

# CRYMSYN HART



DEVIL'S  
TAVERN  
invitation

Aspen Mountains Press

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## Chapter One

The whip licked her flesh once again. The pain of the lash was perfection. Over the years, she had come to anticipate the sessions. Each time the whip met her flesh, she was driven towards ecstasy. A scream built in the back of Emera's throat as the warmth of the blows raced through her body. A burst of white light appeared in her mind. When she squeezed her eyes shut, the scene cleared to reveal a majestic and perfect garden. Sprays of roses blended into a rainbow of colors flowing into orchids, lilies, iris, daffodils, and countless other flowers. The emerald grass was lush and smelled fresh. In the distance the sun glinted off a tranquil lake. A calming song filled her mind. It wasn't the twittering birds, but the soft sound of angels. Pure serenity encompassed her spirit. The blue sky was beyond the color she saw on Earth. It was crisp and clear. No clouds filled the sky. For the few precious seconds she hovered on the outside of Heaven, she felt the small part of her she'd set aside so very long ago. She reached out, hoping to touch a rose petal, but before she could, the ground opened up. Emera yearned to stay in the garden but tumbled back into her body. Her eyes snapped open. The lingering fire of her wounds died away. She drew in a breath and tried to will herself back to the realm where she'd been. Nothing worked. Defeated, she rested her head against the rack she was strapped to. Her fingers were stiff from grasping the bars. The fleeting pain wasn't going to lift her spirit. She needed another thrashing.

"More," she begged.

"No, *cher*. Even I'm not that callous." Sebastian's soft hands undid her bindings from behind. When he was finished, he came around to face her. He pulled in long breaths. She knew he loved their private time together, maybe more than she did. Long onyx hair was pulled back into a ponytail. His naked body glistened with sweat. His red, engorged cock jutted out from his body with a bead of cum glistening on the tip. Defined muscles were visible under his caramel skin. His eyes had changed to a deep amber from their usual butterscotch color the way they always did, depending on his mood. The one thing setting him apart from humanity was the black spaded tail curling around his leg.

"You're crueller than you let on, Bas. Please!"

He shook his head and caught one of her dark braids before trailing his fingers down her creamy breast. Her nipple tightened from the gentle caress. He squeezed the hard knob, and then lowered his tongue to it. For an instant, he suckled on her breast and then bit down hard. Her body hummed with pleasure from the bite, but she needed one more stroke on her skin to come properly. His fingers walked a line down her stomach and began to twine in her downy pubic hair. He exerted a gentle pressure on her pelvic bone, right above her clit making her gasp. Emera gripped the bars harder.

"You might know my deepest secrets, but you can't sweet talk me. Are you forgetting who taught you? Are you forgetting what I could do to you if I really felt like it?"

Emera squeezed her eyes shut hoping for one more stroke of his whip. One more slap from a paddle. Anything. It was all she needed. He was only toying with her now, touching and caressing her in places, but not letting her come. Her inner demon was hiding in the confines of her mind. She had glimpsed Heaven and the very nature of her demon couldn't look upon the purity of the place. Her hands and feet were tingling as the feeling returned to her limbs after the release of her bindings. The cool air stung when it passed over her slowly healing wounds. The gashes were deep, but nothing she wasn't accustomed to. She took a few deep breaths, waiting, hoping he would satisfy her. Finally, disappointed, she climbed off the rack. Her foot hit the floor, but her legs

wobbled. She could barely stand after being strapped to the contraption for two hours. During the entire time her master had enjoyed making her squirm.

"Upsey Daisy." Sebastian caught her and turned her around. She gave him an innocent smile and rubbed her hand over his silky-smooth cock. She loved the feel of him. He was warmer than any human male. Lust fluttered through her when Sebastian ran his free hand over her stomach and cupped her sex. He knew her body and her weaknesses all too well.

"Don't start something unless you truly want to finish it, Em." He nibbled her ear and trailed a line of kisses along her neck. His thumb slid along her wet slit.

He was teasing. Sebastian preferred men to women. He was a master at torture and could give her an orgasm with a touch if he was so inclined. Born an incubus, he had progressed through the levels of hell by delighting his bosses and providing them with numerous souls. The game was all about gathering the most souls. Originally, she was one of the souls he had been assigned to corrupt, but eons had passed since their first meeting.

She stuck her tongue out at the demon and then kissed him quickly on the lips. "You're no fun. Don't you remember the times you used to play with me for hours?" She pressed herself against him.

He chuckled and snapped his fingers. A light blue robe appeared in his hand which he slipped around her shoulders. She gasped when the fabric clung to the open wounds. He escorted her over to a plush couch and she sank down into it. He snapped his fingers again, lifted a cigarette to his lips, and inhaled. Instantly the end burned cherry red. The sickly sweet smell of the pot wafted over to her and she could almost taste it on her tongue. He passed the blunt to Emera, but she waved it away.

"I quit, but thanks." Gazing around the room, a black marble fireplace was off to the left with a small fire burning in it. She had grown accustomed to the heat in his room. In the very back corner was a large four poster bed with images of writhing bodies carved in the wood. Each time she examined it, their expressions and positions changed. It was almost as if it was alive. They'd had many encounters on his bed.

