

# Knocking on Demon's Door

*Cathryn Fox*

Demon hunter Detective Michelle never thought she'd be working with a demon during her undercover assignment at a Canadian ski resort. Blake Ashen might only be half-demon, but he exudes full-demon charisma and lust.

Michelle needs to discover why so many women are dying and going missing at the resort. She has no choice but to form an alliance with Blake, who is having a seriously strong effect on her libido. Forced to pretend they're lovers, the two get up close and personal and Michelle begins yearning for a taste of him. In no time at all, the woman in her overrules the cop and she finds herself knocking on a demon's *bedroom* door, where she discovers the man is far more potent than the demon.

When Michelle gets drugged and dragged to an underground cavern where unsuspecting women become victims, will her trust in Blake prove her damnation or salvation?

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication

[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

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ISBN 9781419925061

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Edited by Briana St. James

Cover art by Syneca

Electronic book publication February 2010

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are productions of the author's imagination and used fictitiously.

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**Cathryn Fox**

## *Dedication*

To Briana, for loving my concept and helping me make this story shine.

## *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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## Chapter One

Blake Ashen dried a shot glass as he glanced around the ski resort lounge which was strategically situated in the valley between two towering Canadian mountains. He placed the glass on the rack and reached for another while he catalogued the room and took in the perfect little patrons with their perfect little smiles and their perfect outfits and matching accessories. Even though outwardly the resort looked like a dream vacation destination specifically designed for the rich and bored, Blake instinctively knew there was a hell of a lot more going on in the resort than met the eye. Damn if he didn't plan to get to the bottom of matters.

He swallowed as he turned his focus to his own clothes and the crisp tailored work shirt and pleated dress pants that made him feel about as comfortable as a Saint Bernard on a Maui beach. Despite playing the part, and fitting the image associated with the resort's refined, upper-crust bartender, Blake would be the first to admit that he was far from perfect, but still, he had his pride.

And since swallowing that pride wasn't normally his thing, he'd found himself in trouble a time or two. Captured

in the crosshairs, despite his rather...let's just call them...unusual abilities. Then again, perhaps it was because of them.

Yeah, trouble and Blake were old friends. He had the scars to prove it. Some lacerations inflicted by the cops themselves, and others given by the convicts he'd been locked up with.

And they called Blake the monster.

But today was different. Today he was swallowing and he was swallowing hard. He had no choice in the matter. Especially if he wanted to find his twin sister alive. If that meant dressing the part and doing exactly what his boss told him to do—when he told him to do it—in order to prove his unequivocal loyalties, he'd shut up and do it without question. He hadn't spent months getting close to Trevor Black, owner of the exclusive ski resort, in an attempt to discover what went on in his underground caverns only to let his explosive temper ruin everything. Cass and he only had each other and he wasn't about to let anything stand in the way of finding her.

Not even his pride.

Bile rose in his throat and turned his stomach, a familiar reminder that this was all his fault. He hadn't kept

as close to Cass as he should have. After all, in this crazy fucked-up world they needed each other's support for survival. She'd taken off a few years ago after their mother had died. Needed to find her place, she'd said. Heck, who was he to stop her? They all had their own demons to fight, so to speak. At first she'd called and checked in with him every few months, but he'd begun to worry when her calls suddenly stopped. Being her twin—not to mention their “abilities”—gave him a strong psychic connection to her. He could feel her emotions and catch fleeting images of her life in fast forward. It was those images that had warned of danger. That was when his hunt for her began.

The cops had never done a damn thing to help him in the past, so seeking their assistance was out. His own research and mental glimpses into her life had enabled him to track Cass to this ski resort hidden amidst the Canadian mountains, far away from civilization. With the retreat smack-dab in the middle of nowhere, it was the perfect spot for human monsters to hang out and go undetected as they engaged in every degenerate activity known to mankind.

Blake finished drying a glass and nodded to the twenty-something man who'd just stumbled up to the bar, his eyes a tad too glossy from the last double shot of whiskey that he'd downed in record time. Blake didn't bother to sniff him. He already knew the guy was just a regular old red-blooded



Canadian. No demon blood there. Not a drop.

Lucky bastard.

Not that any demons sidled up to his bar for a drink, however, especially in the light of day. They didn't. Full-blooded demons could only come out at night. Few humans had the ability to see them, and those who did surely wished they hadn't. Nothing good ever came from a human interacting with a demon. And he should know. Human and demon alike considered him no good. Besides his sister the only other one who'd ever believed in him or showed him any kindness was his mother, and she hadn't exactly been unbiased.

As a receiver of energy, a "seer"—more in tune with the spiritual world and their frequency than others—she was one of the few who had the talent to "see" monsters.

But look where that got her, a single mom in hiding, raising two monster babies. Not that anyone could blame her for being lured in by one. Blake knew the power a demon had over a human woman. Hell, he had it himself when he wanted to use it. Charming, charismatic, fiery passion; no one had the strength to resist such temptation. But despite giving in to the lure of a demon and knowing what her offspring were, his mother had reared them with love. She'd taught them to look for the best of both their

worlds in themselves, not the worst, and had given them affection while trying to find ways to help them control their excessive emotions and strength. It was her strength that had helped Blake resist the unrelenting temptation of the Demon world and all its fixes.

Cass and he had always been close, counting on each other for support in a cold, unfriendly world where humans were quick to hunt and kill anything perceived as different. She'd always been the stronger of the two of them and was the one who'd managed to stay out of trouble—as an adolescent, Blake had a little too much of the pleasure seeker in him. Their mother's death had taken its toll on Cass. When she'd died she'd taken a piece of Cass with her and it had left his sister trying to find her place in society that wanted nothing to do with her. Blake understood her pain and her inherent need to acquire a sense of belonging, but her quick departure left him feeling especially alone in this hostile world. She felt the emptiness too, he'd sensed it. He also sensed something else, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. Which made him really, really afraid that trouble had finally caught up with Cass. And the worst part of it was, he couldn't be sure which world it had found her in.

“What can I do for you, Mac?” Blake wondered why the guy thought alcohol, being a depressant and all, would help numb the pain. But who was Blake to pass judgment? What

the guy did and how he handled his problems were between him and his god.

From what Blake had come to learn, Mac had lost his girlfriend the year before. She'd died on the slopes, been airlifted to the hospital and cremated before he'd even had a chance to say goodbye.

Weird, eh?

Blake thought so too. He also thought sometimes life sucked like that.

Other times it just sucked.

The guy slammed his glass on the table. "I'll've another," he said, his words slurred over a thick tongue. He glanced at the small white nametag pinned to Blake's chest. "Put it on my tab, Ashen."

"Sure thing, Mac," Blake said with a smile. Like the good doobie he was, following his boss's instructions to the T, Blake turned his back and went to work on fixing the drink, ignoring the fact that the poor bastard could barely stand. But since the boss's motto was, never send them away sober, without a drunken slur, or with money in their pocket, he poured. Blake was pretty sure this guy was batting three for three.

“Ashen...what kinda names is...is...that?” the man slurred.

It was a nickname he'd given to himself when he was an angry, confused kid. A shen was a demon. Ashen. He'd kept the nickname as a constant reminder of what he was, who he was and where he'd come from. Never for one minute could he be allowed to believe that he fit in, not in the human world or in the demon world. He'd pretty much ruled out the small bungalow, white picket fence and two point four kids.

Nope, a wife and family weren't in the cards for him. Physical relationships he could do. But getting emotionally close to a woman and risking hurting her was a chance he wasn't about to take. If he grew soft, allowed his heart to rule his head, he might as well lay out a red welcoming carpet for his demon side at the same time. Like his mother had always cautioned, any weakness in his human half increased the power of his demon part, allowing it to grow stronger and overtake the man. Blake, wouldn't—couldn't—let that happen. Yeah, he was a monster, but despite what most thought of him, he wasn't a soulless monster who cared little about humanity. Which was what had led him into demon hunting in the first place. He'd made it his personal mission to rid the earth of every vile beast who though the night streets were their personal playground, because pure demons really were heartless

bastards who'd use any means to get what they wanted, including rape, torture and trickery. And the truth was, like any other human he'd been born with deep-seated feelings, but for humanity's sake, he just kept them in check at all times.

Ignoring Mac's question, Blake buried those dark thoughts in the recesses of his mind, plastered on a smile, turned back around and slid the glass across the mahogany bar.

"One whiskey, neat." So what if the glass contained only soda pop and Mac was too drunk to notice? Blake's deceptions were between him and his own god. Hell, even monsters were entitled to gods.

A quick glance at the clock told him he had less than a half hour to go before his evening meeting with Trevor. He fisted his hands and worked hard to calm himself. Hopefully what Trevor had to show him would answer his questions, and with any luck, those answers would lead him to his sister. Right now she needed him as much as he needed her. Of that he was certain.

A movement at the door caught his attention. He angled his head and watched a group of ski instructors pour in from the lobby. Laughing and jostling one another, they signaled the waitress to bring them drinks and then sat

at the corner booth.

Blake watched them for a moment, taking extra interest in the new instructor, noting with all his pleasure-seeking demon senses how there was something about her that separated her from the others. Snug jeans showed off the lush curve of her ass as she shimmied into the deepest corner and shed her ski jacket. Bare pink lips turned up to reveal perfect white teeth. It was all he could do not to run his tongue over his own as he thought about tasting her. Momentarily giving in to his wayward thoughts he let his glance race over her. The tight T-shirt she wore showed off firm breasts and hard nipples that he'd like to explore with his hands, his mouth, his tongue and had him conjuring up erotic images of their salacious bodies banging together. He put her somewhere in her mid twenties even though her fresh, girl-next-door looks made her appear years younger.

As his cock throbbed, common sense overrode his demon ones. He watched her body language. She sat with her back to the wall, cataloging her surroundings, taking careful stock of all its patrons. As she scanned the room her gorgeous green eyes latched on his. When her pupils dilated—an involuntary reaction undetectable by any human from this distance—and she quickly pulled her gaze from his, he stopped sucking air.

Surely to God she couldn't...

He clenched his jaw and forced himself to inflate his lungs—slow, calming, relaxing breaths to help center himself.

Damn it, this was not what he needed. Not now. Not with him so close to answers. He took a moment to study her, committing her features, her body language and her every nuance to memory in case he had to draw on them later. Young, attractive, flirty, she tossed her long blonde hair over her shoulder and laughed too loud, playing the part of a brainless ski bunny. But he knew the ski-bunny persona was all an act. His gut tightened and the demon blood raced through his system, bringing on a shudder. Much to his dismay, he knew that shudder had nothing at all to do with anger. Damn it...

He cursed himself for feeling aroused, interested and far more intrigued by her physical appearance than he would have liked, because the little bunny was nothing other than a cop. And if there was one thing he hated more than swallowing his pride...

Detective Michelle Simms, alias Sunny while undercover at the resort, forced herself not to show any outward hint of emotion when her gaze locked on the bartender's.

Nevertheless, she knew by the way he looked away too

fast, that the jump in her heart rate, the sudden sweat on her palms and the quick flash of heat between her legs hadn't gone unnoticed by him.

Michelle was good at her job. Damn good. No mere man could distract her from her work this easily. She knew, because plenty had tried in the past.

Yet this guy hadn't even tried and here she suddenly—incomprehensibly—found herself thinking about sex. Hot, sweaty—bang-you-up-against-the-wall—kind of sex. As warmth ambushed her pussy, her nipples tightened. Delicious images played out in her mind like an erotic slideshow—those firm lips of his pulling her hard buds between his mouth, licking and sucking, biting and nibbling, before he buried his face between the juncture of her legs, indulged in her pussy and brought her to orgasmic bliss.

Damn...

Michelle wasn't just a cop, she was a “seer” who secretly hunted things that went bump in the night—things that most humans had no idea existed—and if she didn't know better, based on her primal reactions to him, she'd think the bartender was a creature of the night. A vile, soulless demon. At that sobering thought her temperature spiked and caught her off guard. So did the shiver prowling through her—warning her.



Jesus, was it possible?

Trying to ignore her body's inconvenient reaction to him, she writhed uncomfortably and worked to dispel the desire parading through her veins. Plastering on a vapid smile, she returned to ski-bunny mode and joked with the other instructors seated around the table.

But still, she couldn't seem to get her mind off that bartender, or the possibility that he was a demon. Hell, she'd never seen a demon in the light of day before, let alone one holding down a job at an exclusive resort. She had to be mistaken. She just had to be. Then again, after some of the inexplicable things she'd witnessed over the years she was open to the possibility. Not to mention her body's knee-jerk reaction to him. She knew from experience that only a demon could instantly pull such a powerful sexual response from her.

She noted the way the other women in the room stared at him. He didn't do anything to encourage them. Simply by breathing, he drew the attention of all those around him. As desire continued to prowl through her, Michelle pulled in a clarifying breath of her own.

"Pretty hot, isn't he?" Tabby asked, catching where Michelle's glance kept straying.

It wasn't a good sign when even a self-absorbed

airhead like Tabby could pick up on her interest in the bartender.

“Who?” Michelle asked, faking ignorance as she turned her attention to her brand-new friend and temporary roommate for the duration of this assignment. Her mind raced. If the guy was a demon, how could all these people see him? Demons could only come out at night and could only interact with those few select who had the “gift” to see them. She knew, because she’d studied all manner of things that thrived in the dark. That was why she’d become a cop. Someone had to protect other innocent “seers” who didn’t know how to protect themselves.

