some days she'd kill to be able to get completely plastered and forget her woes for a night. She'd even welcome the bloody hangover afterwards. Vampires didn't get drunk on human alcohol, and even though she could get the same effect drinking Fae blood, Cass didn't think trying to cadge a meal in here would go down well.

No, discretion was the better part of valor, Cass told herself as she slid off her seat and stood. Her hands automatically smoothed down the back of the skirt to make

sure she wasn't flashing her panties. The aversion charm was good, but not that good.

Out of nowhere a hand clamped on her wrist and twisted that same charm. A silent *pop* pressed against Cassia's skin, telling her it had just gone dormant. "Hey!" She started to turn but her movement was cut off, and she was hauled back into a hard, male body instead.

"If you want to keep your pretty little head attached to your body, I suggest you shut up and do exactly as you're told."

It was him. Cass didn't need to turn around and see his face; his voice was instantly recognizable. Everything female in her woke up and took notice. A shiver ran down her spine and blood raced to her cheeks as her pussy clenched in anticipation. Her body was getting itself ready for his, and all he'd done was growl a warning in her ear. Jeez, what the fuck was wrong with her?

Cass gritted her teeth. She didn't know much about demons other than the "kyn good, demon bad" thing, but she sure hoped they didn't have the same keen sense of smell as vampires did. Otherwise he would be able to smell her interest, and that would be embarrassing.

No such luck. A very male sound of surprise and appreciation rumbled through the big chest behind her, and a chuckle sounded in her ear. "Baiting the tiger there, doll, or should I say baiting the demon... And believe me, you don't want to do either."

She didn't, she really didn't. Vamps and demons didn't mix. No way, no how. Cass knew that, but her body wasn't

getting the message and clenched tight with yearning. Instinct told her he would be an excellent lover. Something about him said he knew how to please a woman. Cass tilted her head back against his shoulder to look up, her eyes heavy-lidded and sultry. "Perhaps I do..."

Heat flared in his eyes for a second. Heat and something else, something dark and dangerous, which made the fluttering in Cass's stomach a hundred times worse. He dragged a breath into his lungs, his eyes riveting to her lips as he bent his head. He was going to kiss her. A fierce ache descended and took over, making her body pliant as she lifted her lips...

"Shit." The expletive was short and sharp as the pair were shoved from behind. Instantly, Cass was wrapped in a strong hold as her "protector's" free hand shot out to brace him against the wall, shielding her with his larger body. "Fucking idiot, watch where you're going," he snarled at the group who had almost knocked them sprawling into the shadowed booth.

"Oh hey, sorry, man, didn't see you there," one shot back, his tone flippant until he turned and caught sight of Tiny. He paled and turned tail to disappear into the crowd.

"Young. Human. *Male*," she commented. "So, handsome, where were we?" She turned in his arms to look up at him, an inviting expression on her face.

His eyes, an azure blue like a tempestuous sea waiting for a storm to break, met hers. "You were playing with fire, as I recall." He eased closer to her to get out of the way of another group of club-goers, but stayed there instead of moving back again. The heat of his body burned through her

clothes, warming her skin. It was like basking in front of a hot fire, and all Cass wanted to do was wrap herself around him like a cat.

Were all demons like this, this warm and intriguing?

They weren't though, she knew that. On a normal day she couldn't stand to be in the same room as a demon. Their very presence, their aura, set her hackles to rising and she couldn't get comfortable until she put some distance between her and them. But this one was different. The normal unpleasant buzz was more of a pleasant whisper across her skin, like a teasing caress.

"I'd like to play with something else..." she trailed off suggestively and ran her hand up his chest. Solid muscles met her fingers as she pushed his jacket open to explore. Hell, the guy was built like a brick shed.

Hard fingers closed around hers, like a striking snake, and stopped her explorations. "You would, would you?"

Her gaze shot upwards. A muscle in his jaw pulsed and the expression in his eyes... a battle royal raged there; lust and need warring with something else, something she couldn't identify.

He scanned the club. "We need to move." His tone was uncompromising.

Cass shivered again, a dark thrill slithering along her spine and pooling in her loins. Oh, she had no doubt he didn't intend to turn her on, but there was just something about a man who took charge that, to her disgust, turned her on... turned her on big time.

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He hurried her ahead of him, hand firm in the small of her back as he propelled her towards the nearest exit. At the last minute a huge figure loomed in Cass's peripheral vision. Her demon friend swore under his breath and yanked her into one of the alcoves along the walls, spinning her around to haul her close. She had barely a second's warning before his lips crashed down onto hers, claiming hers in the hottest kiss she could recall.

Her lips were soft and oh-so-sweet. A rumble sounded in Tiny's chest as he pressed her back against the wall in the darkened alcove and took what he wanted, what he'd been wanting since he'd seen her in the alley kicking ass.

God, she tasted good, her lips softer than silk under his. A siren's temptation that enticed him, called out to him, even though he knew this was wrong. He shouldn't be kissing her, touching her... Hell, he should be hustling her out of the club before Knuckles got a look at her and even then, if the gargoyle knew what he'd done, he'd rip Tiny a new one. He should stop. Tiny knew he should stop. He would stop. Just one more kiss and he'd...

She wriggled to get closer, and the sexy little moan in the back of her throat blew the last of Tiny's control. Grabbing a handful of her autumn-colored hair, he pulled her head back to bare her throat—a submissive position for a vampire and a vulnerable one. She stiffened, but the wariness in her body melted as he leaned in to blaze a trail of hot kisses down the delicate skin.

Tiny's response was near frenzy. A deep need drove him so he forgot where he was, who he was with and the danger

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they were still in. He couldn't get enough of her, moving back up to claim her lips again. His tongue swept out and brushed her lower lip to request entry. As soon as she granted it, he deepened the kiss ruthlessly, seeking—no, demanding—a response. One she gave easily as her tongue flirted with the thrusts of his, teasing and tormenting him.

Tiny growled a warning in the back of his throat. The hand in her hair tightened to hold her still as the other slid around her waist to press her hips against his. He was hard, rock hard. All he could think about was pulling up that little skirt she was wearing, shoving her panties aside, and burying himself balls deep in her softness.

"Hey, man, get a freaking room!"

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Chapter Three

The rebuke snapped them both back to reality. Tiny tore his lips from hers. Christ, he'd been ready to free his cock and take her right there, up against the wall of the club. Heat chased over his body as he realized just how dangerous the situation was. Any moment now someone could catch them and realize his companion was a vampire. Then all kinds of shit would hit the fan. Vampires did not venture into Moonlight & Magic—not if they wanted to live.

"We need to get out of here. Come on," he told her roughly, scanning all the exits. All but one, the one to the offices, were covered. Misty he could see over the other side of the club with Knuckles, the huge gargoyle's figure easily picked out.

They were running out of time. It wouldn't take Knuckles long to pick up the trail, even with the Valkyrie distracting him, and Tiny needed to get his companion out of here before he did.

His hand still in the hair at the nape of her neck, Tiny urged her across the crowded club, turning her around his body in a move as complicated as a dance routine as another of the security team passed them, also on the lookout for the vampire.

"All right?" the guy mouthed, his voice lost in the heavy music. Tiny jerked his thumb towards the toilets, indicating he was heading there to check. Relief filled him as the other

bouncer nodded and carried on the way he was going. They might actually make it.

They reached the dubious sanctuary of the corridor. The music dropped to a dull roar as the door swung shut behind them. Rather than carry on down towards the toilets, Tiny hung a sharp left and bundled his companion through the door there. Half hidden by the opening of the first, it was cloaked by a similar aversion spell to the one she wore around her wrist, albeit a larger, more powerful one embedded in the doorframe. Pushing her ahead of him, he threw the lock with a quick gesture and leaned back with a sigh.

"What the fuck? Was there a particular need to assault me and haul me in here in such a highhanded manner?"

Her voice broke through his little reverie and Tiny sighed. Why was he doing this? She was a vampire; he was a demon. A demon about to get his ass kicked and lose his job if anyone found out he had her in here.

Lifting his head he fixed her with a direct look. "I risk my ass to save yours and I'm the fucking bad guy? You need to get your priorities straight, lady."

Cassia stood in the middle of the small office with an angry demon and wondered why she wasn't worried. On a normal day, this kind of situation would have her reaching for any available weaponry and looking for the nearest escape route. But it didn't because she wasn't worried. Hopping mad, yes... and still shaken up from that hotter-than-all-hell kiss.

"My... I need to get my priorities straight?" she spluttered, going from blazing mad to furious in the blink of an eye. Of all

the fucking cheek! First the place discriminated against an entire species. Then they had the balls to make her feel like the criminal here? She half threw her purse on the scarred desk and advanced on him. "You listen to me, buddy. If you lot weren't so fucking anal about vampires in the first place... If you all climbed down off your high horses for a second, we wouldn't be having this problem."

Each word took her one step closer to him until she was mere inches away, glaring up into his face. For some reason his good looks irritated her all the more. Frustration and fury boiled over, and she substituted jabbing him in the chest with every word instead of her earlier steps. "You do realize I could sue for species harassment?"

He stood, looking down at her, one eyebrow raised a little, which made the silver ring through it catch the light. "Harassment?" His voice was deep and rough as hunger flooded his eyes, taking Cass's breath away. In an instant, the mood in the room changed from tense to erotic, from highly charged to supernova. He laughed, a harsh sound of amusement. "Sweetheart, that was nowhere near harassment..."

His hand quickly closed on her wrist, and he twisted her around into a lock with her arms crossed over her body. Cass squeaked; he was faster than anything she'd ever seen. Hell, she'd never seen anyone move like that. His lips found the skin of her neck as she struggled, and trailed gentle kisses along her throat as his thumbs stroked the insides of her captured wrists.

"How's this for harassment, hmm?" His voice was a low rumble just below her ear. A hot, sweet ache joined the sudden panic flaring in her core and moved outward.

She didn't speak—she couldn't. Despite the domineering hold, the soft brush of his lips back and forward over her throat was hypnotic. Wariness drained away, leaving pure need. She tilted her head to the side a little to give him better access, and his lips found the sweet spot behind her ear. Oh, yes, she needed this...

"You like that." Not a question, but a statement. His lips curved against her skin at her response. Then her hands were free and his moved over her, one sliding up to close around a breast. He located her nipple through the thin fabric and pinched lightly, rolling it between his fingers before pulling.

Each soft pinch and pull shot straight through her to where her clit throbbed in response. She shifted her weight, moving her feet further apart, and lifted her arms. Her hand slid to the nape of his neck, holding him to her as she turned her head to seek his lips.

Her moan lost in his mouth, he parted her lips and took what he wanted. His fingers on her nipples kept her off balance as he explored her, plundering the softness of her mouth, and then, just when Cass was ready to beg, he upped the ante.