"You sure, *cher*? You need it more than I do. This is a more efficient way to get high than our weekly sessions. One of these days I'm afraid you'll stay up there and not fall down to me again. What would I do without you, angel?"

"I doubt that'll ever happen. I'm not welcome up there anymore. I think the little glimpses of Heaven are God's way of sticking it to me." Even after falling, a piece of the light connecting her to the Divine had not died. Emera's eyes fluttered shut while she thought about her peeks of the garden. The perfection of the garden haunted her, but it wasn't the only thing. Sometimes she hoped that the garden would take away her buried heartache. So far it hadn't. She tried to retain the serenity she felt, but silky fingers slid along the inside of her thigh. Another hand roved up her other thigh. Sharp nails played over her nether regions teasing her. She shifted and spread her legs wider. Her head fell back against the couch. A low chuckle caressed her throat. "Mmm... I thought you weren't going to play with me?"

Sebastian kissed a path down her neck and flicked his tongue along the curve of her shoulder. She quivered from the rapture he induced in her. She never understood how a human could think her master was a mortal. When deft fingers trailed over her moist slit, her eyes rolled into the back of her head. The wounds on her back were almost healed. Each gentle stroke aroused her more. He rolled his thumb over her small bud in slow circles. Her muscles shivered and screamed for release. Emera moaned when he stopped and held her in orgasmic limbo.

"Maybe I changed my mind." He nipped her left nipple. "Sitting there, showing me your beautiful petals, I couldn't help but dip into that succulent pussy. It's been so long since we've actually fucked. Besides, I know how much you love to beg me for your release."

Before she could reply, she felt something hard penetrate her quim. Her nails poked holes through the suede cushions. A cry shot from her lips. Sebastian's mouth covered her clit, nipping it expertly. His manipulations began slowly and then accelerated. He never got tired and could keep her in agony for hours. She opened her eyes and saw his tail had wound around her leg and was pumping inside of her. Her

hips rose up to meet him every time his tail glided inside her wet depths. His tongue flicked over throbbing bud. Each time she pushed her hips into his face, more of his tail entered her, lifting her to new heights until she was on the edge of an ecstatic blur.

*Beg me for it.*

Her back arched off the couch. She tried to fight the rising orgasm. It was starting to roll through her. If she gave into it, he would punish her. If she didn't react he would punish her. She had learned over the years it was best to do what he said. "Please, Bas. Ahh..."

His tail retreated from her pussy leaving her empty and wanting. He licked her slit slowly, savoring her juices. She squirmed in her seat, but didn't dare make another noise. Sebastian forced her to endure while he used his power and lifted her body from the couch. Only one thing would satisfy him so she wouldn't remain hanging in mid-air and sexually frustrated. On occasion, in the past, he had left her dangling for weeks, tormenting her until she was on the brink of madness. She'd been flogged, tickled, finger fucked, pierced, and paddled anything he could imagine to titillate her until she implored him. Emera's inner demon cherished every minute of the torture. She enjoyed it, but only put up with it because she wanted to see the garden.

*Not good enough. Tell me what I want to hear.*

"Please, Master."

"Good girl." He kissed her cheek and plunged his tail deep inside of her pussy touching her pleasure spot. "You make me very happy, *\$cher\$*."

She smiled, content she had pleased him, because it only meant more rapture for her. For just a moment, pleasure so radiant encompassed her that it burst inside of her, she thought she glimpsed a little bit of Heaven, but in reality, it was only the flaming pits of hell.



## Chapter Two

He stared at the wrapped package once more and wondered if he should send this one. With each token, he questioned if he was doing the right thing. Keenan ran his hand through his blond hair. This was the fifth time he had sent her a present. Each time he sent a gift, it killed him a little more because he couldn't see her reaction. He couldn't wait until the day he could use all of the contraptions on her. Before that happened though, he had to know if he was taking the correct course of action. He prayed that he was, but he got no confirmation from above.

He got up from the bed and stretched. His room was modest. Spartan. It was good to keep it that way and not have any attachments in his life. It had been that way for many years since he began his new profession. He stood before the mirror and flicked a piece of lint from his shirt. He rubbed his hand above his heart. The brand on his chest itched, but he ignored it. The sword in the corner of his room winked in the light. A slight blue sheen outlined the weapon. It had been with him for a very long time. Feeling the pull toward the blade, he picked up the sword. It was light in his grasp, but once his hand connected with the pommel, the blue energy shot up his arm and through his whole body, causing his brand to burn. He closed his eyes and shivered, enjoying the short burst of pain.

"You know you're doing the right thing don't you?"

"Am I? I've been asking myself the very same question for over a year now." He

gazed at the visitor. Dressed all in black, with red hair and light gray eyes, his handler had been with him since the beginning. Keenan let the question roll through his mind once more. Yes, he was doing his duty, but was he doing the right thing? Each time he saw her, he asked himself if he was fooling himself. Or maybe, just maybe, the woman he saw, who was so embroiled in the dark side, still had a spark of light embedded inside of her.