Tabby pulled the elastic from her long auburn hair and let it tumble around her shoulders, offering Michelle a dazzling white smile that would have made her orthodontist proud. Michelle had only been at the resort for one day and had just met Tabby, but she knew her type all too well. Head cheerleader back in high school, dating none other than the star of the football team, belittling anyone who didn’t fit her standards—flirty, well built, popular, and lacking any real ambition—which made the assignment of fitting into the Bunny Club all the more challenging. Michelle was great at undercover work, but since she had little tolerance for brainless bunnies getting into the role was harder than she anticipated.

“His name is Blake Ashen. We call him Ash. And he’s a total badass,” Tabby purred, making no secret of how she knew and confirming what Michelle had already suspected. Every bunny in the resort had most likely sampled the dangerously handsome man. Tabby wet her painted lips, mischief lingering in her eyes. “As a matter of fact, I think he’s just the guy to initiate you into the Bunny Club.”

From what Michelle could tell the Bunny Club was one big, sex-crazed fraternity where nothing and no one was off limits. She shivered. She had a healthy enough appetite for sex, but she was choosy about her partners. Women like Tabby who thought they had the world by the ass had no idea how badly indiscriminate sex games could really end for them.

Tabby twisted on her stool to afford herself a blatantly sexual appraisal of the charismatic barkeep. “Well, well. It looks like he’s checking you out too, Sunny.” Tabby arched a perfectly manicured brow. “So what are you waiting for? Get on over there and get initiated, girlfriend.”

Encouragement sounded from the other bunnies around the table. “Go on, Sunny.”

She took a moment to mull it over and then as she warmed to the idea, she thought, why not? All they’d done was given her a good excuse to talk to him.

The initiation part she could do without.

Michelle eased herself from the table and made her way to the bar. As Ash stepped out from behind the counter to bring a patron a drink, her glance raced over his fine athletic body, dark hair and even darker eyes. His navy work pants hugged his body in all the right places and the crisp white dress shirt, with the sleeves rolled to the elbow, displayed scrumptious corded muscles. His heat reached out to her like a seductive weapon and sent her pulse skyrocketing. Acutely aware of the raw desire searing her insides as well as the hot moisture pooling in her pussy—and suspecting he was aware of it too—she paused for a moment to study the scars on his face and the symbolic Chinese god tattoo on his forearm. A demon with a god tattoo. He was either very confused or trying to balance the bad with the good.

If he was going for the balancing act he was wasting his time. Demons had no good in them. She should know. Her mother had been killed by one before Michelle had reached her teens, leaving her with an overbearing, overprotective father to rear her. As a teenager she hadn't been as sympathetic to that overprotectiveness as she should have been, considering he'd lost one woman and was trying his damndest not to lose another. Instead, she'd spent her days trying to get out from under his thumb and her nights learning all that she could about demons. Other than her

mother, who was also a “seer” she’d never told anyone she could “see” them, least of all her angry, disbelieving father who’d eventually given up on trying to shield her, turned to the bottle during her late teens and drank himself to death before her nineteenth birthday.

But just because the majority of the population weren’t tuned into their frequency and couldn’t see them prowling the nights, didn’t mean that demons didn’t exist. She blamed demons for her father’s self-destructive behavior every bit as much as for her mother’s death.

She slid onto the plush stool in front of the bar as Ash made his way back to his station. Her rebel years and her own ink gave her the perfect conversation starter.

“Nice tat,” she cooed, stepping into her Sunny role. Her gaze panned over his rock-hard body, then moved back to his face to linger around his sensual mouth—a mouth that could undoubtedly do the most delicious things to the hungry little spot between her legs and ignite every inch of her naked flesh. Good Lord... Pleasure shot through her and the sexual energy emanating off him had her clit swelling and knocked her off balance. She swallowed and as she reveled in the sensations she worked to find her next words. “Looks like Nathan Wong’s work.”

“Thanks,” he shot back and let his glance leisurely

move over her body in return, blatantly taking his time to peruse her every curve, specifically the swell of her breasts. The sudden image of him moving his cock in and out of her cleavage came out of nowhere and hit her like a supernova. She planted her hand on the bar and swallowed hard as she resisted the urge to squirm—right into his arms.

Even though she braced herself for it, a darkly seductive smile nearly dropped her to her knees. “You know Nathan?” he asked. Sultry heat lingered near her bellybutton for a moment, giving her the impression that he was checking out the butterfly tattoo beneath her body-molding sweater. Not that demons had the ability to do such a thing. They might have excessive emotions and strength, heightened senses, be able to move between worlds at will as they sought out pleasure and charm their way into most “seers” pants, but the one thing they didn’t have was x-ray vision.

“So do you? Do you know Nathan?” he asked again pulling her focus back.

A warm tingle moved through her, and as her nipples ached in a way they’d never ached before she nodded in response to his question.

His eyes left her belly and moved to her face. “I’ve showed you mine, are you going to show me yours?” His

wicked grin and the suggestion behind his words had her heart racing and her pussy dripping.

Concentrate, Michelle. Concentrate.

Without answering his question, she clamped her legs together, leaned across the bar and ran her index finger over his markings. When her finger touched his flesh, a soft yellow glow flashed in his eyes. The flash of color disappeared so quickly that, if she wasn't looking for it, she never would have seen it. She fought the urge to snatch her hand back, forcing herself to keep the intimate contact a bit longer. As her fingers played over his arm, any lingering doubts she had to his identity were instantly gone. Ash was most definitely a demon. The yellow glow in his eyes confirmed it.

He watched her as if he too was gauging her reactions.

"What does the symbol mean?" she asked, even though her studies into mythology had told her it was a Chinese god symbol used to ward off bad spirits.

"It means 'mother' in Chinese."

She supposed it didn't really matter why he would lie to her about such a little thing. He was a demon, after all. A demon who could walk in the day and cause a flash fire in her pussy without even trying. That quick color change in his

eyes had verified it. She'd gone up against enough of them to know that when they felt passion—either from anger or arousal—their eyes changed color. For a brief moment she wondered which one he felt when she touched him, then buried the stupid thought in favor of more important ones.

Forcing herself to return to professional mode, she took a moment to think things through. She didn't know how or why he was able to walk during the day. All she knew for certain was that where there was a demon there was danger and every instinct she owned told her to do something about it.

But if she wanted to find out why so many girls were supposedly dying on the slopes and going missing from this resort, she had to play by mortal rules this time. That meant killing him was out of the question. Too many employees would notice he was gone. She had to get close to him and stay there, no matter how much she despised him for what he was.



## Chapter Two

She knew.

Blake watched the way she watched him. His heightened senses and gut instinct told him she knew what he was, confirming his suspicions that she was indeed a “seer”. He took a moment to absorb and digest the turn of events. Everything from the way she acted, to her body language and the way her intelligent eyes surveyed him with careful precision—as well as every patron in the room—told him she was the farthest thing from a brainless bunny. Her every nuance alerted him to the fact that she was a damn cop. Hell, he’d been beaten around by enough officers to know when he was up against one. He considered that bit of information longer. So not only was she a cop pretending to be a bunny, she was a damn “seer” who knew what he was. And didn’t he just know that nothing good could come from that. As he took in her carefully concealed inquisitive look it occurred to him that she had to be wondering how he could day walk. He in turn was wondering what the hell she was after.

“I never did catch your name,” he said.

“It’s Sunny.”

Of course, he mused, resisting the urge to roll his eyes heavenward. Determined to find out if she was going to be trouble for him, he decided to draw her deeper into conversation. “What can I get you?”

She pouted plump, naked lips and his traitorous cock stood in salute. Instantly, his mind envisioned the image of that mouth wrapped around his dick. Fuck... This was so not the time for his pleasure-seeking senses to be taking over. After a quick glance at the bunny table she said, “I’ll have what they’re having.”

Blake glanced at the round of Daiquiris. “Strawberry?”

“Yeah, yummy,” she said, licking her lips. “My favorite.”

Blake didn’t take her for the kind of woman who drank girly drinks. She seemed more like a no-nonsense, Labatt’s Blue beer drinking kind of girl. His kind of girl... If she wasn’t a cop, that is.

As Blake went to work on the drink, he asked, “So what brings you to the resort?”

She batted long lashes over deep green eyes and tossed her blonde curls over her shoulder. Her actions seemed stilted, forced even, which led him to believe she

was having difficulty taking on her role as a bunny and dumbing herself down. Not much wonder. She was far too bright for such a portrayal, but despite her awkwardness, she still didn't fail to arouse the hell out of him. Since his unforgiving work pants left little to the imagination, he angled his body to hide his erection. What the hell was it about her that aroused him to the point of distraction and had him thinking about going against his own best interests and fucking her?

"I'm an instructor. Here for the ski season."

With a nod, he gestured to the group behind her. "Are you a live-in, like the others?"

Sunny angled her head and wiggled her fingers at her friends. "Yes. I'm Tabby's roommate."

He made a noise, a half grunt, a half chuckle and then said, "That should be interesting."

"Interesting?" Sunny pulled a face, obviously waiting for him to enlighten her.

Blake turned his attention to Mac, who was twirling his empty whisky glass on the bar. When Mac gestured to Blake for another, Blake again poured him a soda pop and slid it across the mahogany bar. "Right back at ya, Mac," he said and then leaned across the counter in front of Sunny to

pick up the conversation where they'd left off.

"Yeah, you two just don't seem like a good fit," he said, testing her.

Even though he could tell her mind was racing, she answered without a moment of hesitation. "Oh, Tabby and I are two peas in a pod, really. We both love to shop." She held her index finger out and began adding digits as she continued her litany. "We wear the same size clothes, have the same taste in food and," she stopped to pitch her voice low. Her smile was slow and inviting when she added, "The same taste in men."

The dilation of her pupils told another story. She wasn't into ski jocks or playboy bartenders.

He had to hand it to her, she was quick on her feet and despite the situation he found himself admiring her abilities. "What do you do in the off season?"

She gave a low throaty chuckle and in a movement that felt far too erotic to him, she tucked a wayward strand of hair behind her ear. The enticing scent of vanilla reached his nostrils, and he resisted the urge to groan in sweet agony. Vanilla. His favorite. Of all the fucking scents she had to be wearing...

"You're a man of many questions."

He shrugged. "Comes with the job, I guess."

"And here I thought bartenders were supposed to just listen." Her sexy grin made his blood pulse hot.

Okay, she had him there. Despite himself he smiled back, enjoying her quick-witted humor. Damn. He shouldn't be smiling. He hated this woman. Or rather, he hated the cop in her. But much to his dismay something in his gut softened, telling him she was as out of place in this fucked up world as he was. "Okay, you talk, I'll listen."

She took a tiny sip of her drink and went on to explain, "Just because it's the off season in Canada, doesn't mean it's the off season everywhere. I usually travel to Thredbo Resort in Australia and instruct there. Have you ever been? It's quite beautiful. If you've never been you should go. I'm sure they are always looking for great bartenders." He noted the way she quickly redirected the conversation, and decided to let her ramble to see where it would lead them.

"Yeah, I've been," was all he offered.

After a moment of silence she asked, "So what do you do when you're not bartending?"

*Hunt for my sister, avoid the cops and kill as many heartless, full-blooded demons who find their way to earth*

*as I can. Demons that want me to be their fucking mule.*

Just then Blake glanced up to see Tony, his replacement, move toward the bar. Knowing he had to ditch Sunny before she got in the way of his investigation, and his upcoming meeting with Trevor, Blake offered her a smile full of sensual promise and gave her the answers any bunny would want to hear. “I play.”

Except it wasn't playtime. It was time to meet with Trevor and find out what the scary bastard was up to.

Michelle watched him close out his cash and switch shifts with the next bartender. As the two men exchanged a few words, Michelle studied the easy way Ash moved and the way his hard muscles rippled beneath his snug work shirt. Everything about him wreaked havoc on her senses and toyed with her suddenly overactive libido. Her tongue darted out to wet her dry lips as his body tortured hers in the most delicious ways. She clenched her fingers—as well as her legs—and sucked in air, cursing her all-too-human response to him. He was throwing her off her game, and in a resort where women were going missing, she needed all her wits about her.

She marshaled her thoughts and went back to observing him. She put him to be around six foot four, which was much taller than her five-foot eight frame. Even though

she was thoroughly trained in the field of martial arts, she knew it would take more than her skill and strength to take down this demon. She made a mental note to re-dip her dagger in holy water, her weapon of choice when going up against monsters.

Then let him see how well balanced that god tattoo left him.

Mac, who'd seemed to take up permanent residence at the bar, sidled up to her. Despite the fact that she clutched an icy strawberry drink, still full, he asked, "Can I get you a refill?" and then proceeded to rattle the melting ice in his empty glass. The sour smell of stale whiskey on his breath nearly knocked her over.

"No, I'm good, thanks." For a quick moment she risked her undercover role by stepping out of character and conjuring a polite smile, her heart and sympathy reaching out to him. Since he wasn't a ski jock, or a hot bartender, she suspected any other bunny would have immediately dismissed him by offering their back. But she recognized this guy from her preliminary research. He'd lost his girlfriend a few months ago on the slopes, and guessed he was looking for answers in the bottom of a bottle. But his girlfriend wasn't the only one to mysteriously die and be whisked off for cremation, and Michelle didn't believe for one minute that all their deaths were from accidents, which

was why she insisted on being involved in the investigation. Hopefully by the end of the week she'd have some answers, and get to the bottom of their disappearances.

When she twisted sideways she noted the way Ash's eyes narrowed as he watched her private exchange with Mac. The odd way he was looking at Mac—sympathetic and sincere—made her feel a little vulnerable, a little disconcerted.