His hand covered her soft belly and pulled her back hard to grind his hips against hers. Heat swept through Cassia again when his cock pressed against her ass, fitting into the valley between her cheeks. God, he was huge... surely he wasn't that big? It must be some trick of sensation. Then he rotated

his hips and she almost passed out. Yeah, he was that big. Nerves and excitement filled her. She wanted—no—she needed his cock inside her. Right now... in fact, the quicker the better.

"More," she whispered against his lips, thrusting her ass back and trying to hurry things along. There was only so much teasing a girl could take before a guy had to make good on the promise.

His hand slid lower. He hauled her skirt up as he ran his hand up the inside of her thigh. Anticipation filled her as his finger danced along the lace edge of her thong. Then it was gone, the delicate ties snapping as he pulled it from her in one quick movement.

"Hmm, shaved... very nice." He took his time running his fingers along her smooth folds. "Kinky little thing, aren't you?"

Cass opened her mouth to answer but all she could manage was a strangled moan as he parted her folds and found her clit. He circled it once, a very male sound of appreciation in his throat as she whimpered, then his fingers dipped lower to her already soaked pussy.

"Very kinky, and very wet." He spread the wetness he found there, rubbing it over her clit in small, maddening circles which wound the tension in her body tighter and tighter.

"Very, very wet. You're into this, aren't you?" His voice wove an erotic spell around her as his clever fingers worked against her clit. "And in a minute, I'm going to be in you. You like that idea, huh? A good hard fuck bent over that desk?"

Cass shivered. Oh yeah, she liked... in fact, it couldn't happen quick enough for her. "Yeah, when you quit chattering and actually get on with it. Sheesh, and I thought women were bad for talking."

A chuckle rumbled through his chest pressed against her back as sharp teeth nipped her ear playfully. "Didn't your mother ever teach you patience is a virtue?"

He tweaked her nipple through the satin and lace again, sending a thrill through her body to her aching clit. A pout of frustration formed on her lips as he moved his hand. She was already missing the sensation. She opened her mouth to complain just as he pushed her forwards. In one smooth movement, he pulled the remaining warded chains from her belt—she always carried more than she needed on a job, just in case—and spun her around.

Before Cassia could react, the chain snapped and locked about her wrists, binding them together. "Hey! What the fuck do you think you're playing at? Let me go!"

Twisting her wrists, she tried to get free of the Fae-steel. Even as she struggled, she knew it wasn't going to help. It would take something a lot bigger and meaner than her to break the enchantment on the chain, so all she succeeded in doing was rubbing herself raw on the steel.

She looked at him and tried to stay calm. If he'd wanted to hurt her, then he wouldn't have helped her get out of the main area of the club. *Yeah... you think? So what's he done other than brought you somewhere out of the public eye? He's not helped you get out of the place completely, has he? And now you're stuck in warded chains, in a club which*

doesn't allow vampires, with a demon who looks like he intends to eat you for breakfast...

Cassia swallowed nervously and plastered a "Well?" look on her face. *Never let them see your fear.* You did and you were a goner, pure and simple. His answer was a quick jerk on the chain. Cass fell against him, her bound hands landing in the middle of his chest as she tried to balance herself.

"Well, it strikes me that I have a vampire who's been trespassing here." As he spoke, he reached up and looped the end of her chain over one of the exposed pipes running along the ceiling of the office. He pulled, drawing the end of the chain down.

"You bastard! Let me go!" Cass struggled madly as her wrists were drawn upward. She was kyn but even so, her strength was no match for his.

"Just let me get out of these, and I'll make you wish you'd never been born," she promised, fury in her eyes.

He laughed, locking the chain off around the pipe. "Sorry, doll, been there, done that, got the T-shirt to prove it. Besides, there are procedures when we catch a trespasser. I have to search you and your belongings for weapons, contraband... you know."

Grinning over his shoulder he opened her purse and rifled through it until he found her ID. "Cassia Leyland. Nice name."

Cass went pale as he looked in the bag, knowing what was inside. She wasn't bothered about him finding weapons because she was still wearing them for all the good they had done her. She'd fought and brought in demons before, but

she'd never seen anyone... anything... move as quickly as he did.

"Oh, now this is interesting." He pulled something small and pink from the depths of the bag and she went scarlet. It was her special little "friend," a rampant rabbit mini vibrator with a finger loop to help direct those vibrations exactly where needed. "Very interesting indeed."

He abandoned the purse, and leaned back against the desk, sitting on the edge as he fiddled with the controls of the vibrator, displaying all the enthusiasm of a child with a new toy. The dial clicked and a soft buzzing filled the room.

Cass leaned her head back, closed her eyes and prayed for strength. When she looked up, she was still irritated. Why had she thought he was sexy? Right about now she'd much rather slap him upside the ear than get down and dirty with him. Okay... maybe that was a lie.

"You know, it's rude to go through a lady's things."

He experimented with the settings, the little rabbit going from slow and sexy right the way up to va-va-voom, Cass's favorite setting, and her cheeks got hotter. "I know, but why not? Especially when I find such interesting things?" He looked up. His eyes swirled with dark heat, a heat laced with naughtiness, and her breath caught. All of a sudden, being tied up in a room with a demon didn't seem so bad after all...

"You know, I think it might be faulty." He shook it, holding it up to his ear and listening for a rattle. It buzzed back at him. "Yeah, it's sounding a little odd to me. I think it needs testing. Just to be on the safe side, of course. Can't let you go about with a faulty electrical item. You might hurt yourself."

Cass shrugged, attitude locked into place and hiding the fact her knees had gone weak at the suggestion in his tone. "Whatever floats your boat, sweetheart. Just let me out of here before you start getting happy, would you?"

He pushed away from the desk, his expression intent. "Oh no, I'm not using it on myself. That wouldn't be any fun now, would it?"

Cass lost the ability to speak as he sauntered over to her. Most of the female population would kill to be able to move so gracefully, yet there was nothing feminine in his manner. Everything about him screamed virility and masculinity. He paused a mere hair's-breadth away from her, looking down. Their eyes locked and Cass knew he could see what he was doing to her, knew that her insides were quaking, and her clit throbbed at the promise she read in his eyes.

"I think this would be far more fun to use on you," he breathed, bending his head to kiss her again.

Bite his lip, do something... don't give in... Cassia's thought process trailed off as his lips whispered over hers. Touching, teasing, tasting. The gentlest touches, almost innocent in their own way, if not for the fact he'd turned the clit stimulator right up to full and began to trail it up between her thighs.

Anticipation rolled through her as the buzzing plastic got higher and higher. Her pussy clenched in need, wanting it there now and damn the consequences. The flush still riding her cheeks, Cass parted her thighs, silently inviting his touch and that of the pink plastic rabbit in his hand.

He moved in closer, reached down without breaking the kiss and pulled one of her legs up over his hip. Cass whimpered into his mouth as the change in position exposed her pussy to the cooler air. God, if he didn't do something soon she was going to fucking explode.

Cass's world shrank to tracking the rabbit's movement across her skin and the feel of Tiny's lips on hers. She was so turned on that the instant the vibrator touched her clit she knew she was going to come.

She didn't. Tiny made the rabbit's ears circle then brush over her clit. Cass moaned, her eyes closing as Tiny kissed down her throat again. Her hips bucked against the movement of his hand as he ran the vibrator over her clit again, seeking every last drop of sensation.

"Oh yeah, you're a kinky little thing, all right," his voice, velvet temptation over steel, murmured in her ear. "You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to make you come with this, listen to you scream. Then I'm going to fuck you and make you scream all over again."

"You sure you're that good?" Cass asked as he circled again. The tempo of the vibrator changed. Not a constant vibe now, but bursts of vibration building up and up until there was a longer, sustained section of them—the va-va-voom setting, the one Cass could never last long on. Already she could feel the familiar tension low down in her body as her clit throbbed in response to the rabbit's speed.

"Oh, you're going to find out soon enough." He used his free hand to hook a couple fingers into the front of her shirt and pulled down, popping all the buttons as he went. Her

breasts, encased in a purple satin and lace demi-bra, spilled out.

"Packing dangerous weaponry here, I see." Without warning, he leaned down and took one of her nipples into his mouth and suckled it through the lace.

"Ohmigod." The exclamation was torn from her as he sucked hard while at the same time he thrust two fingers deep into her pussy. Quite how he managed it still holding the vibrator against her clit, Cass didn't know and she didn't care. All she cared about was that he carried on doing it.

"That's it, sweetie, come for me. I want to feel you come. I want you all wet and ready for me."

She shuddered at his words, grabbing the chain and holding on for dear life. Her hips pushed against his fingers and the vibrator as heat raced through her veins and licked across her skin.

Then it was all too much. A ragged moan escaped her lips as her body clenched tight and her hips shuddered in an erratic rhythm against his hand as her climax hit her hard, washing her away in a tidal wave of hot pleasure.

Breathy moans and soft cries filled the room; noises Cass belatedly realized were from her own throat as he kept up the pressure, the rabbit's ears still tickling her hypersensitive clit. She whimpered and tried to shift away. "Too much..." she muttered and sighed in relief as he pulled away from her.

Her relief was short-lived. "You feel fantastic." His voice was hoarse and filled with need as he slid his fingers into her pussy again, a pussy slick from her climax. Even though she'd just come, the pressure of his fingers as they curled back to

seek her G-spot made her catch her breath again, a frisson of excitement arcing through her like a bolt of lightning.

Cass's eyes opened wide. She couldn't be ready again already, surely? Normally using that setting wiped her out, but here she was needing more. Something she had no problems with vocalizing. "More," she demanded, moving against him insistently.

"You want more? Then you're going to have to beg," he whispered by her ear, and turned her again in the chains. This time, when his cock pressed against her ass, Cass moaned out loud and thrust back, wriggling her hips in temptation.

His chuckle filled the small room and he kicked her feet further apart. "Tease, that's not begging." His large hand smoothed up under her skirt and over her ass, cupping and massaging the cheek. His fingers dipped down to stroke her needy flesh again. "Perhaps I should leave you to think about it then..."

"No! You can't!" Her voice held all her panic and frustration. "You bastard, don't you dare leave me here like this! Do something!"

Tiny's lips quirked at her imperious demand, and he was glad she couldn't see him. It was hard to act the badass when he was grinning broad enough to split his face. "Beg."

He held his response ruthlessly in check, circling her clit again to savor the helpless little sounds she made. Sounds that made him want to drop his pants, free his cock and thrust hard into her willing body. He knew she would be hot,

wet and tight. A ride guaranteed to take a man to heaven and back.

He wasn't going to, though; not until she begged him, not until she gave him the surrender he craved. A shiver raked his body as she thrust her ass back and wriggled against him in blatant invitation.

"I want to hear the words. I want to hear you beg, sweetness." He nipped her ear, his tone hard and uncompromising. Inside, though, he was begging. Christ, she had to give in sooner or later, or he was going to lose it. "Beg and I'll give you what we both need."

She moaned, the sound tortured, and Tiny knew he had her. "Yes! Yes, please!"

"Please what?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake—fuck me! I want you to fuck me!"

His groan mingled with hers as he yanked the zipper of his pants down. Within seconds he was free, and he kicked her feet even wider. Dipping his knees, he pressed the broad head of his erection against her slick entrance.

Their groans mingled in the small room as he gradually and insistently entered her body. It was like sliding into warm silk. "Gods, you feel good." His voice was hoarse and strained as he fought to keep control when all his body wanted to do was drive into the ambrosia offered to it and revel in excess. Slow and sure was the order of the day though and he wanted this to be as good for her as for him, even if it killed him. She was tight and wet, as he'd known she would be. The combination nearly blew him away as he slid in her as far as he could go and stilled.

Oh. My. God.

Cass's nostrils flared as he paused, his cock stretching her pussy almost to the point of pain. She was glad he'd stopped. It gave her body time to adjust, to get used to him. It was time she desperately needed. She'd had many lovers over the years and some as big... well, almost. None had treated her with the quiet care of the demon behind her.

His hands soothed her, one sliding down her arm. The other slid south over the slight mound of her stomach to seek her clit again. He played with it, soft strokes followed by teasing circles until her initial discomfort had worn off.

An insistent restlessness filled her, centered in her groin. She needed to move. The need kept growing until she couldn't resist. Twisting the chain around her wrists, she used it to anchor herself and then rolled her hips. Sensation exploded within her, the nerves along her feminine sheath going off like a fireworks display at the friction as he slid almost all the way out of her.

"Oh gods, yeah, baby, that feels so good." His voice was guttural and harsh. Cass could hear his need and desire. He thrust back into her. "So, so good."

Cass couldn't stop. Like the floodgates had been opened, she had to keep moving, pulling away from him and waiting as he held her hips still and slid back into her. A whimper sounded in the room, and it took her a moment to realize it had come from her. His slides became thrusts, then slams, and her whimper became moans as their hips met in a frenzied dance.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

All semblance of civility lost, he took her in a hard and fast rhythm, encouraged every step of the way by her gasps, moans and half-articulated demands for more. His fingers danced against her clit in time with the movement of his hips. She stilled, her back arched and her body stiffened. The tension wound in her reached breaking point.

For one glorious moment she stood on the edge, gazing down into the abyss, and it was filled with a million shimmering lights. His hips continued to move, his cock ramming home again, and she cried out, shattering apart and falling into the light.

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Chapter Four

It had been the best sex he'd had in years. No, probably the best sex he'd had in his life, even if he counted the hot redheaded succubus at his eighteenth birthday party. And she hadn't just been hot, she'd been scorching.

"Well, don't you have a face like a wet weekend? Careful, if the wind changes, you'll stick like that." A feminine voice broke through his daydream. Tiny jerked to attention to find Misty smiling at him and holding out a mug of coffee.

He took it with a wary look in his eye. Misty made coffee thick enough to double as industrial degreaser, and the stuff dissolved spoons on a regular basis. The caffeine content was so high, it was more liquid "no way are you sleeping for, oh, a week" than a hot beverage.

He took the mug anyway, and frowned as her words filtered through the sluggish mass of his brain. "Where do you come up with these sayings?" He took a sip and grimaced as the bitterness attacked his taste buds. "Christ, Misty! Would it kill you to put some sugar in here?"

"You're sweet enough. Besides, don't want your ass getting any bigger. Move over, you great lummoX," she ordered, sitting down on the cold stone step next to him and wrapping her hands around her mug. Both of them had stopped smoking a year ago, but they still came out at their allocated breaks to get some fresh air. Or, in Tiny's case, to try and clear his head.

"Charming. Trash my ego, why don't you?" He shoved his nose in his mug again. This time the foul stuff didn't taste quite as bad, probably because it had stripped most of the skin off his tongue with the first sip.

"So where did you disappear to last night?"

Tiny did everything right. He didn't freeze, didn't go silent, just sipped casually from his mug and slid a glance sideways at her. She wasn't looking at him, looked out over the empty street instead, but he knew she was onto him. "Had a little run-in with a patron; had to do a search and packed her off with a warning," he said, his tone noncommittal and bored.

"That some kind of demon-speak for you two did the nasty?"

Tiny sighed. It was going to be a long morning. "You should wash your mouth out with soap, young lady," he admonished, knowing full well Misty was older than him. Although she appeared to be in her mid-twenties, there was something old about her eyes... like the vamp chick last night. No, not the "vamp chick." Cassia Leyland, it said on the ID card nestled in his pocket.

"You did!" Misty crowed as she punched the air. "You screwed some chick in the office. I knew it!" Her gaze cut sideways to him, her expression shrewd. "You must have been going some to track down and get rid of the vampire and pick up a bit... of..."

She stopped, a strange expression crossing her face for a second, a combination of shock warring with surprise and disgust, then, almost hidden, a reluctant interest. "Tiny, tell me you didn't screw the vamp in the security office?"

"Okay, I won't."

"Fucking hell, you did! You fucked the vampire. Are you stupid, or did your momma drop you on your head as a baby? Do you know what the bosses would've done if they'd caught you?"

A scowl settled on the demon's face as he contemplated what it would take to throttle a Valkyrie. "Yeah, well, they didn't," he grunted, his tone defensive. He'd known it was a bad idea, but damn, it had felt good at the time. Trouble was, he wanted more, a lot more, and soon.

He shoved his nose back in the mug again, hoping beyond hope to avoid more questions. But this was Misty, and like most women of his acquaintance, once she'd gotten her teeth into something, she didn't let go.

"So, you seeing her again?"

His shoulder moved in a shrug. "Dunno. Not exactly healthy, is it? Demon and the vampire. Gods know how many people would get bat-shit about it."

"Yeah, I never understood that. What is it with you guys, anyway?" Misty shifted on the stone step to try and get more comfortable. "I mean, to me there's not much difference between your aura and a vampire's apart from theirs are blood-red most of the time."

Tiny arched an eyebrow. "And mine?"

She turned to look at him, her eyes distant. Tiny knew without asking she was looking beyond the physical and into his soul. "Black. With... gold veins."

"Gold flecks? Yeah, right, next you'll be telling me I'm the lost prince of the demon court," he chuckled, his broad grin hiding his unease. Hide in plain sight, nowhere better.

"Oh yeah, they haven't found him yet, have they? What was his name? Sevren, or something?"

Seren. Seren Di Lakai Telosa. Son of Lakai, Prince of the Night and Shadows, Lord of the Seventh Gates. Tiny knew the name and titles by heart, because they were his names, and they'd been hammered into him from birth. "Yeah, something like that. Anyway, break's over. You coming?"

The day was a long one, too long for Tiny's liking. The small ID card he'd lifted from Cassia the night before was burning a hole in his pocket.

For the seventh time in the last hour he pulled the card free. She wasn't smiling at the camera, but her lips had a mysterious half smile some women did well, sort of like the Mona Lisa but way sexier. Tiny wasn't an art lover. He preferred his women live and lusty rather than rhapsodizing over some dead chick immortalized on canvas, but sometimes only a classical reference would do.

Cassia. A pretty name but was it real? Questions about her whirled about his brain, questions he hadn't gotten to ask last night. Once they'd finished, she'd demanded to be released and as soon as he had, she'd grabbed her stuff and disappeared out the door as though all the hounds of hell were after her.

The card stayed in his jacket pocket for the next couple of days. Days in which, try as he might, Tiny couldn't get the sexy vamp out of his thoughts. His dreams were haunted by

images of her, and he woke up hard and aching, dreaming of plunging into her soft body only to realize he was dry humping his own damn sheets.

"Fuck it!" he gasped, dropping one of the drinks menu holders as he helped the bar staff set up for the evening.

"Hey, you all right, man?" the waiter asked in concern. Tiny kept his expression blank as he tried to remember the guy's name. Mark... Matt... something beginning with M anyway.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Laid funny on my arm last night, and my hand keeps going dead. It'll wear off in a minute." He shook his hand for emphasis, the skin across the palm stinging like mad, as the waiter picked up the menu and holder to place them on the table.

Tiny opened his hand to check. He must have been bitten. Either that or he'd touched something dodgy during clean-up this morning. There was always some joker leaving something lying around, and one man's pleasure was another man's poison.

No rash greeted his eyes as he opened his palm, but a series of pseudo-tribal marks decorated the skin. What the fuck? His breath left his lungs in a rush as he stared blankly. Closing his hand quickly he looked around, but no one was watching him.

Matt... Malcolm moved away along the line of tables without another glance in his direction. Like a lot of the staff he was human, so Tiny didn't have to worry much about being snuck up on. Carefully, he opened his palm again, hoping the marks would be gone.

No such luck. They were still there, as plain as if a tattooist had taken a needle to his skin. Not tattoos, he decided, pulling the skin this way and that. They didn't move like tattoos on the skin. Tiny had enough of those, although his demonic blood broke them down after a few weeks, and he kept having to go have them redone. So he knew how a tattoo reacted on the skin. No, these marks were under the skin somehow...

He sighed and closed his palm. He knew what they were. Vampire marks. Somehow Cassia had marked him. Tiny's expression set, his lips compressing into a thin, hard line. The question was... why?

"No, no, no. You've gotta be kidding me," Cassia wailed as she studied the palm of her hand and the symbols etched across the skin for all the world to see. Symbols which would tell another vampire she'd bonded with a mate.

She looked up and into her bathroom mirror, haunted brown eyes staring back at her. This wasn't happening, it couldn't be happening. She didn't need or want a mate. Especially not when...

"No!" The blood drained out of her reflection's face. There was only one way a vampire bonded with his or her mate—the combination of sex and blood. The only guy she'd had sex with recently had been the sexy as hell demon at Moonlight & Magic.

"Crap. This is not good." She couldn't be bonded to a demon. She shouldn't even have given him the bloody time of day, let alone gotten down and dirty with him.

Cass stared at the marks again, hoping they'd have already faded, or better yet, been a figment of her imagination. No such luck. They were still there, clear dark symbols against her pale flesh.

Her brow furrowed. How had she managed to bond to him? She'd made sure there hadn't been a blood exchange. Because, whilst there were a few things she could think of more unpleasant than being addicted to demon blood, they were the sort of things she never intended to try out—like getting her arms and legs ripped off by a were-dragon, or heading on into the dark plains to find a Medusa to irritate.

Somehow, though, even without the blood exchange, she had bonding marks all over her palm. How the hell... Was it even possible to bond with a demon? More importantly, how was she going to keep quiet about the fact she had?

Realizing she was still staring at herself in the mirror Cass dropped her gaze to the offending marks again. Perhaps she could just cut her hand off and have done with it? No, that would hurt like hell.