"Well, I need another," Mac said, wobbling. Michelle reached out to help him right himself, thankful that Ash had switched him to soda pop earlier. Which begged the question, why would a pleasure-seeking, soulless monster care if Mac drank himself to death?

"I got you covered," the new bartender said, grabbing the bottle of Jack Daniels. Before he could pour, Ash came around the counter and nudged the guy.

"I thought you were going to show me your new snowboard."

"I was?" Mac asked. His brow furrowed as though working hard to find an answer through the fog.

"Yeah, come on, you said it was back at your room." Giving him little choice in the matter, Ash hooked an arm under Mac's and hauled him to his feet. Michelle stared on



in mute fascination.

Ash's hand brushed against Michelle's as he maneuvered around her and her body instantly reacted to his touch. Lust sang through her veins, reminding her how long it had been since she'd felt a man between her legs. But this was no ordinary man and his pull was strong—stronger than any demon's she'd ever felt before. She knew if she wanted to walk away from the resort alive, she needed to be extra careful around him and gain some control over her more basic instincts. And she wasn't talking about the ones that nagged her to kill him.

Bleary eyed, Mac tried to find his balance. If it wasn't for Ash holding him, he would have folded facedown on the floor.

After they rounded the corner and disappeared from her line of sight, Michelle stood, waved to the bunnies—who all undoubtedly thought she was following Ash back to his room—and slipped out the side door. In a sense, she was following Ash, and would continue to do so until he led her to his room. She needed to keep a close eye on him and to get into his room. Trailing him was purely for research purposes—to determine the depth of his involvement into her investigation into the missing girls, naturally—and had nothing to do with the heat he roused in her or the shivers of warm need rushing through her body

and encouraging her to go against her own best interests and give into her womanly desires.

Damn him...

Too bad she couldn't share her information about Blake Ashen with Detective Dan Shay, her partner on the case. No one at the precinct knew she was a "seer", nor did they believe in such a thing. If she told her Captain, or Dan, that there was a demon on the loose at the resort, her next assignment would be with the department psychologist.

As she moved through the main lobby she spotted Dan coming in from the slopes, surrounded by a group of bunnies. All dressed in the latest fashion, he was masquerading as a ski jock—not too far of a stretch for him either. She tried to get his attention, but he wouldn't even spare her a glance. Instead he indulged in the bunnies as they lavished him with attention. Not that she cared if he was purposely avoiding her. She wasn't a big Dan fan. Michelle was the one who'd pushed for a full investigation into the missing girls. Dan, on the other hand, thought the assignment was a waste of his precious time and had tried to discourage the captain from any further involvement. Since they'd arrived that morning, he spent his time skiing and playing, and subscribed to the theory that women died on the slopes all the time simply because they couldn't conquer the hills quite like a man.

Which led to her main reason for disliking him. He hadn't wanted a female partner, or to go undercover with her, the sexist pig. She'd taken down countless demons all by her little old feminine self, so coming up against a man who felt women belonged at home, barefoot and pregnant, irritated the hell out of her. When it came to Dan, she had better places to plant her bare foot.

She turned her thoughts back to Ash, watching him guide Mac to the elevator. Other than Ash being a demon she had no proof that he was responsible for the missing girls. Since she couldn't come out and tell Dan that Blake Ashen was her main suspect she knew she was on her own. Soliciting help from anyone else was out of the question, too. After all, to ninety-nine percent of humans, monsters of the nonhuman variety didn't exist. The other one percent knew better.

Since she was lucky enough—or unlucky, depending on which way you looked at it—to be amongst the minority, by the time this assignment was over she planned to make sure there was one less monster for humanity to contend with.

## Chapter Three

Blake nodded to the two guards standing outside Trevor's office. "The boss is expecting me," he said, inwardly sizing up the men. Yeah, he could take them down, limb by limb if need be. It might be a tough fight, but certainly doable.

Blake was sure Trevor's need for bodyguards had something to do with the goings-on in the underground caverns. Otherwise, why would a hotel owner need this kind of protection?

From what Blake could tell Trevor had inherited the resort from his deceased brother a few years ago, right around the time the girls started going missing, or started dying on the slopes as most believed. At least that was how the dates on the coroner's reports read. Blake suspected that something entirely different was going on and concluded that whatever underhanded dealings Trevor had been involved in before, he must have brought them with him. That, and his connections ran deep.

One of the guards opened the door, turned sideways and cleared a path. Blake stepped through the threshold

and glanced around, his gaze coming to rest on the burly man sitting behind a massive mahogany desk.

Trevor smiled and motioned him forward. “Ash,” he said. “Right on time.”

As Blake met the man’s steely eyes, he put on his best “loyal employee” face. “Five o’clock means five o’clock, sir. Anything else is unacceptable.”

That seemed to please him. “So it is, so it is. Please have a seat.”

Blake lowered himself into the plush chair across from Trevor and noted the rather large file with his name on it.

Trevor tapped a thick finger on the manila file and got right to the point. “So it seems you’ve had a run in with the law a time or two. Probably have a real hate for cops.”

“Yes, sir. I hope that doesn’t affect my position—”

Trevor leaned forward, his pale, cold eyes cutting him off. “Oh but it does.”

“Sir, it—”

Trevor held his hand up. “Relax, Ash. What it gets you is a promotion.”

Blake didn't have to fake relief as his mind raced, pleased at the prospect of being brought into Trevor's organization. It was his ticket to uncovering the truth, finding his sister and exposing this place for whatever it really was.

"A promotion?"

"You see, Ash." Trevor paused to push back in his chair. The leather squeaked under his weight. "I've been watching you. Carefully." With a nod, Trevor glanced at the door where his guards stood waiting. "Had Lex and Neal watching you too, and you're just the man I've been looking for."

Blake offered him his best hardass face. "No matter what it is, I'm your man."

Trevor flashed a grin and said, "That's exactly what I wanted to hear." He stood. "Come with me."

Blake, along with the two guards, followed Trevor to the bowels of the hotel where they met with two other guards. Blake had seen the guards traveling to and from the basement numerous times before, but had never gone beyond the hotel boundaries himself. After all, very little got past him and he'd been kicking around long enough to know that Trevor and his goons had been watching him, which was why he'd never attempted to explore the

underground himself. He was trying to prove his loyalties, and if he got caught snooping, it would surely blow his chance of being brought into the organization.

A long cold cinder-block corridor led them to a back room. Trevor nodded to the guard to open the door. Once inside it took two locked knees to keep Blake upright, and an iron-clad stomach to keep his lunch down. Fuck, no... In less than a heartbeat, Blake had figured out what the sick bastard was up to.

Shivers moved down his spine and he felt like he'd been sucker-punched as he surveyed his surrounding and took in the bed, props and camera equipment. As emotions rose sure and swift, they clogged his throat and caused his insides to shake. He worked to tamp down his emotions. Jesus Christ, now was certainly not the time to let his demon loose. He needed all his human wits about him and couldn't afford to let his defenses down if he was going to protect the innocents and save them from Trevor's monstrous hands.

As his blood curdled and everything inside him dictated that he rip these three to shreds here and now, he worked to school his features. Fuck, there was a special place in hell for guys like Trevor. Blake vowed then and there to make sure no woman ever set foot in the place again. His new mission was to expose the bastard and make sure

Lucifer lavished him with the kind of attention a bastard like Trevor truly deserved.

His nostrils flared, his body tightened, and with effort, he resisted the urge to blink his eyes in distress as he thought about the suffering Trevor was inflicting upon all these innocent girls. And so help him, if he'd touched a hair on his sister's head, he'd personally torture the monster until he prayed for death.

Trevor turned to speak to one of the guards and Blake took that opportunity to pull himself together. Trying for casual, yet feeling anything but under the circumstances, Blake drew deep breaths, straightened his shoulders and tried to keep the disdain from his voice when he turned back to face his boss. "Nice place you got here."

Trevor laughed, the sound menacing. "I thought you might like it." He shot Lex a glance and ordered, "Roll the reel."

Oh, sweet fuck, no...

Lex dimmed the lights, pulled down a projection screen and flicked on the projector.

Blake's nostrils flared. Knowing Trevor was carefully gauging his reactions, he folded his hands under his arms and widened his stance to keep himself from wavering. It



took all his effort to keep himself together and fight the urge to look away. For one agonizing minute he listened to screams wailing from a nearby speaker and it took every ounce of human willpower he possessed not to let the rage unfurling inside him take over. The sound boiled his blood and raised his anger to near uncontrollable proportions. But soon those screams turned into tiny sobs and those tiny sobs ended on a gasp. Instantly, his vision went fuzzy around the edges. As his entire world tilted on its axis equal mixtures of sadness and shock moved through him. Fuck, it was worse than he thought. The bastard wasn't just filming x-rated flicks, he was making snuff movies.

Fierce rage came on the heels of his realization. It prowled through his bloodstream and elicited a tremor from deep within. As chaos erupted inside him it became harder and harder to think. Jesus H. Christ, he'd seen a lot of shit in his day, but never had he witnessed anything so inhumane and barbaric. Like he'd always known, sometimes it was hard to distinguish who really was the monster.

“So you like what you see?”

Blake watched the way the bodyguards hovered nearby, ready to draw their weapons if Blake showed any sign of protest. He cleared his throat but also noted that his voice didn't quite sound like his when he said, “What I see

is money.”

Trevor nodded his approval. “Good. Your new job is to audition women. I’ve seen the way they watch you. Christ, they’re drawn to you like flies to shit.” When Trevor laughed at his own expression, the guards laughed with him. A show of respect, he presumed, for a man who deserved none. What he deserved was a life of pain and suffering and Blake wanted to be the guy to give it to him.

“I’m pretty good with the ladies,” Blake said, biting down on his temper. He would have exploded then and there, tearing the bastard to shreds, but that wouldn’t help him discover his sister’s whereabouts. And if he wanted to protect all the other unsuspecting women by putting a halt to Trevor’s productions, he had to play along. For the time being.

“We’re looking for women with little to no family, but if they’re really good,” he stopped to wink, and then added, “thanks to the coroner, we’re able to work around it. If you know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean. I know exactly what you mean,” Blake said. Under the guise of anticipation, he gave a wicked grin and scanned the room, memorizing the layout in case he needed to draw on it later.

After they exchanged a few more instructions one of the

guards herded them all back out into the long hallway, locking the doors behind them. Darkness had already fallen by the time Blake was guided back to the main lobby and given the understanding that he'd begin auditioning women immediately.

Trevor turned to him. "I'll be away for the next few days. You can check in with Lex and Neal to let them know how things are progressing, and now that you're on the team, we're moving you onto the top floor, to our VIP suite." He handed him a new keycard.

"My room is fine," he assured him.

"Take it," Trevor demanded. "Nothing but the best for all those working on my special project."

When Blake reluctantly accepted the key card, Trevor nodded toward the underground entrance. "They'll be waiting." Before Trevor turned to make his way back to his office he added, "And we'll be watching you, Ash."

With those words of warning bouncing around inside his head, and fighting down a surge of rage, Blake made his way back to his old room to sort through matters. Had the bastards gotten their hands on his sister? Cass sure fit Trevor's specific requirements. A low growl rumbled in his throat and he began to think, to strategize, to figure a way to shut down his operation for good. Not just for his sister,

but for all those poor, unsuspecting women who'd gotten more adventure than they'd bargained for.

When Blake opened the door to his room, his skin prickled in warning. Two faint yet distinct scents curled around him. One was from a demon. The other was the enticing aroma of vanilla.

Preparing himself for a confrontation, his gaze darted around the small room, but his search came up empty. Blake stepped inside and closed the door behind him. The demon he couldn't do anything about. It had probably tried to find itself a fix without having to go through the hassle of dealing with Blake. The bastard would find him sooner or later, when he was desperate for drugs, although Blake had never dealt heroin for them in the past, nor did he intend to do it now. What he did intend to do was drive that fact home in a manner the demon and its friends would never forget.

The vanilla, on the other hand...

If Blake disliked the thought of a demon invading his space, he hated the thought of a cop even more. Especially when he was now hip deep in something that could not only get his ass nailed to the wall, but leave him dangling there like a poster boy for fucked-up good intentions.

Except for a picture of a striking woman with physical characteristics similar to Ash's, the search of his room turned up nothing. As Michelle committed the picture to memory she wondered if Ash was related to the woman. She replaced the picture, her mind racing, noting how familiar she looked. Was she one of the missing?

After a quick trip back to her own room, Michelle logged onto her computer to check through her reports. Less than a half an hour later she'd found the woman's picture, and learned that Cassandra Smith had gone missing a couple of months ago. Her disappearance was reported by a man she'd dated only a few times while working at the resort. With no known family to contact, her file was simply added to the rest of the missing cases.

Michelle then proceeded to do a check on Blake Ashen. Shock watered her limbs. He had a rap sheet a mile long, which meant he'd walked the daylight hours of the mortal world for a very long time. A hot temper as a youth had earned him a place in a correctional center. Michelle spent an extra moment absorbing that tidbit of information. She had to admit, Ash's clear, dark, straightforward eyes didn't give him the look of a seasoned criminal. At least, not a human one.

Michelle grabbed her parka, strapped her dagger to

her hip and then went to meet up with Dan to discover if he had any new information to share. Except when she found him in the bar, still surrounded by bunnies, she suspected he hadn't even tried to investigate, and undoubtedly considered this trip nothing other than a vacation.