She'd once had to regrow the tip of a finger after an accident with a Keres demon and an industrial steel press. That had been bad enough. She could only imagine what regrowing the whole damn hand would feel like.

As soon as the idea occurred to her, though, it wouldn't let go. She had to get rid of these marks somehow, but cutting her hand off wasn't the only solution. Padding barefoot back into her bedroom she sat on the bed and pulled the lamp over so she could get a better look at the marks.

Ignoring the small quiver in the region of her heart, she studied her palm. Bonded mates were rare. Every vampire girl dreamed someday—if she was lucky—she would meet Mr. Perfect and wake one evening with these marks on her hand. Cass hadn't been born a vamp, but even she'd bought into the romantic dream of a bond-mate.

Using her fingertips she manipulated the skin of her palm under the light. The mark wasn't on the skin, more under the skin, like something had been inserted there. Her full lips compressed into a thin line.

Turning, she grabbed her purse from the other side of the bed and rifled through it. In the chaos that reigned supreme in the bottom, she located her knife. Pulling it free from the bag, she released the blade with a practiced flick of her finger and considered her palm again. This was going to hurt...

There was blood on the air. Tiny might not have been a vampire, but his senses were still acute enough to pick up the scent of new blood. Not surprising since vampires were a form of demon, just not one from this world.

Tiny didn't know the full story as to how they'd ended up in this world, and he didn't much care. It was a secret both races kept religiously. It was also the reason demons and vampires didn't get along; they were too alike.

Tiny checked the card in his hand again and looked up at the apartment building. It had taken him a while to track her down, but there weren't many people who could remain hidden from a demon of Tiny's power for long. What did surprise him was the fairly "normal" looking building. Didn't

vampires need to sleep in their graves? Or was that another myth interfering with the facts?

The scent of blood got stronger, a sweet, almost tantalizing scent. Tiny's nose twitched. It smelt good, good enough to eat. His stomach rebelled at the same time his mind rejected the idea. He wasn't a bloodsucker, no way, no how. So no blood should smell that good.

He climbed out of the car, his tall frame unfolding from the seat and stretching as he eased muscles cramped from the long drive. Never having driven for so many hours straight, he was in agony, but driving had been the quickest way here, and he'd needed speed. He'd only managed twenty-four hours off work. It was the most he could swing at late notice without telling Jaren what he needed time off for. An explanation he couldn't give. Tiny couldn't see the vampire-hating incubus being understanding about his need to track down a vampire he couldn't get out of his head.

The tall demon snorted to himself. Yeah, Jaren was more likely to slap him in a straitjacket and cart him off to the paranormal equivalent to a mental ward. Probably slap him around a little en route for his sheer stupidity. Jaren was one demon who held the ancient enmity between vampire and demon close to his heart.

He heard her before he saw her, a feminine muttering emerging from the other side of the door as he approached the building. He smelled her before she came into view. The fragrance of a new wound hung on the air like an exotic fragrance. Tiny's brow furrowed. What was up with him? He'd never been this sensitive to fresh blood before.

The door opened and she was there, a frustrated expression on her heart-shaped face which disappeared when she saw him. Her eyes widened in recognition and anger.

"You!"

"Me?" Tiny leaned one shoulder against the doorframe. By the gods, she was glorious when she was mad. Her eyes flashed with fire, her features came alive and even her hair crackled with energy.

"Yeah, you! You're the bloody problem!" she snapped, advancing on him and jabbing him in the chest. Tiny noticed two things at the same moment. One, her eyes were wet with what looked suspiciously like tears and two, her hand was bandaged.

He grabbed her wrist, careful not to put any pressure on the dressing over her palm. His eyes narrowed as he registered the placement. "What did you do?"

"Nothing."

Anger hit him broadside, washing over him as he twisted her palm upwards and stripped the dressing away with quick, efficient movements. She struggled, swearing at him, but Tiny ignored her as he revealed her palm. Or rather the mess she'd made.

She'd tried to carve the marks out of her palm. But she hadn't managed it. Blood oozed around the ragged edges criss-crossing her palm and in one section the skin was missing completely. Almost as if she thought by removing the skin she could remove the mark. It hadn't worked; the mark was still there in the flesh below. His lips compressed as he looked up at her, his gaze glittering and hard.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

"Doesn't look like nothing to me. I was going to ask you what these were," he said, holding his own hand up, the palm decorated with similar markings. "They're obviously not something good if you tried to do this. Fancy cluing me in any time soon?"

"Go screw yourself." She snatched her hand back, cradling it against her chest as she pulled a clean handkerchief from her pocket to use as a dressing. Worry threaded through his chest, winding around the anger. What were these marks and why had she tried to get rid of them in such a drastic manner?

"Tell me." His hands curled around her upper arms to drag her hard against him. Perhaps a little harder than he intended, but when the result was her breasts pressing against his chest in such a manner, he wasn't going to apologize.

She flicked her hair back over her shoulders and glared up at him in challenge. "Or what?"

Tiny dropped his head back, his eyes closed as he prayed for strength. This woman was going to be the death of him. "Never challenge a demon." His voice strained, he counted to ten, a hundred... hell, he might as well go for broke and make it a thousand.

"Why?"

He jerked his head up, the look in his eyes feral and dark. The fierce challenge in her eyes wavered for a moment, as though she was unsure. As well she might be. Demons weren't the most stable of creatures, and being in the arms of a pissed-off, sexually frustrated demon probably wasn't the

best place in the world to be. Tiny smiled as he watched the realization enter her eyes.

He slid a large hand into her hair and cupped her nape. The bones of her neck seemed so delicate and fragile as his large fingers stroked them, applying pressure to tilt her lips up to his. "Because," he breathed through lips barely a hair's-breadth from hers, "we like it. It gets us... me... hot."

He took her lips, biting back a groan at the sensation. They were like cool silk beneath his. Luscious and full, they quivered for a moment under his sensual assault, but the softest brush of his tongue against her lower lip had her opening for him. Triumph washed through him like the incoming tide. Tiny murmured in pleasure, and drew her deeper into his embrace to deepen the kiss. It felt good—felt right—and to hell with anyone who said it was wrong.

When he lifted his head a moment later, they were both breathing raggedly. Need and something else, something softer Tiny didn't want to define, raged through his blood. It urged him to pull her outside into the darkness in the lee of the building, and slake the thirst which claimed him.

Their eyes locked in a long moment of shared, stunned realization. Tiny watched the darkness flare in her eyes, matching the darkness racing through his own body. She wanted this as much as he did.

"Your place? Or mine?" The question was more of a plea than he wanted to think about. Naked need and longing rang in his voice. He wanted her and he didn't care what he had to do to get her where he needed her, on her back under him.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

She didn't answer. The seconds ticked by as she studied his eyes, her own going from one to the other as though looking for the answer to an unknown question. Finally she nodded, her lips pursed for a second before she smiled. "My place, on one condition."

"Which is?"

"This time, I'm in charge."

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Chapter Five

Cass, what the hell are you doing? This is such a bad idea. The thoughts circled in Cassia's head as she turned to lead her demon lover back up to her apartment. How he'd found her, she didn't know, but as soon as she'd seen the marks on her palm she'd known he would come for her. Bonded mates couldn't stay away from each other for long. Not even, it seemed, when one of them wasn't a vampire but a demon instead.

His larger hand engulfed her uninjured one, and his thumb stroked over the delicate flesh on the inside of her wrist. The gentle movement sent sparks of awareness through her, all meeting to pool low down in her belly. Cass's footsteps sped up—the need to get somewhere with a comfortable and horizontal surface uppermost in her mind.

He must have felt the urgency in her grip. He matched her step for step as they turned the last corner on the stairs and her door came into view. She'd been lucky and managed to get the apartment closest to the stairwell. Made it easier with her coming and going at all times of night. She led him down the corridor to her door in silence, the sexual tension stretching between them like a third person in the narrow hall.

Without a word, she unlocked the door, swallowed her nerves and stood aside to let him in. This was a big thing for her; she didn't bring men here, back to her "lair," a laughable description of her tiny apartment.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

Her calm expression as he walked past her hid a seething mass of nerves. The kiss downstairs had re-ignited the need which had been a constant ache since the night at the club. Not only re-igniting it but fanned it to the blaze racing through her veins, causing liquid heat to dampen her panties. It was a need which transcended even her drive to feed, an overriding desire for her mate which couldn't be denied.

Mentally she shied away from that fact in favor of watching him. Even standing still, he was the sexiest thing she'd ever seen. The last few days apart seemed to have increased his attractiveness, even though she knew that was baloney. Her grip tightened on the door handle, knuckles showing white as she fought the urge to do something stupid like march over and rip all his clothes off.

He had agreed she was in charge though, hadn't he? Her mouth went dry, and she closed the door behind her with a decisive click, cutting off his escape to the outside world.

"Bedroom. Now."

Tiny didn't need telling twice—not when she was ordering him about in such a sexy, take-no-prisoners voice. It made him think of leather-clad dominatrices and whips. Unbidden, an image of her in a leather corset leapt to mind. He bit back a moan of need as his cock, already half hard from their kiss downstairs, came to full attention.

A tiny jerk of her head clued him into the right direction for the bedroom, and he headed that way, barely seeing the neat apartment around him. All he cared about was getting them into a room with a bed so he could get them out of their clothes, slide his cock into her warm, willing body and ease

the ache that had tormented him since she'd run out on him the other night.

Once inside the bedroom though, he slowed and started taking notice. This place was her sanctuary, and finding himself wanting to know everything about her, he drank in all the details. The room was neat with the small, personal touches that said this was a home rather than just a place for someone to lay their head.

The only clue to her true nature was the heavy shutters on the inside of the window, between the gauzy net and the curtains, which were open to the night air at the moment but in the day would protect her from the sun's harmful rays.

Tiny pot dragons in cute poses cavorted between the cosmetics and perfumes scattered across the top of the dresser. Tiny's lips quirked. He knew a few dragons, none of whom looked quite as innocent as that. It was cute though, a hunter who collected pot dragons. Didn't do much for her fearsome reputation, but the revelation of a softer side to the woman did things to him on levels he didn't want to think about.

His gaze moved on, flicking over the bed and the deep scarlet satin draped there. Arousal knotted hard in his stomach as he turned to her, eager to pull her into his arms and onto the bed with him. His hands itched to strip off the jeans and top she was wearing, revealing her luscious body to him again. Already he could feel the weight of her breasts in his hands as he molded and caressed them, his lips on the soft skin of her throat, before lifting one darkened nipple to his lips and—

"Strip."

Tiny jerked out of his erotic daydream at the command. He blinked in surprise. When she'd said she was in charge, he hadn't thought she meant it that way. Her expression, full lips drawn into a determined pout and her eyes hard on him, told him that oh yes, she'd meant it.

Excitement hit him in a dizzy surge, like a sugar rush after drinking too much soda, and he ditched his jacket and removed his T-shirt in the same move. His boots hit the carpeted floor with two dull thuds, the footwear quickly covered by his pants and boxers until he stood proudly naked in the middle of her bedroom.

Her eyes wandered over him, taking in the breadth of his shoulders and the hard planes of his chest. Tiny puffed up with male pride at the look of admiration in her eyes, unable to resist posing a little. He knew he looked good, a combination of genetics, species and trying to keep up with Knuckles in the gym. Since getting married, the guy had become obsessed with making sure he didn't get fat or anything else that could mean his wife lost interest in him. Why he bothered, Tiny didn't know; anyone with eyes in their head could see the woman was besotted.

Her eyes widened slightly and he knew she'd spotted the silver ring through his nipple. There were a few paranormal races who could withstand the burn of silver—the Fae, for example, were only susceptible to iron—but demons weren't one of them. The ring through his nipple burned every day, as did the one through his eyebrow. They were there on

purpose. Pleasure mixed with pain, the hallmark of the demon courts, reminders of who and what he was.

A demon.

Currently a demon with the hardest erection he could ever remember, and a hot woman looking at him as though she'd like to eat him whole. His cock jerked, signaling its approval of the idea, blood pulsing and pooling in the engorged shaft. He resisted the urge to reach down and palm himself. He wanted only one set of hands on his body, and they weren't his own.

Her dark chocolate eyes slid from his face down to his rigid cock and back up again. A groan reverberated in Tiny's chest as her small pink tongue flicked out to wet her full lips.

"A man can only take so much teasing, honey," he told her hoarsely, but she was already moving towards him, a sway in her hips.

"Oh, I don't think so." Trailing a finger up from his waist, she placed her hand on his chest and fanned out her fingers. He bit back a gasp as her fingertip caught the ring, and a lance of pleasure-pain shot through him, from his nipple all the way down to his cock.

"In fact, I think..." She leaned down. Her mouth hovered just over his pierced nipple, and her warm breath whispered over his heated flesh. His body tensed in anticipation. Her lips were just millimeters away. All she had to do was open her mouth and he'd feel her soft tongue against him. "...you'll take everything I dish out."

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

Then she did what he was waiting for. Her tongue snaked out and circled his nipple in a lazy spiral before she sucked it into the warm cavern of her mouth and suckled.

"Fuck yeah, baby, do that more."

His hand latched into her dark hair, holding her to him as she lapped at his flat male nipples. She alternated from one side to the other, seemingly fascinated by his piercing. Her small nips and licks were heavenly, not that a demon like Tiny had any concept of heaven, but it felt damn good. Better than anything he'd felt before. Then she moved, pulling and teasing the ring with her tongue and teeth, leaving him cursing. God, he wanted her clever mouth working his cock.

She pulled away, smiling as she noticed his pout of disappointment, but he didn't stop her. For such a hulking, well-built guy—she had to face it, he was built along the same lines as the average linebacker—he had some expressions which reminded her of the small boy he'd once been.

"On the bed, lover-boy, and be quick about it," she ordered as she reached for the silk scarves over the chair at the side of the bed.

He was quick, easing his long frame onto her bed almost before she'd finished the sentence and watching her in the intent way he had, like a cat watching a mouse. Cass avoided his eyes and stole a glance down his body to the impressive erection lying rigid against his flat belly.

He was as well built down there as she remembered, or rather, as her body remembered since she hadn't actually seen him that night in the office. So she drank her fill now, biting her lip as she lashed his wrists to her bed. She wanted

that cock inside her again. Liquid heat slid from between her thighs as she imagined straddling him and guiding that thick shaft to her wet pussy and slowly, oh so slowly, sinking down onto it. Then she'd ride him until they were both slick with sweat and sated with pleasure.

Hands trembling with need, she checked the knots against both his wrists. The scarves held his arms captive above his head. Silk could be slippery, and it had been a long time since she'd had someone tied to her bed. The last thing she wanted to do was hurt him and end up in whatever the demon version of the Emergency Room was. She had far more interesting things in mind.

"Comfortable?" She tweaked his pierced nipple, the eager thrust of his hips answer enough.

"I will be when you stop fucking about and sit on my cock."

Cass grinned and leaned down until her lips brushed his ear. "Patience is a virtue." With that she left the room.

What the hell? Where had she gone? She couldn't leave him high and dry like this, not when he was about ready to burst with need. Hell, all he needed was a minute with her hot little body wrapped around his cock like a velvet glove, and he'd be shooting his bolt faster than a bloody rifle.

"Cassia? Cassia! What the fuck are you doing? Naked guy on your bed feeling a complete twat..." he called out, the demand in his voice unmistakable. Craning his neck, he glared at the door she'd disappeared through, hearing the sounds of movement from beyond.

It wasn't the door they'd come through so she hadn't just led him down the garden path, tied him up and left. Although, if she left him here much longer he'd be expecting the guy with the hidden cameras to step out of a cupboard or something.

"Smile, Prince Seren, you're on *Candid Camera*!" Gods, wouldn't that screw the pooch completely? If he was caught out by something so stupid, it would be more than embarrassing. Worse, it would lead to his father finding out where he was. Going back to the demon court for another couple of centuries of boredom was definitely not on Tiny's to-do list.

He started to pull on the silk. Flimsy restraints, they weren't strong enough to make even a pretence of holding him. It was a sensual-erotic thing; they symbolized him giving up control to her.

"Cas—fucking hell!" Sensing movement in the doorway Tiny looked up halfway through his complaint and cut off with a curse. His mouth dropped open as he stared at the vision in the doorway. Gone were the black T-shirt and jeans he'd been fantasizing about peeling off her, and in their place she wore a black leather corset which nipped her tiny waist in and pushed her breasts up until they were in danger of spilling over the top with a pair of killer-heeled thigh-high boots.

A thousand erotic images hit him at once, and his cock swelled even further. Shit, once he got between her thighs, this wasn't going to take long at all.

"You like?" She sauntered towards him, a mysterious little female smile on her lips, and each step revealed a flash of her

pale thighs and the scrap of satin masquerading as a thong which tied at the sides.

Ties she played with, running the silky ribbons through her fingers as she watched him. Tiny swallowed and nodded dumbly. In truth, he couldn't have framed a response even if he still had the power of speech.

"You want to see more?"

Another nod. Of course he wanted to see more. What did she think he was, some kind of monk?

The ties pulled taut, sliding from the bow centimeter by slow centimeter. All Tiny's attention was riveted on the thin scraps of ribbon. He'd never watched anything as intently in his life as he watched those little ribbon bows get smaller and smaller until they weren't there at all.

The satin fell away, revealing the bare mons at the apex of her thighs to his interested gaze. Blood surged through his body as his arousal deepened, tightening the skin of his cock and balls in a vise-like grip as she turned away, bending over and spreading her legs so he got a good look. The plump pink lips of her pussy glistened as she spread them a little, teasing him, and the scent of her arousal filled the air like fine perfume.

She wriggled her hips. "How about now? Seen enough yet?"

"Witch," he growled and strained against his silken bonds. All he wanted to do was grab her, place hands on either side of those wonderfully curvy hips and plunge his tongue as far as he could into her delicious pussy. "Come here." His voice was hoarse. "I want to taste you, run my tongue over your

clit. Suck and nibble on it until you come screaming. I want to make you scream, let me make you scream," he begged.

Pretending to think, she "absently" slid a finger deep into her pussy. He lost the ability to breathe, watching as she worked her cunt with first one, then two fingers. "Well... I guess you've been a good boy and good boys deserve treats."

She pulled her fingers out with a wet *pop* and crawled onto the bed. Instead of straddling his face as Tiny expected she turned the other way and faced down his body.

Tiny closed his eyes and counted to ten as her pussy waved tantalizingly just inches from his face and her mouth hovered over his cock. Bloody hell, he'd just died and gone to heaven.

Cass held her breath as she sat astride him. Her whole body tightened in anticipation as his hot breath fanned over her exposed pussy. She'd been fantasizing about this since the night at the club, wanting to taste him and have him taste her in return.

He didn't disappoint. Before Cass could take another breath, his warm tongue explored, sweeping from her clit to the soaked entrance to her body and back again. Unerringly he located her clit, nibbled and sucked on it, not letting up as Cass shuddered and moaned above him.

Dipping her own head, she ran her tongue over him, wetting him from root to tip before sliding her lips around the swollen head. She sucked him in, feeling the surge of blood in his cock as she took him as deeply as she could, the tip pressing into the back of her throat. A groan against her clit was his only response, the sound more a vibration against her

sensitized flesh. Cass gasped, her eyes threatening to roll back in her head.

Using her hands, lips and tongue, she worked his cock and relished every helpless jerk of his hips, each moan and muffled curse from between her thighs. The tension in her body wound tighter as he upped the ante, teasing her with quick sweeps against her clit then plunging deep into her body and fucking her with his tongue. He played her body with frightening ease until she was hanging on the very precipice, just one more move threatening to push her over and into her climax.

"Stop." Pulling away from him with a gasp, she rested her forehead against his hipbone. "I want you to be inside me when I come."

She felt rather than saw his smile, and a second later he laid a gentle kiss on her clit. "Okay, honey, you take what you need. You're in charge, remember?"

Cass lifted off him, unable to resist a last slow lick along his cock before she did. He tasted fantastic, far better than any other man she'd had, a message in itself. Her mate would be compatible in all ways. Even taste.

Impatient as the needs of her body made themselves known, Cass swung her leg over his hips and settled herself into his lap. His rigid shaft was trapped between them, settling into the cradle of her thighs. Biting her lower lip, she rocked, rubbed against him, and chuckled when his back arched in response. So she did it again, her eyes half closing in pleasure at the delicious friction.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

"Are you going to screw me, or do I have to rip these scarves off, turn you over and fuck you from behind again?" he demanded, passion flaring bright in his eyes as he looked up at her as though she was the only thing that mattered in the world.

Cass shook her head. Her hair danced over her shoulders as she leaned forwards to brush her leather-covered breasts against his naked chest. "Oh no, lover-boy, this time is all mine," she whispered in his ear, "but next time you can take me any way and any how you want."

With that tantalizing promise she reached between them, positioned herself and slowly sank down onto his rigid cock...

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Chapter Six

"Ugh, do you demons actually need to eat or..." Cass asked the next evening, her disgust at the prospect of eating apparent as she popped her head around the door whilst Tiny showered. Catching sight of him naked and soaped up, her expression changed. A sparkle of interest in her eyes had Tiny rising to half-mast automatically. "Naked man. If we weren't on a deadline here, I'd be tempted to join you."