Disgusted with her partner, she made her way back to the main lobby, sat on the sofa and grabbed the newspaper. If Ash made a move, she planned to follow.

For the next two days while Dan did what he did best, avoid her while he indulged in all the resort had to offer, she watched Ash, studying his habits and his movements. When he ate, she ate. When he slept, she slept. When he worked at night, she sipped drinks with the other bunnies, keeping tabs on him. She'd yet to see him with a woman. In fact, he seemed to be going out of his way to avoid them.

Watching him all the time was having a seriously bad effect on her. There was something undeniably primal about him. Everything from the way he moved to the way he licked his fingers clean after eating had her blood pulsing hot and aroused her libido to the point of distraction. Never had her nipples tightened so painfully, her pussy throbbed so hard, clamoring for his undivided attention. If she wasn't careful she feared she'd lose herself in him and allow him to do the most delicious things to her body. As her mind went off in an erotic direction she pictured their hot naked

bodies coming together, his mouth taking possession of hers as his cock drove inside her, pushing deep, driving hard, filling her in a way she'd never been filled before. The truth was, Ash made her feel ravenous, carnal and completely out of control.

Damn him.

She shook her head to clear her lusty, yet dangerous, wanderings, and glanced around the table. Once again she found herself sitting in the corner booth the bunnies had claimed, twirling her glass and sipping the awful fruity drink Tabby had ordered for her, as well as for everyone else, and tried to maintain a professional detachment. Difficult, considering everything about him screamed sin, seduction and danger. Pure sensual delight raced through her veins whenever his eyes turned her way, forcing her to fight off unwanted shivers of longing. In spite of herself, her mouth watered and she once again let her mind drift for one glorious minute, imagining what it would be like to feel his naked body climbing over hers. To feel that sensual mouth graze every speck of her flesh, licking and sucking and rehydrating himself with her cream. Her sex muscles fluttered in eager anticipation.

Oh God...

She knew it had to be the allure of the demon that

caused her salacious mind to conjure up such erotic images because it certainly wasn't in her nature to be drawn to a suspect. And it should sicken her to know that a demon could do this to her.

But her mind kept flashing back to the way he'd taken such painstaking care of Mac a couple of days earlier. Surely a soulless monster wouldn't have cared if the guy drank himself to death. She recalled the look of sympathy that had come over him, and the way he'd switched Mac to soda pop. Not to mention that he hadn't done anything out of the ordinary. As far as she could tell he kept his nose clean, and kept to himself. Deep in her gut she suspected that Ash had nothing at all to do with the missing girls and that she was simply attracted to him, the woman in her drawn to his charisma and charm. She pushed herself deeper into the booth and bit back a moan. He had to be involved, he just had to be. Because all demons were monsters. Even ones that could walk during the day. Weren't they?

Michelle decided she'd had enough of watching him for now. A long day on the slopes had tired her out more than she'd expected and sitting at the bar with the bunnies for the rest of the night was more than she could take. She pushed the last of her drink away with her fingertips and excused herself, pleading a headache when the other women protested. The headache wasn't too far from the



truth. She was sick and tired of listening to them talk about their sexual games and knew it wouldn't be long before they'd put the pressure on for her to join in.

Michelle wanted this case closed. For many reasons.

She stopped when she got to the lobby, taking a quick moment to run through the headlines in the newspaper, dying to know what was going on in the outside world. How the bunnies could spend their lives ignoring reality, totally baffled her. The closest Tabby got to reality was watching *American Idol*.

Before she'd finished scanning the paper, Ash rushed from the bar, looking like sex incarnate. A black leather coat billowed around his powerful legs, the well-defined thigh muscles bunching as he cut across the wide expanse of floor. Michelle cast her eyes down as though concentrating on a news article, but mindless compulsion forced her to glance up and watch his sexy swagger.

A gorgeous, curvy Barbie-doll type stepped up to him and blocked his path before he could reach the main doors. He took a quick glance around, then, with a look of weariness on his face, leaned down to whisper something in her ear. Michelle's distance kept her from hearing the exchange, but she could well imagine that the girl would soon be decorating his arm and eventually his bed. Then

God only knows what came after that.

The cop in Michelle had to put a stop to that, and the woman in her, well, the woman in her felt a tinge of jealousy, aching to be the one on his arm, and feeling his mouth on her pussy as they explored a brief affair. Dammit.

She stood and casually made her way across the room, straining to hear the conversation. As she listened she caught snippets of their discussion and what she heard shocked her. Ash had turned the girl down and then resumed his long strides toward the doors. Demons never turned down women. Ever. Seducing unsuspecting females seemed to be their driving force, their reason for stalking the night in this world.

And night was already upon them.

Michelle zipped up her jacket, felt for the reassuring length of the dagger at her hip, pleased that she'd secured it there before meeting the bunnies for drinks and then followed him outdoors into the dark. Keeping a reasonable distance between them she followed his footprints in the rising light of the moon, her boots crunching on the freshly fallen snow. It was a bit frightening how fast he could move, and without sound.

The last of the day's skiers trudged back to the lodge, unaware that a demon walked amongst them, which

brought out her protective instincts all the more.

She caught a glimpse of him up ahead. He paused for a brief moment, seeming almost to be sniffing the air, and then, as if something or someone had suddenly caught his attention, he twisted around and made his way to the secluded staff parking lot. After a brisk walk across the vacant, snow-covered lot, Ash suddenly disappeared from her sight.

Wind whistled around her, her heart beating double time, her hand automatically going to the dagger at her hip and pulling it free. As she cautiously crept forward through the shadows she heard low, angry voices.

Pale white light from one of the few lampposts in the poorly lit lot provided sufficient illumination for her to see Ash with another monster.

"I don't deal drugs," Ash said, the disgust in his voice loud enough for her to hear. "Get that through your dumbass head."

Michelle couldn't hear the demon's response, but it was obvious that it wasn't happy. After studying and hunting demons for years, she knew heroin was a demons drug of choice. It didn't seem to have the same addictive effect on them that it did on humans. What it did do, however, was enhance their already impressive strength. The one time

Michelle had gone up against a demon who'd had a fix, she almost hadn't walked away. The drug had somehow slowed the effects of the holy water she'd used on it too.

As far as she was concerned, demons could have the Earth's entire supply of heroin, but it was the currency they used in order to buy it from humans "seers" that had her worried. A promise of immortality could buy a demon a lot more than drugs in this world. And what if that promise turned out to be true?

As Michelle shivered in the cold, wondering what she should do, if anything, Ash must have decided the conversation was finished. He suddenly reached out and earlapped the other demon with two cupped hands.

Michelle wasn't the only one caught off guard. The demon let out a howl of pain, its eyes flashing yellow. Why did he have to go and do something so stupid?

Blake Ashen looked more than capable of handling himself, but Michelle wasn't about to take that chance. So far, he was the only lead she had in finding out what had happened to all those dead and missing women. She gripped the dagger tighter and rushed forward.

"Get the hell back!" Ash shouted when he saw her coming. He only shifted his attention to her for a split

second, but it was long enough for the demon to seize an opening. It lunged up, striking Ash across the throat with the vee of its thumb and forefinger. Ash dropped to his knees, choking, his hands going to his neck.

Michelle thought for a moment he was dead. That blow certainly should have killed him.

The demon turned on her.

“Give me the knife,” it said, holding out its hand. Then it smiled at her.

She'd never get used to how impossibly handsome demons were or how magnetic their appeal. Something about them literally pulled at a woman. She'd once read an article about men with an extra Y chromosome. Supermen, they were called. She wondered how many extra chromosomes a demon must have to make a woman feel like this. One long lingering look from this monster made her feel warm, but one quick glance from Ash could give her an orgasm on the spot, he made her that hot.

“Sunny, snap out of it,” Ash choked out as he climbed to his feet. “Your dagger. Use it.”

The sound of his voice pulled her back. She blinked her mind back into focus. This was no superman. This was a demon and it didn't belong in this world.

It was also coming for her.

She swung her dagger, connecting with solid flesh. The demon doubled over from a combination of the blow and the holy water, sank to the ground and rolled to its side. Then came the telltale sucking sound of lungs drawing in air through a hole in the chest. It was a sound she would never get used to—not as long as she lived and no matter how many demons she killed. She tried not to gag. They looked too much like humans for her to totally detach.

The demon slipped back to its own world much the same way it had slipped into this one, fading into a shadow, disappearing before her eyes.

She looked up into another pair of yellow, glowing eyes. The yellow slowly faded and Ash's calculating gaze dropped to the dagger in her hand. He shifted his body sideways and widened his stance.

"Impressive. But if you're waiting for a thank you, you're going to be waiting a long time. I have no reason to be grateful to cops."

So, it appeared they both knew what they were dealing with.

His combative stance felt threatening, provoking her

into action. She raised the dagger again, holding it defensively in front of her, praying enough of the holy water remained on its blade to protect her. Demons normally traveled alone. She'd never had to fight more than one at a time before and always in the past she'd had surprise on her side. None of them had expected her to fight back, especially after they turned on the charm.

"It's not a thank you I want, Ash. It's answers, and I want them now. Why are you here?"

He lifted one brow and began to circle slowly, forcing her to shift her footing on the slippery, salt-slushed asphalt to keep him in her sights. He put his hands palms out where she could see them in a gesture meant to show he was harmless. Michelle didn't buy that for a second. "I could ask the same thing of you. Personally, I was just out for some fresh air."

"How can you walk during the day?" she challenged him.

"Just like I walk at night. On two legs. Same as you."

"Are there more like you?"

"I'd like to think I'm one of a kind." His eyes narrowed as he tossed out a few questions of his own. "Why are you following me? What do you want?"

She wanted to catch him off guard. “What do you know about the missing girls?”

His eyes flared at that and he stopped his circling. Okay, that question shook him. So he was involved. Goddammit, how could she have allowed herself to think for one minute that he wasn't?

He stood to his full six foot four, sexuality oozing off him in waves of heat that banished the chill of the night. “What?”

“The missing girls. What do you know about them?” Michelle couldn't think clearly when he looked at her that way. She tried hard to fight off this second, more subtle line of attack.

His nostrils flared. “What do you know about them?” he demanded in return.

“Only that you're somehow involved.” Lessons learned long ago had taught her that demons and trouble naturally gravitated toward each other.

He shook his head. The yellow was back in his eyes, deepening to a rich amber color. “Assumptions can be dangerous, sweetheart.”

“Stop it, Ash.”



“Stop what?”

She blinked her eyes, trying to clear her head. “Stop wasting your charm on me. It didn’t work for him,” she pointed the tip of her dagger to where the dead demon had fallen, “and it’s not going to work for you.”

Ash had the nerve to look insulted. “I’m not doing a damn thing to you.”

She hoped he was lying because if he could do this to her without any effort, she hated to think what he could do if he tried.

A fine shiver moved through her as she brought the conversation back around to the missing girls. “Are you telling me you’re not involved?”

“Hell yeah, I’m involved. I’m involved because my sister went missing a few months ago. And if you don’t get that dagger out of my face I’m going to take it from you and you’re probably not going to like it.”

Michelle took a step back and immediately remembered the picture in his room, recalling the similarities between the two. “Your sister? Is she demon too?”

Looking suddenly weary, she felt something inside him

give as he pitched his voice low, so low she had to strain to hear. "Half."

Half?

As she studied him a moment longer she spotted something in his eyes, something beneath the amber glow that looked suspiciously like sadness, and it slammed into her heart.

Half-demon?

She'd never heard of such a creature. As she took a moment to process that new piece of information, there wasn't a damn thing she could do to separate herself from her emotions. Jesus, how awful must that have been on a kid? Not much wonder he'd been in trouble with the law.

More than a little unnerved by the unexpected sympathy, she processed what he'd said. Half-demon meant half-human. Understanding dawned in small increments. "So that's how you can walk during the day. You're half-human."

He nodded, a wash of conflicting emotions passing over his face. "Just so you know, I hate cops as much as you seem to hate demons. But it appears that we're here for a similar reason and I think we're both intelligent enough to know we're better off working together than against each

other if we want to get to the bottom of things. So, as the old saying goes, if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

That would be great, except it wasn't her back she wanted him to scratch.

Damn Ash and his demon charm.

"I have new information," he said, showing good faith by making the first move.

"What is it?"

"First, put down your dagger."

It seemed she was supposed to show good faith as well. Not bloody likely. She didn't lower her blade. "So you're saying you want to work together then?"

A slight, reluctant smile softened his features. "Yeah, imagine that? We worked together a few seconds ago and look what that got us. One less full-blooded demon in the world."

Michelle still wasn't convinced. "I didn't think demons killed their own kind."

The smile left Ash's face. "He's not my kind," he said evenly. "He wanted drugs and I don't deal drugs." He

dipped his head to look into her eyes and it was all she could do not to melt to the ground. His tone softened, sounding surprised. “Besides, he was going to kill you. I couldn’t let him do that.”

Rattled by the unexpected tenderness in his voice, she shot back the first thing that popped into her head. “I thought you hated cops.”

He raked his fingers through his dark hair. “Yeah, I do. Look, let’s just forget I said anything about working together, all right?”

Her mind raced. Was it possible that he really wasn’t a cold-blooded monster? That he was simply looking for his sister? She replayed the events of the night, recalling the way he’d declined Barbie doll’s invitation and the way he’d helped kill the demon. But even though Michelle had seen fleeting traces of humanity in him, he was still half-demon—and that demon half could be pretty potent. His sexual energy alone was enough to make her head spin. Could she trust him?

Did she have a choice?