Tiny grinned and opened his arms. "Plenty of room for two; give you a replay of last night," he offered her, his grin widening as her cheeks flushed pink. She'd been insatiable last night, but to be fair, so had he. After the first time on the bed, they'd done the round tour of the apartment—the bedroom, the bathroom, the shower, the lounge, the kitchen. They hadn't missed a room in the "christening."

"You are an evil man," she told him and disappeared from the doorway. Tiny chuckled out loud as the sounds of muttering filtered through the open door. Something about "damn teases of men who got a woman all worked up and then let her down."

He wrapped a towel around his lean waist as he walked through into the bedroom, and snagged her around the waist as she tried to bustle by him. "We can always leave a little later," he suggested, nuzzling the sensitive spot behind her ear.

She sighed in pleasure and stretched against him, catlike and lazy, but her voice filled with regret as she disengaged his hands and turned in his embrace. "I'd love to but..."

She wouldn't meet his eyes. Her gaze dropped down to his shoulder instead. At first he thought it was the usual female emotional kickback. Most women needed to be reassured after a night of mad, passionate sex. Needed to be reassured it meant more than two people fucking like bunnies.

Usually Tiny didn't have the patience for it. He tended to leave as soon as possible and avoid it all. Leaving wasn't an option with Cassia, though. Without the apparent intervention of his brain, he found his arms tightening around her and never-before-uttered words of comfort on his tongue.

Then he realized her attention was fixed on the pulse beating strongly in his neck. The flush he'd taken to be shyness—although why she should come off as shy after all they'd shared—was revealed to be hunger when she lifted worried eyes to his. Tiny didn't need any mystical abilities to read her mind. The worry that she'd disgust him was written all over her face. Without thinking, he tilted his head to the side and offered her his throat.

"Feed if you need to," he said in a quiet voice, something which shocked him. Where the impulse came from, he had no idea, but it was a no-brainer. She needed to feed so he would provide.

"No!" Cass recoiled, putting the distance of the bedroom between them. She sounded horrified, her eyes wide in her face as she stared at him. Even from this distance, he could

see the trembling in her limbs and the stark longing in her eyes. "I—I'm sorry. I can't."

Frustration raced through him as she turned away to finish getting dressed, sitting down on the side of the bed to slide her feet into more sensible boots than she'd worn in bed last night. It was frustration laced with puzzlement as he pulled his own clothes on. Why had he offered to let her feed from him? In all his long life he'd never offered his throat, or his blood, to anyone. Apart from the fact nice demons didn't do that sort of thing there was the whole darker side of domination he'd never been comfortable exploring with anyone before.

But with Cassia it seemed natural, seemed right, to take care of her and her needs, all her needs. This was something else that was new, like his sensitivity to the smell of blood and the marks on their palms.

Pulling his jeans over his hips, he left them unbuttoned to look at the symbols etched on his palm again. They seemed deeper and more defined than they had last night. It was probably a trick of the light. Surely they couldn't be getting deeper?

Realization hit him hard and fast, like a full broadside from a galleon's cannons. He loved her. Somewhere between their night in the club and this morning, the sassy, awkward vampire with the killer figure had grown on him. He'd fallen for her, and when a demon fell, they really fell—hard and fast like an angel from the heavens.

He'd offered her his throat—his blood—for no other reason than she needed to feed. She hadn't coerced him; she hadn't

used mental manipulation—she didn't think that was possible with Tiny—or even the physical force some vampires resorted to. He'd offered of his own accord, and Cass was still in shock an hour later when it came time to leave.

"Ready?" she asked, picking up her purse and going to check the belt on her jeans where her warded chains usually hung.

"Mind still on the job?" Tiny asked, a half smile on his lips as he caught her movement. "Remember, tonight you're all mine." The expression in his eyes was a sensuous promise of long nights spent in pleasure.

Cass swallowed as her heart fluttered madly again, distracting her for a moment from the hunger gnawing at her gut. "Yeah, old habits die hard."

Like not going in even though it was her day off. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had a day off. She'd had a bad run-in with a Keres demon a couple of years ago and been off her feet for a week or two healing up.

Wrapping strong arms around her, he pulled her into an embrace. Cass sighed and rested her head against his shoulder. She closed her eyes, relaxed, and let his touch soothe her, absorbing his quiet strength.

They were bonded. Finally Cass accepted the fact and gave into the tugging on her heart she'd been ignoring. Released, the denied bond settled into every fiber of her being. Echoing her own response, his heavily muscled chest expanded in a sigh of relief, but he didn't say anything, just carried on stroking her hair gently.

She had no idea how this was going to work but she didn't care. Somehow they would make it work, even if he was a demon.

A chill ran the length of her spine. She'd have to tell the city court she'd bonded. If she didn't give too many details and said her mate wasn't local then they wouldn't realize. Bonding was rare anyway and she'd never heard of anyone bonding with a demon. Ever.

In fact, if anyone had mentioned the idea even a week ago, she'd have laughed at them. Now though, with the bonding marks on his palm and him displaying all the possessiveness of a bonded male already... there was no other explanation for it.

Reluctantly, she eased away from him. A loud growl from her stomach signaled other needs and without a word the pair headed for the door.

"You gonna last until we reach my place or do we need to stop for... um, drive through?" Tiny asked as they emerged from the double doors at the front of the building and into the night. On instinct Cass took a deep breath, letting the cool air filter over her tongue, tasting it awash with scents. She could tell a group of humans had passed this way not long ago. Female, heavy on the perfume and hairspray. Girls' night out.

Cass's lips quirked in amusement as she searched for the right term to use. "Drive through would be perfect." Better than stalking the girls' night out group. Besides, Cass preferred male donors, which wasn't such a good idea with a newly bonded male in tow. Possessive would be the understatement of the year. Bonded males had been known

to half kill another male for even looking at their mate. She dreaded to think what one would do seeing his woman sink fang into another guy's neck. "There's a blood bank just outside the city limits I can use."

A chuckle escaped her at his startled look. "Surprised? Oh, we're all organized around here. Hunters can have trouble getting time to feed, so rather than have us rush a feeding and potentially brutalize a donor, we can pick up blood pack —" She cut off mid-sentence as three figures materialized out of the darkness around them. "What the hell?"

The figures took on a more defined shape as she watched. Within seconds shadow became substance which turned into texture and color until three men stood in front of them. In business suits and clean cut, they reminded Cass of lawyers. Apart from the smell of fire and brimstone surrounding them, this impression was reinforced when one of them stepped forwards and offered a card.

"Good evening. I trust we're interrupting something," he said, smoothly offering Cass the card when Tiny waved it away. Curious, she took it. There was no logo, no fancy design someone with far too much education and a tendency to talk about complementary colors and "white space" had slaved over for hours. No, this card was plain and simple. Just three lines of text which read:

* * * *

Josiah Jhinks & Sons
Legal Representatives
House of Telosa

* * * *

"You're lawyers? Demon lawyers?"

The guy who'd given her the card inclined his head and offered a small professional smile. "I'm afraid so, Miss..."

"None of your business," Tiny broke in, an unmistakable edge of threat in his voice as he glared at the three men.

"Your business is with me, not with her. You can let her go."

Cass gasped in surprise as he shoved her behind him with a rough hand. Rough she could do. In bed it was kinky. Being pushed about out of it wasn't. She opened her mouth to tell him she'd fight her own battles, but stopped as something tugged at her memory. She looked down at the card in her hand again.

Telosa.

There was something familiar about the name, something she should be remembering. Her brow furrowed as she rooted through her memory. A year or so ago, there had been something in the press about a missing prince, and there had been a picture. Cass blinked and looked up at Tiny. He didn't look the same. The gorgeous long hair had been shaved off and the ring through his brow was new but...

"You're the missing prince."

Tiny ran a hand over his head, his expression bleak. "Fuck, Cass, you shouldn't have said that."

The demon lawyer smiled. "If you would both please step this way."

"Why didn't you tell me you were a prince?" Cass whispered as they were marched down corridor after corridor,

each more impressive than the last. Cass felt like she'd stepped into a history book. It was quite easy to forget they were in hell rather than a European palace other than the heat.

It was as hot as a sauna, and within seconds of stepping out of the magic circle they'd been brought through, Cass's thin shirt had cleaved to her back. It made her feel hot and grubby, especially as no one else seemed to be bothered.

A small muscle jumped in Tiny—no, Seren's jaw as they turned another corner. Cass rolled the name around in her mind a little. She'd have to get used to it. It was strange, knowing his real name after thinking of him as Tiny since she'd met him.

This corridor was different from the others. Not a thoroughfare, it ended in double doors higher than three men, dwarfing the guards on either side. A tremor of fear crawled up Cassia's spine. Nothing good was going to happen on the other side of those doors.

"I was in hiding. Not much point being in hiding if you're going to tell everyone who you are, is there?"

"But —" She'd been going to say "we're bonded," but at that moment, the doors in front of them opened and cut off her response. A tall man—another demon—stepped through. Unlike Seren and the lawyers, who were at least doing half a job of concealing their true natures, this man made no effort to hide his demon heritage.

Skin the color of molten copper stretched over a heavily muscled frame. Blue eyes blazed in the middle of an

impossibly handsome face complete with two small horns set on his forehead.

"Ah, Prince Seren, so good of you to join us." His tone was smarmy and condescending. Cass eyed him with distaste, deciding she wouldn't turn her back on this one any time soon. It would be full of knives if she did. She'd seen enough of his type in the vampire courts.

"Lord Zarek. The pleasure, as always, is all yours." Tiny's reply was dry and implacable, the subtle insult wrapped up in a polite smile, his dislike for the other demon clear.

Zarek beamed wider, as though winding people up was his favorite pastime, and transferred his attention to Cassia. "You brought your little pet. Excellent. Things have been so dull around here. An execution will really liven things up."

"Huh? What? Execution?" Oh shit, that didn't sound good. "Tiny, what's he on about?" she demanded, as they were shunted none too gently into the hall after Zarek.

Tiny didn't answer, which worried Cass. He just reached for her hand, which worried her even more. Walking ahead of them, Zarek threw a smile over his shoulder. "Lover-boy didn't tell you? Tsk, tsk, Seren, that's naughty of you. It's illegal to bond a member of the royal family without the king's permission and to do so is —"

"Punishable by death."

The deep voice was unmistakable. Tiny's heart sank in his chest as he turned to face his father. As always, Lakai looked little older than Tiny did himself. In fact, the two men could have been brothers except for the fact Lakai sported two small horns. Quite understated for a demon but there,

nonetheless, and truthfully, the man was as twisted as demons came. Lakai the Corrupt, they called him, Tiny's revered father.

"That's your dad?" The surprise in Cassia's voice matched the stunned look on her face as she stared at the lounging figure on the throne. Tiny nodded, lips compressing as he noticed her expression. She shouldn't be looking at any other man but him and definitely not his damn father! Not like that. Never like that.