With Dan’s belief that women were dying because they didn’t have the proper skills to combat such a huge hill, combined with the way he purposely avoided eye contact with her as he indulged in the bunnies, it was apparent that

he wasn't going to be much help.

"What would be the rules of this partnership?" she asked.

Ash's eyes flared again, anger and frustration apparent. "Anything goes. I need to find my sister and then we have to shut these bastards down."

The little hairs on the back of her neck began to tingle and her head cleared as her police training took over. "Shut them down? Tell me everything you know."

He glanced over her shoulder. "Not here. It's not safe." He made a move to go around her.

She paused. Despite her brain—as well as years of training, both on and off the streets—telling her to proceed with caution, oddly enough her instincts told her he was safe. There was something about him that put her at ease and she didn't think it was all demon charm. But since she never let her heart rule, she said, "And if I don't agree to go with you? If I blow your cover?"

"Then I'll feed you to the wolves."

Michelle shivered at the coldness in his words, but in a way they reassured her. This was the honest reaction of a man out to find a loved one and it was a reaction she could

deal with.

She slipped her dagger back into the sheath hidden in her ski pants. “Just so we’re clear, Ash,” she warned as she accepted their uneasy alliance. “If you blow my cover, you’ll wish I’d been decent enough to feed you to the wolves.”

## Chapter Four

Blake turned up his collar against the cold night wind and sized up the unexpected turn of events. He'd been summoned to the parking lot by a drug-crazed demon he'd intended to kill. He hadn't expected help from a cop.

The sudden crawling of his skin had nothing to do with the subzero temperatures. He sniffed at the air, knowing more demons would be on the move soon when the one he and Sunny had killed didn't show. He grabbed her arm. "Come on, we really need to move." He hauled her against his body and shuttled her back inside the resort, trying to decide on the best place to take her so they could talk without being overheard. He opted for the nightclub, maneuvering them both through the throngs of people on the dance floor, all scantily dressed and gyrating shamelessly to the music. Sure the resort was a classy place—exclusive really—but once the sun went down, the rich and bored suddenly morphed into the rich and horny.

He grabbed an empty table directly in front of one of the speakers, then leaned in and spoke into her ear, careful to make it look like he was trying nothing more than to get her naked.

He watched her eyes grow wide and felt her body shiver as he shared what he knew of the underground caverns. He paused for a long moment, working to control his emotions. He couldn't lose Cass. A wave of guilt swamped him. Damn it all, he should have taken better care of his sister. He never should have let her go out in the world without his protection. His hands fisted and a growl crawled out of the depths of his throat.

Sunny's hand closed over his and squeezed, taking him by surprise. Her comforting touch went right through him. Something about her stirred warm feelings deep in his soul, feelings that were best left buried unless he wanted to give his demon room to play. And if his demon got out, God only knows what it'd do to her. A cop.

"I'm sorry your sister is missing." His gaze flew to her face to see the sincerity in her eyes. "I'll do whatever it takes to help shut this place down and find her." His gut clenched as if he'd taken a physical blow. Other than his mother or sister, no woman had shown compassion toward him before and it was all he could do to fight down the need clawing its way to the surface. She might be a cop, but she was still a beautiful woman and the man in him wanted her—in ways that were dangerous to both of them.

He'd just finished telling her about his task of



“auditioning” women when Neal stepped into the club and glanced around. Their eyes collided and Neal nodded his appreciation. With the way they Blake and Sunny were sitting so close, touching rather intimately, and speaking into one another’s ear, Neal clearly assumed Blake had made his selection.

“Shit,” Blake whispered, the bass from the speaker beating backup to the panic unfurling in his chest. He’d been going out of his way to avoid women, not wanting anyone to get the idea he’d found a candidate. But now he’d been spotted getting up close and personal with Sunny...

And Sunny was a cop. A cop who could handle demons. Common sense told him that of all the women at the resort, she was the one most likely to be able to take care of herself—as long as she knew what he’d gotten her into.

But common sense wasn’t going to help him look himself in the mirror if he was wrong about that and the last thing he wanted was to put her in danger.

“What is it?” she asked.

Neal cut a path across the floor.

Blake held her face between his palms and let loose a

little of that demon magnetism. “No questions, Sunny. I just really need you to trust me right now.”

She nodded. “What do you need me to do?” Her voice thinned to a whisper.

“I need you to step into your ski-bunny role, okay?”

Before Neal could reach them, Blake leaned in and pressed his mouth to hers. The second their lips touched, explosive heat arced between them and his body buzzed to life. Sexual tension hung heavy in the air and undoubtedly could be felt by anyone in the room.

Sunny’s hands circled his neck, her fingers playing in his hair with aroused awareness as she pulled him in tighter. Her warm sweet tongue moved into his mouth and tangled with his. He indulged in the taste of her, eager to brush his tongue over her entire body and bury his face between her legs. Unrelenting pressure brewed in his groin, and even though they were playing a role, he couldn’t help his body’s physical responses. As his cock thickened and everything in her touch generated desire and need in him, a surge of warmth flooded his veins. He trembled. Almost violently. Her boldness surprised him and made him hunger for her in ways he’d never hungered before. Ways that frightened the hell out of him.

Goddamn, when Sunny played a role, she really got into

character.

Before he became too lost in the moment he had to pull back to regain a little self control. "Jesus," he breathed against her lips. "You're killing me here, sweetheart."

As he reveled in the sweetness of her mouth she moaned in erotic delight and he wondered if she was still playing. She pressed against him and as a shiver racked her body, some small, semi-coherent part of his mind told him that what was happening between them had very little to do with their roles. The second his lips touched hers something passed between them. Something very potent and he knew she felt it too.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Neal's smile widen, then he backed off.

"Come with me, baby," Blake murmured against the corner of her mouth.

Her green eyes darkened, flashes of desire in their depths making them smolder. "Scale back on the charm a little, Blake. You're killing me here too."

That was the first time she'd called him by his name and he had to admit it made him feel weird inside.

And she was accusing him of using charm.

He led her to the dance floor so they could disappear into the crowd. He circled his arm around her waist, slipping his hand under her jacket, splaying his fingers over her smooth skin. She melted into him, letting him know she welcomed his touch. He could feel her heart pounding against her rib cage. Perspiration broke out on his forehead and he knew it had nothing to do with the warm room or that fact that he still had his coat on.

He backed her up against a wall. Her pink tongue slid over her lips. "Blake, what's wrong?"

The hint of concern in her voice totally undid him and he silenced her with a kiss. Once again he lost himself in her taste and this time there was no hiding the bulge in his pants. Need fogged his brain. They traded kisses until they were both left breathless. Blake inched back with the instinctive knowledge that a kiss would never be enough. He wanted more. Needed more. Never had he felt this way about anyone. He didn't know what it was about her, but she did things to him, to his mind, his body and his heart and he had to admit, for the first time in his life, he was scared. His gaze roamed over her flushed cheeks, taking in the naked desire in her eyes.

"What's wrong?" she repeated breathlessly.

"They're keeping tabs on me. I was supposed to check

in with them tomorrow night but I guess they got impatient.”

“Is he gone?”

“Not yet, and a couple more goons have joined him.” When he looked into her eyes, his stomach twisted. As bone-deep warmth rushed through him, he had to work to tamp down the torrent of emotions. Passion he had absolutely no control over ran through his blood.

After a quick consultation with his better half he suddenly had a change of heart. He didn’t care if she was a cop who could handle herself. He didn’t want her involved in this.

“Listen, I think this might be getting too dangerous for you. Maybe you should back off.”

By small degrees her body tightened and her head tilted back so she could look at him. Her mouth lost its soft, well-kissed curve. “Forget it, Blake. We’re in this together, remember. This was your idea, not mine.”

His protective instincts came out in full force. Well, hell. This was a twist he hadn’t anticipated. “It’s just—”

She shook her head. “Not you too?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I can take care of myself, Blake. I think I’ve proved that to you already.”

Despite having seen her skills first hand, he couldn’t help but want to shelter her. He’d made the mistake of letting his sister do things her own way and look where that had gotten him. He couldn’t be in a more fucked-up mess if he’d tried. “These guys mean business, Sunny.”

“So do I. Trust me, that demon in the parking lot was nothing. I’ve been up against all kinds of monsters.”

He supposed she probably had, not that it made him feel any better. Still, she was strong, capable and clearly well trained, and he knew there was nothing he could do or say to deter her, but that wasn’t going to stop him from trying.

“Plus I know you’ve got my back,” she added for good measure, as if sensing him weakening. “Which is more than I can say for my partner.” She made a gesture with her head.

It hit him then that she actually trusted him. That threw him off balance for all of two seconds. Then he processed everything she’d said.

“What partner?” he asked suspiciously, and looked

toward the spot she'd gestured to in time to see a guy leaving with a hot blonde. "That him?"

"Yeah." Sunny waved a hand just as a couple moved past them, their hot bodies brushing up against Blake's back as he caged Sunny between his chest and the wall. He briefly glanced over his shoulder and took in their gyrating bodies. Christ, if not for the clothes separating them, undoubtedly the couple would be fucking then and there.

"Forget him," Sunny said bringing his attention back to the matter at hand. He doesn't believe anything out of the ordinary is going on, but I can demand he call for backup if we need it. Right now the bulk of the investigation is up to us."

He wasn't too keen on the idea of this partner. Then again, if he had to, he could always turn Sunny in if he thought she was getting too deeply involved. "Okay," he said, letting the matter of the partner drop for the moment. "We need to shake Neal and his friends so we can talk and figure out a plan of action. It shouldn't be too hard. I don't think they were hired for their intelligence."

She nodded. Then she slipped her hand into the front of his shirt, the long folds of his leather coat swinging closed around them, making it look for all the world as if they were

indulging in a little foreplay before they made plans to meet up later.

Sunny angled her head, and her lashes flutter against his skin as she put her mouth close to his ear. "They're still watching us," she murmured. "How do you suggest we shake them?"

"By convincing them I've got things under control."

Her eyes flared hot, indicating that she knew exactly what he was referring to. Without hesitation, her lips met his, and she moved restlessly against the wall. Her pert nipples scraped against his chest and as instantly he ached to touch them, and taste them. As his thoughts raced off track, he damn near dropped to the floor and dragged her down with him.

As he rooted his feet, she trembled in his arms, and he could feel the heat rising in her. She stroked his face and her touch went right through him. Lust bombarded him and as the air around them charged, his cock throbbed so hard against his zipper he was sure it was going to burst free. His muscles rippled and it was all he could do to maintain composure.

"Is it working," she questioned in a soft tone before she slipped her tongue inside his mouth.



A sudden, unexpected riot of emotions overcame him. Oh yeah, it was working all right. Working to make him forget that she was crawling past his defenses without even trying.

As his body ached to join with hers, and cravings like he'd never before experienced swamped him, he casually shifted his glance and Sunny followed the movement.

"They're not leaving."

"What now?" she asked, and he noted how she didn't seem in a hurry to come up with another plan, as if she was taking as much pleasure in this charade as he was. Jesus, the way she responded to his touch really did something to him, and truthfully, there was nothing he'd like more than to stay there, keeping her pinned to the wall while he indulged in her mouth and the way her sexy body pressed against his. No, that was a lie because everything in him was suddenly screaming possession. It felt so intimate, so right being with her and what he really wanted was her in his room, naked and writhing beneath him so he could spend the entire night with his cock buried deep inside her.

"I guess we have no choice but to let them follow us to my room." When she gave him a strange look, the fire in her eyes licking him from head to toe and he went on to explain, "Hell, they obviously think I'm auditioning you, so

the only way to shake them is by giving them what they want. Once were inside we can talk privately and put together a plan of action.”

Before they had a chance to escape, Tabby sauntered into the room and brushed up against them, causing another complication for them both. Blake bit back a curse, as he worked to tame his cock. Not only was Tabby interfering with their getaway, he didn't want to put her, or anyone else, in any danger. And now that he'd sampled Sunny, something told him he'd never have a taste for another. He drew a breath and struggled to make sense of his reactions to her.

Blake shifted, and Tabby moved in close, rubbing her body against his. “I see you two are getting to know each other.” She gave a wink and added, “Mind if I join in?” Blake offered her a sexy grin, and turned on a bit of his demon charm, hoping to put her under his spell so she'd do what he wanted. “Why don't you go grab us a drink, Tabby.”

Seemingly pleased that she was going to get in on the action, she disappeared through the throngs of people. When the goons continued to watch with interest, Blake put his mouth close to Sunny's ear. “You get rid of Tabby,” he told her, trying to ignore the slow, steady movement of her fingers. He paused, slipped a key card into her back pocket and added, “Then I want you to meet me back in my

room.” He gestured with a nod, “Check the card number. I switched rooms,” he added, lifting an eyebrow. When she opened her mouth to speak, he cut her off and added, “You should wear a less distinctive perfume.” He inhaled deeply, then grinned. “Although I must admit, vanilla is my favorite.”

Vibrant green eyes met his and she whispered back. “I’m bringing my dagger.”

He laughed. “I’d expect nothing less.”

Ten minutes later, Blake made his way to his new room, having put off his move into the suite Trevor’s had assigned him for as long as he could. He’d made the switch earlier that morning, but last place he wanted to be sleeping was on the same floor as Trevor and his goons. With Trevor’s final words still ringing a warning in his head...we’ll be watching, he pushed open the door and entered.

As he tossed his coat over the suitcase he’d unpacked earlier, and took in his new digs, he suddenly had the feeling he was still being watched. He casually made his way to the window to shut his blinds when the smoke detectors caught his attention. One room. Two smoke detectors.