She was his, end of story. Jealousy rose hard and fast, almost choking him before he got it under control. But it was too late; already Lakai's eyes had filled with interest as they swept over the slender vampire.

"Although, if you've brought a treat to share with the court, Seren, we might be persuaded to forgive you," he drawled lazily, propping his chin on one hand as he watched the two. "And she is very pretty; she'll be entertaining to watch as she services the lords. A vampire, though... we might have to de-fang her first—just to be on the safe side."

"Touch her and you're a dead demon," Tiny snarled before the words were fully out of his father's mouth. Beside him Cass paled, a small sound of fear escaping her which wrenched his heartstrings. He knew enough about vampires to know the threat of rape was nothing at all to the threat of de-fanging. She might survive rape, even here, but losing her fangs would be a death sentence.

"Ohhh, baby boy grew some balls." Lakai laughed, contempt for his son evident as he pushed off from the throne and sauntered down the dais steps. Tiny's lip started to curl,

but with effort he kept it in check. All he wanted to do was rip his dad's arms off and tear his eyes out for looking at Cass that way, but here and now? It would be suicide.

"You'd better believe it. You and me, old man, in the ring." Tiny jerked his head towards the challenge ring set to one side of the throne room. Nearly every civilized race, paranormal race that was, operated on some sort of challenge culture and the demon courts were no different. Dried blood from the last fight still decorated the circle carved into the stone.

"Oh, no. Me and her in the ring, now that could be fun," Lakai countered, circling the two of them and snarling at Zarek when he didn't hop out of the way fast enough. That was the thing with the demon monarch. He was as changeable as the weather and just as foul at times. At the moment, he appeared to be amused so long as he was getting his own way. However, he was getting Cassia over Tiny's dead body, so his dad's good mood was going to disappear fast.

"Not a chance, Pops. Me or no one."

Lakai shrugged one shoulder, his movements filled with an elegance Tiny had always avoided emulating. In fact, he tried to be as different as possible from his father in all ways. Yeah, sexually he could be a twisted bastard, but he wasn't a patch on good old daddy here.

"You see, now I have a problem." The amusement which had colored the demon king's voice a moment ago was gone as he walked back around them, completing his circle and

turning to look directly at them. The expression on his face was hard, his eyes unforgiving.

Without asking, Tiny knew they'd stopped dealing with Lakai the man and were now dealing with his Majesty, King Lakai Di Jeran Telosa, King of the Seven Hells.

"My word here is law, and your female has broken the law, made a fool of me. So tell me, can I allow that to go unpunished?"

"No!" he answered his own question before Tiny could open his mouth, the reply short and barked, making not just Cassia but some of the assembled courtiers jump as well. "I bloody well cannot. If I did, then it would be anarchy. Everyone would think they could defy me. Hell would descend into the chaos it already balances on the edge of. So your female must be suitably punished. It is the law."

The two demons locked eyes, king and prince, father and son. Tiny knew he had to tread carefully. He couldn't lose this. Cassia's life was at stake. "No. No one touches her. She did not know the law."

"Ignorance of the law is not an excuse."

"She broke no law. She didn't want the bond."

"Makes no matter—she bonded you without permission. Or do you call me a liar, challenge my word?" Lakai's eyes glittered dangerously as he advanced on his son.

Tiny didn't bat an eyelid, staring his father down and realizing for the first time he was taller. Taller, heavier and younger, with two years working as a bouncer putting out the scum of the earth because when the shit hit the fan at Moonlight & Magic, it really hit the fan. He'd thrown out

argumentative goblins, violent banshees and faced down more werewolves than he cared to think about. But it got better.

A smile curved Tiny's lips. Lakai wanted him alive, which was the only reason he was still standing after running out on his duty as he had. Which gave him an out, gave him leverage.

He shrugged nonchalantly. "So take her..."

Cass gasped, the sound full of hurt and fear as Lakai grinned in triumph and reached for her. His eyes, so like his son's, were already shining lewdly as he made no pretence of the fact he intended to strip her naked as soon as he got his hands on her.

Tiny's next words stopped him dead, cutting across the silence of the court like a whip. "But you do and I leave. I'll go so far away and hide so completely you'll never find me. Never drag me back to sit on that," he nodded towards the throne. He laughed, a short sharp sound of dry amusement.

"I'd even go as far as finding one of her people and getting them to turn me. How'd you like that, Dad? Your son, a bloodsucking leech. It's one for the history books, isn't it? Lakai the Corrupt wasn't even capable of siring a decent demon of a son. No, he managed to sire one who ran off to become a vampire."

All the blood drained out of Lakai's face as he stared at Tiny. "Don't be stupid. You can't. No demon can be made into a vampire."

Tiny held out his palm, displaying the marks there for all to see. "You sure about that, Dad? I'm already bonded to one."

We've already shared blood. So who knows what's happening in my body right now? The conversion's probably started already." He bared his teeth, feeling at his canines as though checking if they'd lengthened. "What do you reckon? They feel a bit longer to me. I think I'd only need another bite to cross over."

The demon king's expression wavered as he looked from one to the other. Sensibly, Cass remained quiet. Hopefully she realized what he was trying to do. If not, when they got out of here, if they got out of here, Tiny had a lot of explaining to do. Probably whilst maintaining a crotch-protecting crouch.

"You wouldn't."

Tiny's voice was hard and unemotional. "Try me."

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Chapter Seven

Oh God, I hope he knows what he's doing. Fear riveted Cass to the spot as Tiny faced down his father. Even through the terror, she noticed how alike the two men were. The Telosas were a very good-looking family.

"She didn't bond me, I bonded her. So your issue is with me, not Cassia..." He trailed off and looked at the challenge circle again, his meaning clear. Lakai's expression shifted, calculation showing stark on his face as he considered them both.

"Hmm, well... I see that as merely asserting your authority. You're my son, all right. Not many would stalk and lay claim to a vampire." Lakai grinned broadly and threw his arms open to hug his son. His lightning quick mood changes threatened to make Cass's head spin, but Tiny took it all in his stride and suffered the embrace. She did notice, though, he extricated himself as quickly as possible and took her hand. A rush of warmth hit her as his large hand surrounded hers, rough but protective at the same time.

"No! She's a vampire. She can't... you can't..." Forgotten behind them, Zarek's frustrated exclamation made Cass jump. The copper-skinned demon strode towards Lakai, his eyes beseeching. "Sire, she's a vampire bonded to your heir. Would you put a leech on the throne as queen?"

The room fell silent, deathly silent, as all eyes turned to Cassia. She swallowed in nerves. Now she knew what a goldfish felt like surrounded by a roomful of cats. This was

bad, very bad. For a moment Lakai had seemed amused by the whole situation, proud of his son's audacity in bonding a vampire. But the instant Zarek uttered the word leech—an insult to any vamp—centuries of interspecies hostility had joined the party, filtering into the room like a heavy, cloying perfume. Cassia swallowed again. She felt sick.

Lakai's head snapped around, his eyes blazing as he glared at the demon lord. "Ready to be rid of me so soon, Zarek? Perhaps you have a little ambition for my throne there yourself?" His voice dropped dangerously low, a subtle threat in his tone recognized by everyone in the room. Even Zarek—especially Zarek—his skin paling as Cass watched. Even though she didn't like him, Cass knew how he felt. Challenging the king, even inadvertently, wasn't the smartest of moves.

"No, no, sire," he hastened to reassure his king. "I merely meant that no demon prince has mated outside the blood before. Demons have needs, needs no non-demon could possibly comprehend."

"Hmm..." Lakai returned to his throne, his tall figure slouching elegantly across the crudely carved seat. Unlike the fine craftsmanship of the rest of the room and the corridors beyond, the throne itself looked to be carved out of a rock. "For once, Zarek, you have a point." His eyes narrowed on Tiny and Cass again. What had Zarek meant by "needs?" Was there something else she didn't know about, something freaky he needed he hadn't told her?

Whatever it was, she knew she'd do it without hesitation if she could, and if she couldn't, she'd go to the ends of the

earth to get it for him. That was the nature of the bond. Whether she'd picked him or not, he was the center of her world. She literally couldn't survive without him.

"Cass meets all my needs." Tiny's lip curled slightly as he answered Zarek, and the hard expression on his face promised retribution. "All of them. I don't need anyone else."

"Prove it."

The two quiet words hung in the air like a neon sign, flashing for all to see. Tiny sighed and turned towards her.

"What's happening?" she asked, looking about warily. She'd seen crowds act this way before. Right before said crowd turned into a lynch mob. Human lynch mobs, whilst not pleasant, could be dealt with. Cass didn't even want to see the demon version. She moved closer to Tiny as he ran his palms down her arms to take her hands in his. When she looked up his eyes were full of apology.

"I'm sorry, babe, but they want proof."

Cass frowned. "Proof of what?"

Tiny looked uncomfortable, savage flashes of color like banners on his cheeks. "Proof you can give me everything I need..." His voice trailed off, and he dragged her into his arms without warning. His lips sought her neck, brushing against the soft spot under her ear and making her knees buckle despite the danger they were in.

"Christ, Cass, you've got to have figured it out." Tiny groaned, burying his face into her neck. "I need... for you to be assertive."

"Is that it?" Cassia pulled back to look at him in surprise. He wanted her to boss him about? Her mind flashed back to

when she'd tied him to the bed—his instant, eager reactions... the rock-hard cock... the need and longing in his eyes. She'd put it down to being the first time after the club, but now she thought about it, it had also been the only time she'd taken charge. Really taken charge and tied him to the bed.

"Well, no. You need..." His color deepened. "...you need to make me come. Prove you can dominate me. Each demon has a weakness; that's mine. Fuck it!" he swore. "You shouldn't have to do this!"

"Problem?" Zarek's voice broke in, all eagerness and gloating triumph.

Cass straightened her back and glared at the other demon. She could do this. She had to do this, or she could kiss goodbye to her mate. And if that happened, as a bonded vampire, the rest of her long, long life would be meaningless.

"And why would there be a problem?" Cass arched an eyebrow coolly at Zarek. It was easy to channel her inner bitch with the demon lord and his ilk. Tiny shifted slightly, as though to answer, and she snapped her attention back to him. Looking him over, she allowed heat to fill her eyes, the heat she felt every time she was near him, but schooled her expression to an impassive mask.

"Did I say you could speak?" she demanded, her voice a harsh whip. Maybe a little overboard but she needed to do something and fast to establish the mood she needed. "No. I'll tell you when I want you to use your mouth, and what to use it for."

Role play. It was just role play, Cass told herself. She could do role play. After all, she played the mean bitch every time she donned a hunter's chains. She could do this.

She wasn't prepared for the darkness in the demon prince's eyes, or the excitement and longing written across his tight expression. His nostrils flared as the look on his face begged her to carry on.