We’ll be watching...

Was the place rigged? He inconspicuously examined the detectors closer, and that was when he caught site of the camera lens haphazardly hidden beneath the plastic.

Oh, fuck.

He was intelligent to understand the significance of those two detectors and why Trevor had insisted on the new room. Because clearly he planned on “watching” the initiation process.

And goddammit, Sunny was on her way...

\* \* \* \* \*

Michelle paused outside room 412, hardly able to believe she was knocking on a demon's door. Well, technically she didn't have to knock since he'd given her a key card.

She trusted Blake. She wasn't sure why. It wasn't smart, or even rational, but if she were honest she'd have to admit that she'd come across too many humans who were as much a monster as he was. Maybe more so.

She slipped the card in and took one cautious step forward. Blake met her at the door and pulled her into him. He put his mouth close to her ear. “They're watching.”

She buried her face in his neck to muffle her words. “I know,” she murmured”

“No, Sunny,” He angled his head slightly. “I just realized they have cameras planted in my room.” She felt a cold shiver move through him when he added, “Probably so they can watch me audition women.”

“We need to get out of here.”

“We can’t. They’ll know we’re up to something.” Blake’s mouth moved to her ear, where his warm breath caressed her sensitive lobe. “I need for you to pretend we’re making love, Sunny. Can you do that? It’s the only way for us to keep our cover.”

The uncertainty in his tone surprised her. It was very un-demon-like. She swallowed. “Yeah.”

Blake removed her jacket, his hands skimming her curves. She shivered under his invasive touch.

“Are you cold?” he murmured.

“No,” she managed to croak out as he pulled her closer. In fact, she was hot. So goddamn hot from his touch she was about to spontaneously combust.

His lips brushed over her eyes, her nose and settled on

her lips. He whispered into her mouth. "I don't want you to do anything you're uncomfortable doing, understand?" he whispered.

Michelle could hear the need and lust in his voice and had to admit she wasn't at all immune to his touch. How could she be, considering who and what he was? "I understand," she said, his genuine concern for her well-being touching her deeply, and getting to her in a way that warmed her from the inside out.

With that Blake guided her to the center of the room. His dark, smoldering eyes locked on hers. Warmth pooled between her legs and she wanted...no needed, to feel his body next to hers. He ran his fingers along the back of her neck as she reached out a shaky hand and tugged his T-shirt from his waistband. Blake helped her remove it. Her breath caught when she glanced at his hardness. Her entire body quivered as she trailed her fingers over his flesh.

"Sweetheart..." The roughness in his voice gave way to softness as she caressed his gorgeous warrior's body, taking extra care to run soothing hands over his scars. When her eyes met his, she was completely unprepared for the emotions he brought out in her.

The minute she felt his warmth beneath her fingertips, her heart began to pound in a way it had never pounded

before and everything inside her told her this moment wasn't about cameras, protecting their cover or the irresistible lure of the demon. The woman in her wanted him on an emotional level and never desired anyone the way she desired him. As his touch warmed her darkest corners she trembled and knew this moment was about a man and a woman and their undeniable need for one another, a need that started on the dance floor and had now spilled into his bedroom. No, she quickly corrected herself. The need started well before the dance floor because she couldn't dispute the fact that the second she'd set eyes on Blake she'd wanted him physically, but there was something deep inside him, something warm, compassionate and giving that drew her in emotionally. Nor could she deny that, after watching him for days, she'd also glimpsed the man beneath the monster, a man who got to her in a way that no one else ever had.

She was fully aware that for the first time in her life, she was letting her heart rule her actions. But right now all that mattered was this man and this moment.

Blake's hands went to her shirt and he arched a questioning brow before proceeding. In one quick movement she pulled her own shirt off, answering his question.

His smoldering eyes dropped to her breasts. "My God,"

he murmured.

Her lips found his for a long, soul-searching kiss. Blake circled his hands around her waist and squeezed her ass. A moment later he inched back and gestured toward the bathroom, his voice loud and clear when he said, "It's been a long day and I'd liked to get cleaned up first."

Instantly understanding the gist, she nodded. "I'll help."

With that his lips found hers again, and as they'd continued to kiss and caress each other, once again putting on a good show for those who were watching, Blake walked her backward and guided her into the bathroom, leaving Trevor's goons to believe they were going to continue their exploration in the shower. Once inside, he turned on the water and then twisted to face her.

"I checked earlier, Sunny and there are no cameras in here. We don't have to pretend anymore. It's safe to talk." An invisible band tightened around her heart when she heard the vulnerability in his voice. Oh God, how she wanted him.

Standing before her in nothing more than a pair of jeans, he looked like he was in agony. Total frigging agony. Physically and emotionally.

Aching to lose herself in him, to touch him and have him



touch her in return, she took one step and closed the small gap between them. She brushed her tongue over her bottom lip, while her finger traced his mouth. "We can't be sure, Blake," she said, wanting, needing, most desperately to finish what they started.

"But I—"

When she pressed against him, letting him know exactly what she wanted, the color in his eyes deepened and she knew he was beginning to understand the implications of her actions. Air rushed from his lungs in a whoosh and his body began to shake.

"Oh, hell, Sunny." With that he backed her up and pinned her to the wall, answering the demands of her body. His hungry mouth crashed down and with the way his tongue was tangling with hers and his fingers were ripping at her jeans it was clear that he couldn't seem to get her naked quick enough.

Without pause, he pulled her jeans to the floor and she quickly kicked them away. Her eyes never left his as he took a tiny step back. A moan escaped his mouth as he just stood there, taking his time to stare at her body. She watched his throat work as he swallowed. "You're beautiful." He gently stroked her face and outlined her angles. The tenderness in his tone filled her with warmth.

She pointed her index finger at his jeans. "And you're completely overdressed."

He grinned and then proceeded to make quick work of his clothes. Her heart skipped a beat as he stood before her completely naked, his beautiful cock beckoning her touch, her mouth, and her pussy. Simply put, the man was magnificent. All lean muscles, hard as granite.

His smile was dark, predatory as he put his arms on either side of her head, pinning her to the wall with his body. He kissed her long and deep, then trailed a path down her body. "God, you have no idea how much I've been dying to taste you," he whispered.

He kissed her breasts. Moaning in bliss he took his time to lave her hard, achy nipples. He drew one into his mouth and nibbled and sucked until it formed a rigid peak. Then he clenched down with his teeth, mixing pain with pleasure. She pressed against him, wanting more, wanting him to ravish her with wild abandon. His fingers circled her areola and her cunt clenched with want, a shudder overtaking her.

As her body vibrated he moved to her bellybutton. After stroking that sensitive area with his tongue, and driving her mad with want, he insinuating himself between her legs. Her pussy lips inched open for him, and as she offered

herself to him, completely, unequivocally and without question, it brought them to a deeper level of intimacy. He tapped her thighs, gesturing for her to widen them even more. She immediately obliged. He leaned in and inhaled her tangy scent and when his mouth found her damp cunt, she let out a low moan and sagged against the wall. That first sweet flick of his tongue was the most delicious thing she'd ever felt in her entire life, and the onslaught of pleasure damn near shut down her mind.

“Blake—” she murmured and raked her fingers through his hair, holding him to her. He was doing the most amazing things with his tongue, pushing it deep inside her pussy, then circling her engorged clit until she cried out in bliss. Ripples of sensual delight traveled onward and upward through her body and it was all she could do to keep herself upright. She grew wetter and wetter with each caress and her breasts felt so heavy and achy she took them into her hands and squeezed.

“Jesus, Sunny, you have the nicest pussy I’ve ever seen. So pink and so fucking pretty.” The heat of his mouth scorched her skin as his primal essence completely overwhelmed her. The need to lose herself in him became so intense she began shaking. He widened her lips with his fingers and stroked his tongue over her flesh, going all the way from the back to the front. “And you taste like heaven.”

His sexy words nearly pushed her over the brink. She moaned without censor, letting him know what he did to her, how much she wanted him. When he inserted a finger into her throbbing cunt, she moved restlessly against him and nearly came apart in his arms. Heat spread over her skin and she whimpered in delight. A tremor moved through her as she chased an orgasm. She sucked in a tight breath but couldn't seem to fill her lungs as her body tightened all over.

"Blake, please," she cried, not really able to vocalize what she was feeling because the emotions he roused in her were so foreign to her. He glanced up at her, and when his guarded eyes met hers, it occurred to her that he was holding back. God, why was he holding back? What was he afraid of?

When he dipped another finger inside and stroked her deep, he skin flushed hotly and her entire world went fuzzy around the edges. Her sex muscles fluttered and a powerful wave rolled through her as she came apart in his arms. He cunt clenched and pulsed in heavenly bliss, her entire body tingling as he pushed her over the precipice. Flames surged in her pussy, as equal mixtures of heat and fire moved through her bloodstream, and she feared she was going to combust. "Oh God, Blake, I'm coming."

"That's it, sweetheart," Blake said as she gave herself over to her orgasm. He kept his fingers inside her, pushing

deep, and circling her G-spot until her syrup dripped over his hand and down his arm. He brushed his tongue over her lips, drinking in her cream as she rode out every last wave, but it wasn't enough. She wanted more. She wanted his cock inside her. And she wanted him to let go, to give himself over to her. Lord, she'd never been so driven by lust or desire before.

As though reading her needs, Blake grabbed his pants, pulled a condom from his wallet and quickly sheathed himself. His eyes locked on hers as he wrapped his hands around her hips and lifted her. "Put your legs around me," he said, his voice low and raspy.

The second she slipped her legs around his waist he pushed into her, driving her against the wall. Never had she felt so gloriously full. "Yessss," she cried out. Their cries of pleasure merged as he began to pump into her with fevered passion, taking her to places she'd never been before, penetrating not only her body, but her heart. As a bone-deep warmth moved through her, her heart swelled. She knew he felt the pull between them every bit as much as she did, it was unlike anything she'd ever felt before. God, what she was feeling for him really shouldn't be possible, considering she'd only recently met him. He plunged harder, deeper and in no time at all another powerful orgasm ripped through her. When he felt her liquid heat, his eyes smoldered with need and he drove into her

and stilled. His breath came in short bursts and his cock throbbed as he splashed his hot seed inside her.

After a long time, he pulled out and let her slide down his body. "Sweetheart, that was amazing." When his lips found hers, everything in her reached out to him.

Michelle could barely breathe, let alone talk, so she simply nodded her head in agreement. That brought a smile to Blake's face.

His hand found hers and he tugged. "Come on."

He pulled back the shower curtain and they both stepped inside. The warm water felt glorious against her skin, but not nearly as glorious as his hands felt.

Blake grabbed the soap, lathered his palms and proceeded to wash her body. Once he completed cleansing her, she took the soap and began lathering him in return. A comfortable silence fell over them as they stood in the shower together, washing each other like it was the most natural thing to do.

Blake pulled her to him, and with a new closeness between them, he murmured into her ear. "I need to get into that room, Sunny. To gather enough evidence for you to get a search warrant."

She snuggled in closer, astonished at the new intimacy between them. The man was simply addictive and she'd never felt so cherished by anyone before. Everything from the way he held her, touched her and talked to her told her that he felt the connection every bit as much as she did. But still, she could feel him pull back emotionally. As she looked at him, she wondered how deep his scars ran and what secrets he held close.

Returning to professional mode she said, "I think it might be easier for me to get in." Once again he tightened, but this time not with pleasure. She knew he didn't like the idea. "Look, they know you, Blake. You can distract them while I get inside and gather evidence." She tried to lighten things. "You remember what I did to that demon." When he remained quiet, she pressed on. "Just tell them you've got a hot little number back in your room and you want them to come check her out before presenting her to the boss."

"Sunny—" She heard worry and fear in that one word. Her heart swelled beneath her breastbone as warmth flooded her.

She touched his face, needing the physical connection. "We are not going to let one more innocent woman go missing at this resort," she insisted. "Let me do my job. I've gone up against demons alone, Blake. I can go up against these guys."

He shook his head.

“What?” she demanded.

“Do you have a gun?” he asked.

She smiled at him. His concern for her well-being spoke volumes and touched her deeply, so did his belief in her. “Yes.”

“Then I want you to start carrying it. But you won’t be alone, Sunny. I’ve got your back.”

With that she planted her mouth on his, needing him inside her more than she needed her very next breath. “Good. Now, since you don’t have to check in until tomorrow night and we still have so many more hours to kill, I think you should have the rest of me again too, before we put this plan into action.”

Blake grinned, “I like the way you think.”

He gathered her into his arms and carried her to his bed. Pulling the blanket up for privacy he climbed over her body and pressed his mouth to hers for a deep, soul-searching kiss. Michelle ran her hands over his skin, absorbing his heat as her mouth moved to his shoulder to taste his exquisite skin.



“Mmm,” she moaned. When she felt him quiver, she instantly she knew she wanted to taste more, to brush her hungry tongue along every inch of his skin. She gave a light shove. “Roll over,” she demanded.

## Chapter Five

Roll over?

He stared at her, hardly able to believe what she wanted to do to him. Most women took what they wanted from him, never giving his pleasure a second thought.

But Sunny was different. So different from the rest. Not only was she seducing his mind and body, she was seducing his heart. And he feared that could break him.

When he gave her a questioning glance, she simply offered him a mischievous look and pushed again. "Now."

"So demanding," he teased.

Once she had him beneath her, she ran her tongue over his neck, his chest and lower. His hands gripped her hair and the feel of her smooth silky strands between his fingers filled him with lust. "Christ," he murmured.

"What is it?" she asked lightly, obviously knowing he was in total agony as his cock throbbed against her midriff, in desperate need of release again. As a demon, he didn't

need much recovery time, but deep in his soul he knew it was more than that. He just simply couldn't get enough of her.

"You're fucking killing me."

"Killing you? Where? Here?" She gathered his cock into her hand and gave a light squeeze.

He growled. "Yes there."

She glanced up at him. "You think I should kiss it better, then?"

He lightly tugged on her hair and noted the gruffness in his voice when he said, "That might be a good idea."

With that she gave a light playful chuckle, and made a slow pass with her tongue before drawing his cock into her mouth. The soft moans of delight told him how much she enjoyed it. Damn, if that didn't excite him even more. She spent a long time tasting him and running her fingers along his length, building his climax and melting his resolve. Her mouth moved to his balls, and she gently suckled them while working her hands over his length. When small beads of cum pearled on his crown, she shifted her position and licked him clean. She moaned with pleasure, and it resonated through him.

“I love the taste of you,” she said, her voice full of want. Blake gyrated restlessly and raked his fingers through her hair, as her touch and words pulled him into some emotional place that he had no intention of going.

His tension escalated as she continued to suck his cock, the look on her face indicating that she was taking genuine pleasure in the length and thickness of him. She shifted her position, and straddled one of his legs. Rocking her hips slightly, she rubbed her sopping wet cunt over his thigh and rode him furiously. She scraped her hot, swollen clit against his flesh, and he sensed she wasn't too far from an orgasm herself. His heart tightened as his glance slid over her.

“Sunny...” he murmured, needing this to stop almost as much as he needed it to continue.

She glanced up at him and her expressive green eyes met his. When her mouth opened, but no words formed, his heart thumped, and he feared all was lost. As her hot cream poured over his leg, and the ecstasy on her face touched him deep, his insides turned to mush. Need and pleasure gathered in his chest. Jesus, how she had the ability to evoke deep emotions in him was beyond him.

Her body slowed and she whispered his name. “Blake...” Her voice was so soft, intimate and so full of

emotion that it rattled him to his core. In a span of a moment as they moved past some imaginary line, it had him thinking about love, family and white picket fences. His throat clenched, and needing the intimate contact, he brushed his fingers over her hard nipples. She gave a broken gasp and leaned into his touch. Christ, she was impossible to resist, and being with her was as natural as breathing. He was losing himself in her, goddammit, and there was nothing he could do about it.

He needed to fight it, to put a stop to this, before his demon grew stronger and took over.

As if sensing his distress, she pulled back and climbed over him. "Condom?" she asked breathlessly.

"Nightstand," he whispered with effort, knowing he didn't have the strength to stop what was happening between them, and knowing how much he wanted this. No, he needed this. After she quickly sheathed him, and before he realized what she was doing, she impaled herself on his cock.

"Sweet Jesus..."

Eyes full of want moved to his as they joined as one. He valiantly forced himself to suppress his emotions, astonished at the way she affected him. Unfortunately, his efforts proved futile. She moved up and down, her sweet

cunt squeezing his cock until the point of no return. The sweet torture made him throb. As he gripped her hips and slammed deep, his composure melted, and he felt a shift inside his gut.

“That’s it, Blake. Let yourself go,” she murmured, as his guard slipped. “Just let go.”

In no time at all, his skin grew tight and his balls constricted. “Come here, sweetheart.” He captured her head to pull her close, then took possession of her mouth. He slid his hands down her back, circled her waist and flipped her over, needing her beneath him so he could feel every inch of her body against his. He buried his face in her neck and pumped deeper, harder, seeking, searching. He lifted his head to see her.

“Sunny, babe...” he murmured.

She moaned and pulsed around his cock, and there was nothing he could do to stave off the riot of emotions coursing through his veins. Unable to stop himself, or fight this powerful pull between them, a moan caught in his throat and his body quivered as he gave himself over to the pleasure. Over to her. As he made love to her, he wondered exactly when it was that she’d taken up residency in his heart.

“Yes...” she cried out when he released inside her,

giving her a part of himself that he'd never given another. His mouth found hers and he kissed her long and deep then pulled back, breathless.

A long while later he rolled in beside her, fear working its way through his bloodstream as he wondered what came next. He tensed. Had his weakness just opened the door for his demon? He drew in a deep rejuvenating breath, and in that instant, after opening himself to her, it suddenly made the man in him feel stronger, fierce, more in control of his darker side. It occurred to him that loving her didn't create a weakness, it created a strength in him. He could feel that power coursing through his veins, building, growing. As his body began tingling, it sharpened his instincts and kicked his protective nature up a notch. Perhaps his mother was wrong about giving into one's emotions, or perhaps it simply took the right woman to empower him, to bring out the man in him.

As he considered that epiphany longer, he admitted, "I can't seem to get enough of you."

She grinned and the look in her eyes told him she understood that feeling all too well. "You can keep trying."

Blake chuckled and rolled back over her, until she was captured beneath him. "Like I said, I like the way you think." And with that he took her again, and again, until the wee

hours of the morning.

When he awoke he took a moment to gaze at the amazing woman sleeping silently beside him. As emotions charged through him, his heart pounded in his chest. After being with her intimately, it gave him all the more reason to keep his demon buried. Never would he let the monster loose, because never would he do anything to hurt Sunny. Which was why he'd wasn't about to let her put that plan of hers into action. He cared far too much for her to let her put herself in harm's way, despite knowing she could handle herself. Trouble was, he was having difficulty coming up with something better on his own. It wasn't as if his new best friend Neal, was letting him wander around the lower levels of the hotel all by himself.

His body grew needy as he proceeded to kiss her awake. "Hey," he murmured. When her eyes opened and met his, urgent need overwhelmed him. He drew a centering breath, aware that she'd unleashed something inside him, and no matter how hard he tried, he'd never be able to get enough of her.

"Hey yourself," she whispered back, her voice soft and seductive.

When she offered him a sultry smile full of promise, he gave into impulse, quickly sheathed himself and slid over



her, crushing her body beneath his. Her legs automatically widened, and he grinned, loving the way she wanted him, and the way she so readily welcomed him into her body. His cock found her wet opening, and her mouth opened as his crown penetrated.

He swallowed hard, his head spinning as the need to sink all the way into her consumed his thoughts. Jesus, she felt so good, so tight. "I need to be inside you again, sweetheart."

"I need that too," she responded, giving him a look that conveyed her hunger as she pulled his mouth to hers. He kissed her, his tongue tangling with hers as he sank deep, her liquid heat scorching his cock.

Once inside, he gave her a moment to get used to the fullness. When she cried for more, he rocked into her, slowly, taking his time to savor her heat, and every clench of her beautiful cunt. As her body quivered in delight, it occurred to him that being with her this time felt more emotional, less physical. Completely potent.

Her arms slid around his back and held him to her, moisture sealing their bodies together as they made love, both pushing and pulling, giving and taking, and touching intimately as they indulged in one another.

Her cunt tightened and a deep sense of satisfaction

rolled through him as he took in her flushed face and the look of ecstasy in her eyes. As emotions ripped through him, his cock throbbed, and he knew he'd reached the point of no return. "Baby, I'm not going to last."

She chuckled softly, and touched his face as she murmured, "I'm already there, Blake. I'm already there."

Her muscles tightened around his cock, and he threw his head back. "Jesus..."

"Come with me," she murmured.

Panting hard, he gathered her tight and held her as he drove deep, pumping once, twice before he released himself, never wanting the moment to end.

After a long time he inched back and brushed her hair from her face. "Jesus, girl, I love the look on your face when you come for me."

She grinned, and once again it triggered another craving in him. He'd like nothing better than to spend the day, the week, forever in bed with her, but they both had work to do and they both knew it.

Blake clenched his jaw and shook his head. "You keep looking at me like that and I'll never get out of here."

With that Sunny glanced at the clock and put on her best professional face. “We need to move.”

“I know.” Blake planted a long, soul-searching kiss on her mouth before climbing from the bed. He took a quick shower and pulled on his clothes. As she too, got ready, he tossed her another look before moving to the door.

“Be careful,” she said and her concern for his well-being touched his deep.

His heart thumped and he hated to leave her. “You too.” With that they both went their separate ways, stepping back into their roles, eager to put a stop to Trevor’s monstrosities.

Hours later Blake found himself at the bar, carefully taking stock of the patrons—including Sunny’s partner who seemed rather preoccupied by the ladies and didn’t appear to give two shits about Sunny’s well-being. Conscious of the way Neal was watching his every move, Blake moved about easily, putting on his best professional face as he slipped into bartender mode.

As Blake carefully polished another glass and placed it on the shelf behind the bar, Neal helped himself to a bottle of water from the bar’s fridge. He cracked it open and took a long swig.

"The hot little blonde is watching you," he said, nodding in Sunny's direction.

And Blake didn't like the way Neal was watching Sunny. It made him wonder just how much of her he'd seen back in Blake's hotel room earlier. The bastard.

"That's the problem with women," Blake said, slamming the fridge door closed a little too hard with his hip. "Once you screw them, they think they own you."

Neal never took his eyes off her, his expression turning just a bit too calculating for Blake's comfort. "She any good?"

Blake shrugged. "I've had better." *And if you touch her I'll rip your fingers off one by one, then shove them up your ass.* "There's something weird about her."

"Yeah, well." Neal set his water on the bar and grabbed one of the glasses. He mixed up a Daiquiri with enough skill to show he'd done it before. Then he pulled a little bottle out of his pocket and emptied something into the drink. He lifted the drink to Blake, whose uneasiness escalated to full-scale red alert. "A few ounces of this will make her normal."

Blake almost went for his throat. He knew a challenge when he saw one. But then he thought of that movie, he

thought of Cass, he thought of Sunny's cover and he thought better.

He kept his own face blank, but cold sweat chilled his spine as he watched Neal cross the room to where Sunny sat with the ski bunnies.

Sunny smiled over at him and all he could think about was how she'd tasted when he'd kissed her goodbye. Her smile dimmed a little when he didn't return it.

"The bartender asked me to give you this," Blake heard Neal say. Demon genes came in handy sometimes. Neal set the drink on the table in front of her.

*Don't drink it*, Blake thought at her. She was a cop. She should know better. Right? Blake shot her partner a look, thinking he just might need him, but he walked through the door with two bunnies on his arm, unaware or uncaring of what was going on around him. Under the circumstance, Blake had no time to go after him. Knowing Sunny needed him here to keep his eye on her, he turned back to face her and hoped like hell she could read his distress through the professional mask he wore.

Sunny glanced over at Blake, then up at Neal. She pushed the drink away with her fingertips. "Tell him thank you, but I've had my limit for the night."

“Are you crazy?” Tabby whispered loudly. She shoved the drink back in front of Sunny. “You don’t say no to Blake Ashen.”

Blake figured things couldn’t get much worse than this. If she didn’t take it now, someone was going to start wondering why not. Neal already knew he and Sunny’d been at it.

Sunny reached for the drink, smiled over at Blake and took a small sip.

He was really worried now. She might know better than to actually drink the whole thing, but by accepting the drink she’d given Neal an excuse to sit down and talk to her. And that wasn’t what Blake wanted. It wasn’t what he wanted at all.

Michelle’s mind raced, trying to remember all she could about date-rape drugs, wondering how much she could safely drink before she found herself in serious trouble.

She had to assume he wasn’t trying to kill her, at least not yet. Surely she should be able to drink a few sips before it kicked in. Spilling it would be too obvious.

“For Pete’s sake, Sunny,” Tabby said in exasperation. “Not much wonder you can’t get laid. If you aren’t going to drink that, then I will.”

Just for that, Michelle was tempted to let her have the drink. Instead, she raised the glass to her lips and pretended to take another small taste. Already, her tongue felt numb. What on earth had he put in it?

Neal slid into the booth beside her. “What’s with the ladylike little sips?” he asked, winking at the other women at the table. Before Michelle could stop him, he raised the drink to her lips and tilted the glass. She swallowed a large mouthful out of instinct.

The hell with worrying about being too obvious. She jerked her head back and the rest of the drink spilled down the front of the sweater beneath her open ski jacket, although the cold, satisfied smile in Neal’s eyes told her she’d gotten enough.

She was in it up to her ass now, and she had to get out of there—just as soon as she found her feet, which seemed to be AWOL.

Then Blake was at her side. He had a towel in his hand and was helping to mop her up. Michelle’s head, however, was no longer in the game. The room was spinning and her tongue felt two sizes too large for her mouth.

“Christ, that hit her fast,” she could hear Neal saying, sounding for all the world like he gave a crap. “This is all my

fault. I guess she'd already had too many. Ash, my man. Why don't you take her other arm and we'll help her up to her room?"

Where was Tabby, who was supposed to be her friend, in all this? Michelle wondered indignantly, trying to find her missing feet. She was going to let two strange men manhandle Michelle back to the room they shared?

Of course she was. She probably thought a threesome might do "Sunny" some good.

A hand slid beneath her jacket to the gun in the shoulder holster Blake had asked her to start carrying, and for a moment, stark terror filled her. Then the hand shifted and it was Blake who hoisted her up and found her feet for her.

"I've got her," he said. "Lead the way."

Blake caught her as her knees gave out, hoping like hell that she was playing along.

So this was how they found their victims. Or at least one of the ways, because he'd be surprised if it had actually worked on Cass. Even half-demons had a pretty good tolerance for any kind of drug. That was why they went for the hard stuff.