Christ, he really did get off on this. A thrill shot through Cass as she realized the power she held over this powerful man, one far more powerful than she'd realized at first. Of course, she'd known from the outset he was something special, but she'd thought it was just her feminine side reacting to him. She'd always had a thing for a strong man, a bit of a bad boy, and they didn't come badder than the way he looked with his shaven head, the piercings and the tattoos.

She circled him like a shark circling prey. How the hell did she do this? She'd never had to act the dominatrix in front of a crowd. In the privacy of her bedroom with her "clothes" on was one thing, but to do it in normal clothes with people around was going to be difficult. She closed her eyes for a second and reached deep inside herself, knowing she had no choice.

How could she make him come whilst still being dominant? The quickest way to make him come was to suck him off, but being on your knees with a cock in your mouth wasn't exactly the dominant position she needed.

"Strip," she ordered, her voice a cold, hard reflection of her normal tones. To most she would have sounded like the ice queen she meant to. Out of the corner of her eye she

noticed more than one of the demons surrounding them flinch in response. Interesting, perhaps a need to be dominated was common amongst them. Despite her act, someone who knew her well would hear the underlying tension and worry in her tone.

Tiny was eager to comply. His jacket hit the floor a second later, followed by the T-shirt he all but tore from his torso. He flexed his shoulders, the sleek muscles rippling under his satin skin as his hands reached for his belt buckle. She let him. She stood with her hands on her hips arrogantly, and her mouth watered as she watched his strong fingers work the heavy buckle.

She knew how clever those fingers were and what they could do to her body, the pleasure they could bring. Arousal shot through her body. She wanted him, pure and simple. Embarrassment shot through her when she realized she didn't even care there were people in the room watching them. Somehow that added an illicit thrill, her panties dampening as he held her eyes, pulling the belt slowly free, the sexual tension between them mounting to unbearable levels.

The guy was a tease and he damn well knew it.

"That's enough. Hands on top of your head and spread 'em." Her voice was husky with need but wavered as the audience pressed forward a little, breaking the spell. How many people were in here watching them? The small crowd that had been in here when they arrived seemed to have doubled in size, as though word had gotten out something was going down in the throne room, and all the voyeurs had emerged out the woodwork.

"At me, babe, concentrate on me." His voice brought her eyes back to him. "Look at what you're doing to me."

Her gaze followed his downwards, past the sculptured planes of his chest and over his toned stomach. How the hell had she managed to catch the attention of a guy like this? Hell, with a presence like he had, he should be on the screen. He sucked a sharp breath in as her gaze travelled over him. Her attention was hijacked by the thin line of dark hair which trailed down the center of his stomach and disappeared under the waistband of his jeans. She ached to follow it with her lips and tongue, nuzzling down his toned stomach to push the denim aside until she could release the hard cock, pressing against the fabric.

"Stay still. Don't move. Understand?" Her voice threatened dire retribution as she slid to her knees. All else fell away as she reached for the snaps at his fly. Screw how it looked, she was in control here.

He nodded silently, jumping a little as her fingertips brushed his hard stomach. The muscles flexed in reaction as she snapped open each fastener one after the other. He went commando so the denim parted easily, his cock bursting free into her hands. Cass murmured appreciation in the back of her throat and licked her lips. There was something about giving head she liked, something about the feel of a rigid cock in her mouth or the pulse of blood so close calling out to her in an erotic siren's song. Whatever, it made her pussy clench hard with need and her fangs ache as they dropped into her mouth ready and waiting.

Holding his eyes she opened her mouth and licked slowly along the underside of his shaft.

He swore as she swirled her tongue about the swollen purplish head. Fingers closing around the base of his cock, she held him still as she explored, taking her time to enjoy him at her leisure. A wave of... something rose around them, something dark and heated, something new. Cass snapped her eyes open in surprise as it brushed against her skin, like the touch of a lover's fingers. What the hell?

She stilled in wariness, her tongue flicking out across him as she opened her senses. It was the same buzz she always felt about demons, but instead of feeling wrong, it felt familiar and comforting, like the pleasant tingle she always felt when she was around Tiny but stronger. The beat of his heart sounded in her ears, the rush of blood through his veins pulsing in the same rhythm. His magic, it had to be.

She relaxed and closed her eyes, a murmur of pleasure in the back of her throat as she slid her lips over him and finally took him deep inside her mouth.

"Oh fuck, yeah, baby, do that more."

She worked him with her lips and tongue, using all the knowledge she'd gathered the night before along with every dirty little trick she knew, some she'd not yet used on him. She'd been told she was good at this and by God she intended to prove it. Not to the demons pressing around them, but to her mate.

The crowd around them ceased to matter. All that mattered was the thick cock in her mouth and the man it belonged to. All that mattered was his pleasure and bringing

him to the edge of his control, proving her own power over him.

She pulled back to tease him with soft licks and nibbles. His respiration shortened and became harsher, his heart pounding. She felt his movement before he dropped his hands, his fingers about to slide into her hair to hold her in place.

She moved her mouth off him, eliciting a moan of protest, and gave him a sharp slap on his thigh. "Did I tell you to move? Hands back on your head, and don't come until I say you can."

A shudder racked his heavy frame as he locked his fingers back over his shaven scalp. Curses escaped his lips as she leaned forward again and rewarded him with a quick flick of her tongue.

"Quiet," she ordered as she cupped his balls. "You know what I'm going to do with you?" she asked between quick licks and even quicker sucks. "I'm going to make you beg. Turn you on so much you can't think of anything but my mouth on you, my lips around you and my tongue across you."

He groaned again, his hips thrusting forwards to try and get more of his cock in her mouth. "Don't stop."

She smiled as he jerked in her hands, tension in every line of his body. He was close but not there yet. She wanted him closer.

She licked one more time, her tongue circling him before her head bobbed forwards and she took him deep again. This time they both moaned, locked in their own sensual world.

Her hands smoothed over him and pumped his shaft in unison with her mouth on him. He resorted to reciting the seven times table, every cord in his body standing out as he fought off the climax fast approaching—the climax she'd told him he couldn't have until she said so.

His erection swelled in her mouth, beads of pre-cum warning her she didn't have much time. Biting back her own frustration, Cass pulled away and stood gracefully.

His eyes were closed, a muscle jumping in his jaw the only movement in his body as he fought for control. Well, apart from the throb of the big vein across the top of his thick erection. Cass licked her lips at the sight but turned and looked over her shoulder at Lakai.

"You wanted proof?" She spread her hand in a gesture towards the demon prince as motionless as a statue, a work of erotic art with his legs spread and his manhood jutting out proudly. "I give you dominance. Seren, do you want to come?" she asked softly.

All eyes focused on the still figure in the middle of the room. He opened his eyes slowly, their azure color a maelstrom of need. "Yes," he rasped, his body unnaturally still as beads of sweat broke out on his forehead.

"Now?" she pressed, hating herself when he was in so much need.

"Yes," he growled, his jaw clenching. "Damn it, let me come. I can't until you say... please, Cass," he begged, a real note of torture in his voice.

Cass felt awful and elated in the same moment. That he trusted her enough to let her bring him to this point in front

of others brought tears to her eyes and a fresh wave of liquid heat between her thighs.

"Drop your arms, don't touch yourself." She stepped behind him and kissed his shoulder as she peeked over it at the demon king. Her hands snaked around Tiny's waist and grasped his straining cock. She pumped the satin shaft a couple of times, feeling the slick evidence of his excitement and need.

"Come. Come now."

He trembled and turned his head to claim her lips in a brief, torrid kiss. Then his hips thrust harder against her hand as his cock jerked and pulsed against her hold. His whole body went rigid and he tore his mouth from hers, a ragged cry escaping his lips as he came in her hand.

"Fucking hell, don't stop, Cass. Please don't stop," he begged as she continued to work his cock. Cum splattered up across his stomach, covering her hand, but she ignored it and concentrated on the strong throbbing between her fingers, intent on wringing every last bit of pleasure from his climax. When the last shudder washed through him he groaned and sagged against her.

Tenderly she cradled him in her arms, never more grateful for the strength granted by her vampire blood than at that moment, and raised her eyes to meet Lakai's. Was she imagining it or was there a new respect there?

"And that is all the show you perverts are getting," she announced. She stood Tiny back upright when she was sure he had his balance back and stepped around him. With a graceful movement, she scooped up his discarded shirt and

handed it to him, standing in front of him whilst he cleaned himself up.

Lakai chuckled and addressed his son. "Feisty little thing, isn't she?"

"You have no idea." Tiny's lips quirked as he dropped the shirt unheeded to the ground and buttoned his jeans. If he was embarrassed about being brought off in front of a crowd he wasn't showing it. For some reason that excited Cass even more.

"And sorry," he added, as Lakai opened his mouth, a sly expression crossing his face. "I'm not sharing. She's all mine."

Lakai blew out a sigh, his breath stirring the long strands of hair about his face. "Can't blame a guy for trying. But tell me—is she worth your birthright?"

"Meaning?"

"Don't be dense, Seren. Zarek was right; you know the people will never accept a vampire as queen. So you need to make a choice, the vamp or the throne." The demon king sat back, his expression smug, as though he already knew what choice his son would make.

Cass caught her breath, not daring to look at Tiny. Misery closed her throat over. Put like that, he was going to choose the throne. Who would choose her as mate when it meant they would lose everything? And if he turned his back on her that was it. She was bonded to him; he might be able to walk away but she couldn't. She would never respond sexually to another man, only her mate.

Deception and Desire
by Mina Carter

A large hand curling about hers made her jump. She looked up into Tiny's eyes. Slowly a smile crept over his lips, one of promise and love. "Come on, sexy, we have some unfinished business—and this time you get to use those chains."

With that Prince Seren turned his back on his birthright and walked out of his father's throne room to be with the woman he loved.

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Mina Carter

Usually I hate talking about myself. In any conversation I'm always trying to find out about the other person. People are fascinating to me and, yeah, I'm a people watcher. ;)

OK, me. About me... I'm short, dark-haired and British. The rest is subject to change without notice. I'm quite possibly insane, and I'm a bit of a control freak when it comes to organization. Although this doesn't mean I can keep a room tidy, it does mean I know just about where everything is in it.

I love to write, always have. I write primarily romance, which can span over paranormal, urban fantasy, contemporary and even sci-fi but always it's about a romance. So, whether it's brooding bad boy vamps or handsome starship captains, you'll always find a healthy dose of the alpha male in my stories and the women strong enough to tame them.

When I'm not writing, I'm addicted to Photoshop and online rpg's. I virtually live online so the chances of catching me lurking around a forum or two are good.

You can read what I get up to daily on my Blog (mina-carter.com/) or on twitter ([MinaCarter](https://twitter.com/MinaCarter)). Or feel free to contact me at mina@mina-carter.com.