He lifted Sunny into his arms, relieved to find how light she was. Definitely, she was at least partly playing along because dead weight was harder to carry. And thank you, Jesus, she'd actually started wearing her gun.

The trick now was to make sure no one else discovered it.

He wasn't surprised when Neal took the service elevator to the basement. He was a little more surprised to find Trevor Black already waiting for them.

"Put her over there." Trevor gestured for Blake to drop Sunny on the bed. Blake carefully rolled her to her side so she could more easily reach her gun if she had to. But it worried him that she wasn't moving at least a little.

Trevor was watching him with all the warmth of the lizard he was. "How would you like to be in movies? We blank out your face so customers can picture themselves in the lead role. It's all part of the fantasy. Neal's already been in a few. Haven't you, Neal?"

Rage unfurled inside him and he fisted his hands at his side. Jesus, what cold bastards. Blake would rather go up against a demon any day. Better the monster you knew. And understood.

These men were conniving pricks, and things had gone

too far, farther than he'd ever expected. He needed to get her out of there, now.

As he formulated a plan, the only one he could come up with under the circumstance, and the one and only he thought would allow him to get her to safety he said, "Maybe next time." Blake shot a shriveling glance at Neal, who already looked like he had a woody the size of his arm. Cold, sick bastards. "If your friend here had let me finish what I'd started to say to him, rather than just go ahead and slip her a drug, I could have told him that she's probably a cop."

Trevor's eyes flicked to Sunny, still motionless on the bed. "Kill her."

Fuck no.

Neal slipped a gun from his waistband, not even bothering to question the command. Not only were they cold-blooded, they were stupid.

Jesus, he really hadn't thought his plan would backfire like this. He assumed they were at least smart enough to figure out what he meant. Apparently assumptions were dangerous. His mind raced a million miles an hour and it was then that he realized he was going to have to walk them through this, step by step. This was going to work, he assured himself. It was a good plan. And it had to work.

“Wait. Where there’s one cop, there’s always at least one more, and we don’t know who it is. I have a better plan.” Sunny still hadn’t moved. Right now that was a good thing. “So far she’s got nothing on us. We put her back in her own bed. We tell her someone slipped something in her drink. We apologize like shit, tell her we’re doing an internal investigation into it, give her a false lead, and just like that, she’s off on a wild goose chase.”

“That’s assuming she’s really a cop,” Neal said.

Blake laughed but there wasn’t any humor in it. “You think I can’t tell when I’ve been screwed by a cop?”

Michelle kept her eyes closed and her breathing steady, wishing like hell she could kick his half-demon ass. Not just because he’d told them she was a cop, although that was big part of it. It was because he was trying to get her out of that room, and there was no way she could leave. Not now. She’d never get another chance to get back in. She tried to clear her head enough to think, but it was hard. She’d like to drift off into sleep and let Blake take care of the whole frigging mess. But if she let them take her from this room, she’d never get a search warrant. She’d been drugged and that meant her testimony wasn’t worth squat.

As Blake negotiated for her life, however, she came up with a plan she thought just might work. If she discharged

her weapon in here, she'd have proof that she'd been in the room and it would officially become a crime scene. There would then be grounds to search it. She could swear in court that she'd fired her weapon because she'd thought her life was in danger, and the fact she'd been drugged would work in her favor. Women weren't slipped date rape drugs for the good of their health.

Of course if she discharged her weapon one of them would most likely return fire, but that was a chance she was willing to take. She'd just have to trust Blake to watch her back, like he'd promised. The man was part demon. He might as well put that to good use.

Michelle reached for her gun, rolled from the bed and fired—all in one fluid movement.

Except “fluid” was a relative term to someone who'd been drugged and she didn't exactly master the element of surprise. The first return shot caught her high in the chest and felt more like a solid punch. The second shot she didn't feel at all.

Blake didn't have much time to react when Sunny pulled her weapon. Neal, his gun already drawn, managed to get off one shot at her before Blake's fist caught him in the side of the head and dropped him like the sack of shit he was.

As Neal fell, his finger tightened on the trigger again, but the second shot went wild and hit the wall behind Blake.

The roaring in Blake's ears and the sudden terror on Trevor's face told him his eyes had flashed to demon yellow.

"Jesus," Trevor breathed. "Your eyes. They look like—"

Blake didn't give a damn what his eyes looked like. Sunny was bleeding all over the floor.

He picked Trevor up by the throat and slammed his head against the wall, not caring if he killed him and rather hoping he had. He tossed the limp body aside and rushed to Sunny.

He clamped his hand over her chest, trying to stop the bleeding, only to realize that most of it was coming from beneath her. He carefully lifted her to check the damage, then squeezed his eyes shut against the sight of it. The exit wound was far worse. She was going to die, right there in his arms, and it struck Blake hard what it was he was about to lose. Other than his mother and his sister, Sunny was the only woman he'd ever known who was strong enough to see him for who he truly was and face him as an equal, unafraid.

A world without Sunny was a world he no longer wanted

to be a part of. The demon in him roared to life, unleashed, and when the demon world called out to him, for the first time in his memory he didn't bother trying to resist it. Instead, he breathed in its darkness and let it consume both Sunny and himself.

The room tilted. When it righted again he was in a different place and a different world. And this world, oddly enough, felt much more like...home.

Bright yellow eyes approached them from out of the shadows, and with a snarl Blake tracked their progress, prepared to protect Sunny with his own life. She wasn't dead yet.

The yellow eyes had a face, then the face had a body. Clad neck to toe all in black, the demon halted a few paces away from them. Blake, even in his demon rage, hesitated before it. Heat curled around him.

"So this is the demon slayer," it mused, its attention focused completely on Sunny and disregarding Blake as something unworthy of interest.

Too late, Blake realized what he'd done. This might feel like home to him, but he'd brought Sunny to the one place that would be unlikely to welcome her.

It extended one hand to her and Blake bit out a

warning. "Touch her and you'll die."

Its eyes went to Blake as if seeing him for the first time. Then, it laughed at him. "I'm not going to harm her," it said. "I'm wondering what it's worth to heal her."

"Anything," Blake said, not daring to hope but unable to hold a flare of it back.

The demon seemed even more amused by that. "Is it worth giving up your sister?"

Cassie was there, shrouded in darkness. The blank, empty look on her face, her once-violet eyes now a steady, yellow glow, tore an even deeper hole in Blake's soul. The demon stroked her cheek. "You can't have them both," it said to him. "Choose one."

Sunny's weight grew heavier in his arms, the dampness of her blood seeping into his clothes and chilling his flesh, and Blake knew he was losing her.

But he was losing Cass too, and he'd loved Cass his whole life. One woman was his future, the other his past. The demon in him, the part of him that refused to compromise when it came to something he wanted, rebelled. "I'm taking them both."

Cass' face was no longer empty. She looked at him,

violet banishing the yellow, and her voice was soft when she spoke. "I'm not ready to go back, Blake. I don't know if I ever will be."

And then Blake understood. The demon didn't hold her. She was here by her own choice, because the mortal world had become too much for her. In her own way she was as damaged as Sunny, and she'd chosen this place to heal. Just as he'd sought it out when he realized Sunny was dying.

The difference was, Sunny couldn't survive here. Cass could.

Blake looked at his sister, loving her and offering her whatever strength he could and silently begged for her understanding. Then he held Sunny out to the demon.

"I choose this one," he said. "I'll pay any price."

The demon grinned.

"The debt won't be yours," it assured him. "The debt will be all hers. And I think I would like to have the demon slayer in my debt. I would like that very much." It ignored Blake again as it stepped in close and laid its hand on her still body.

Color and warmth slowly flowed back into her face and



the soft fall of her hair brushed against Blake's forearm as she shifted her head to one side. Then suddenly it was light, not darkness, surrounding them, calling Blake back to the mortal world.

"Tell her I gave her life," the demon called after him. It laughed again, softly this time, but with a delight that made Blake shiver in spite of the heat it expelled. "And tell her I gave her a small gift to go with it."

Blake found himself back in the underground room of the hotel with Sunny still in his arms. And when she opened her eyes to look up at him, they shone with a warm yellow light.

\* \* \* \* \*

Michelle didn't remember much of what happened over the next few days other than that she'd spent much of them asleep in a hospital bed with Blake refusing to leave her side.

Trevor Black's career in the movie industry was over. That much she knew, thanks to her captain. And after her partner's disgraceful behavior, he'd been demoted to beat cop duty. But it was Blake's silence, and the way he studied her when he thought she wasn't looking, that kept her from wanting to celebrate.

As she lay in her bed watching Blake pace, small bits of information began to trickle in, filling in the blanks, until she had a clear picture of what had happened to her in the demon world. Even though she'd been given her life back, her destiny was in the hands of a monster she didn't know, and whose motives she didn't trust.

But as long as Blake had her back, the good in them both would trump any evil. As far as she was concerned they were now in this together and she wouldn't want it any other way.

She focused all her attention on him as he scanned her monitors. God, she was so amazed. She could actually hear the pounding of his heart from this distance. What other powers had the demon given her? She could also smell Blake, and what she smelled was spice, earth, shampoo...love and fear.

For her.

Her heart filled with love. "Hey, Cowboy, you'd better slow that heart rate down before it's you lying here instead of me."

He moved to her side. His sensuous mouth flashed a grin, and it was all she could do not to pull him down alongside her and make love to him for the rest of her life.

She released a little of her own charm and watched as beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead.

"I didn't realize you were awake." His smile faded, replaced by sadness when his gaze collided with hers. After a moment of silence he said, "Sorry, Sunny. For everything."

She closed a hand over his. "Sorry for what? For trying to save me? For caring enough about me to make a deal with the devil himself?"

"I meant it to be my debt, not yours. I didn't think of that."

He perched on the bed beside her while she digested that bit of information. "How does he expect me to repay the debt? What does he want from me?"

He rolled one shoulder and frowned, his dark eyes regretful. "Only time will tell."

Her heart ached, loving that he was willing to barter his life for hers and hating that he now felt responsible for her fate. She was a big girl and accepted whatever cards were dealt her way. It was her burden to bear, not his.

When his sadness reached out to her, heat burnt her eyes as anger erupted in response. Something dark and dangerous stirred her blood, something she was

determined to harness and use for good. Even though she was no longer quite the same physically, she was still the same Michelle in all the ways that mattered. And wasn't that the same for Blake? He was human in all the ways that mattered, too. Even more.

Then she thought about Cass. Michelle had a fuzzy memory of a beautiful, tragic face, very much like her brother's, and of enormous yellow eyes flashing briefly to a deep violet when Blake had drawn Michelle back to this world. She reached for his hand. "We're going to get Cass back, Blake."

Sadness and sense of loss apparent, he tore his gaze from hers, although his fingers tightened their grip. "Cass doesn't want to come back. She feels like this one has nothing to offer her."

Michelle felt the faint pull of the demon world too now, so she could understand a little better what he and Cass had lived with all their lives.

"What about you? Does this world have anything to offer you?" She drew a breath, waiting for his answer.

Sadness turned to love, when he twisted back to face her. "It has everything to offer me," he admitted honestly. He touched the tip of one finger to her cheek, tracing a path to the curve of her lips. "At least, I'm hoping it does."

Those were all the words she needed to hear. She ripped the electrodes from her body, flung her legs over the side of the bed and reached for her clothes.

Blake jumped back, startled. "What are you doing? You need to rest."

"I'm done resting." She parted her johnnyshirt to reveal her chest. "Besides, it looks like I'm all healed." She could get used to this particular change. Fat chance they were all going to be as welcome.

"Sunny—"

"You do realize that's not my name, right?"

A small smile kicked up the corner of his mouth. "I like it. It suits you."

"Really?" That surprised her. She'd never pictured herself as particularly sunny. She dropped the johnnyshirt back in place, smoothing the fabric over her hips. "Cass may have to make her own choices, but there's nothing to say we can't help her make up her mind. And while we're at it, I'm going to start repaying my debt to the bastard who changed me."

"Something tells me your idea of repayment and his,

differ drastically.”

She gave him a wicked grin and once again felt her eyes flash hot. She liked the feeling. “He has no idea what he got himself into when he brought me back. This is our world. Yours and mine, and Cass’. Not his. He thinks we’re something to help him get whatever it is that he wants from here. But really, we’re something to stand in his way.”

Blake didn’t seem convinced. “You sure about this?”

She loved it that he didn’t try to talk her out of it. That he didn’t say no. She’d been fighting demons her whole adult life. She wondered briefly if the holy water was going to be a problem for her now. If so, she and Blake would just have to find another weapon.

“It’s not like I can pretend nothing has happened to me,” she pointed out.

“True. But you don’t know what he can do to you.”

She grinned. “I’m not worried. Not when you’ve got my back.” She gave him a moment to absorb that, and then said, “I think we make quite a team. So, are we in this together or what?”

His voice softened as his eyes flashed to liquid gold. “On one condition.”

“What’s that?”

After a long, thoughtful moment he tapped her chest, right around the vicinity of her heart. “I’ve got your back, but I want the rest of you too. You can’t begin to imagine how I felt when I thought I’d lost you. Because believe me when I say, I never want to be without you again.”

She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him with all the love inside her. His hands slipped around her waist and held her to him. Inching back, before the two of them lost all control and ended up tangled in the sheets, and wanting desperately to get him alone in a place where no one from any world could interrupt them, she whispered into his mouth, “You’ve already got me, Blake, you’ve already got me.”

## About the Author

Cathryn welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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