"It's the only way to make sure. You have to make the judgment call. It has to be now. You've been in and out of that den of sin for a year doing recon, but we have our orders. I've let you go on long enough so you'd be sure. I can't delay any longer. You have to strike soon. If you don't, then the entire lair will be cleansed. I won't be able to stop it. Make up your mind. Tell her who you are or smite her along with the demon."

Keenan nodded. He knew what was expected of him. What he had to do and what he yearned to do were two completely different things. Deep down he had to be sure the woman he loved still existed. He thought she did, but it all depended on how loyal she was to her master. Closing his eyes, he remembered the first time he saw her. Naive and innocent. Her voice was sweeter than anything he had ever heard and turned his heart. She sat by a lake staring at her reflection and singing a wordless melody. Her skin was the color of fresh milk. Hair so dark it was blacker than a moonless night. Even though her beauty should have tipped him off, her eyes gave away her otherworldly heritage. Even before she looked at him, he was her slave. His heart was lost and he was immediately under her spell from the moment her gaze first fell upon him.

He had loved her no matter what, even in the end when he was burning. That adoration had kept his soul steady and it was the reason why he had chosen to be what he was. While the flames licked his skin, the agony was taken away from him. Heavenly beings appeared before him and gave him a choice. He could ascend into the garden of Heaven or choose a different path and save her from the clutches of evil. It was the only chance available to him. Everything in him said yes. After his resurrection, the task of locating her began. After centuries of searching, Emera was so close he had touched her.

He had laid his eyes upon her and yet she didn't know who he was. Even with all that, he had to be sure the woman he loved still existed and hadn't been totally corrupted over time.

Keenan handed the envelope to his handler. He eyed the angel. His expression was grim. Keenan knew that Vangelis, Van, was not happy being a messenger boy. The lectures the angel had given him were burned into his memory. "You'll make sure she gets this?"

Van took the package and sighed. "Of course. She always does. Will you be going there as you planned?"

Keenan rolled his eyes. "I already told you I would. Is that a problem?"

"Not at all. Be careful of the owner. He's our main concern. I've heard rumors he's planning something big, which is another reason you have to hurry. You should've taken care of your assignment months ago."

He didn't meet his angelic handler's gaze. He understood that he was walking a thin line between following orders and going rogue. The angel was correct. He should have gone into the den and killed all of the demonic spawn who were there. That was the original plan. However, once he interacted with the staff and had his first interview with the owner, his plans had changed. He recognized Emera at once even if she didn't know him. Afterwards, he shared the information with Van telling him he wasn't storming in there to smite all of them, first he wanted an opportunity to reach out to Emera. If the higher orders of angels didn't like it, then they would lose their best Catcher. The heavens had rumbled, but they allowed him to play it by ear, until they'd had enough of his dallying. He knew his time was running short, but his gut hadn't figured Emera out yet. He sensed the evil in her, but there was also good. Her dual personality perplexed him. The longer he drew out his mission, the more he got to see her.

He picked up his sword and stared at the sigils etched into the metal. They were Enochian Script, angelic writing, that flared blue when he sent a bolt of power up the blade. It was blessed by the most holy and forged in the bowels of a volcano. He had

killed many demons with the weapon. It was his trusted companion and the one thing he kept pristine. He ran his finger down the sharp edge and pulled it away when a drop of crimson slipped down the blade.

“Don’t worry. He’ll be the first thing I take care of.”

“And the woman, if she’s too far gone?”

He gripped the handle harder turning his knuckles white. “I don’t honestly know. She’ll be next if she is. I know my orders and my job. I still have hope. I have to. It’s gotten me this far. It’ll get me to the end of my journey.”

## Chapter Three

"Hey, boss, these came in the mail for you."

Emera glanced at the receptionist's outstretched hand. A platinum wig covered red hair and pale blue eyes stared out from under blue glittery fake eyelashes. Her face was white from all the foundation she wore. A blue leather dress clung to a statuesque form that accentuated her already slender waist. She had been the receptionist for the club for the past four years. Cindy didn't care a lick about what strange characters waltzed into *The Denizen* because she considered herself one of them. Emera had always liked the woman. She thought back to the first day she had met her.

It was chaotic; her previous secretary had just disappeared without any warning. Emera had surmised she accepted Sebastian's offer for a one on one session and that was not a good thing. Her master had never elaborated on what happened, when she asked, just that her secretary had gotten what she bargained for. Emera was handling the front desk and in walked Cindy in a red kimono, thigh-high black leather boots, and red hair done in a knot, white face, and painted on cherry red lips. She hadn't even put an ad in the paper yet. After the interview, Emera hired her on the spot, because she had plenty of skills. Cindy had been a godsend, one she was truly grateful for.

Taking the heap of mail, Emera sorted through the bills, flyers, and other crap before settling it into two very distinct piles. Within the stack were two parcels. Each was in a plain brown padded envelope with no return address. The difference was one was flat and the other appeared to have a box inside. She recognized the handwriting on the bigger one from others she had received. She tackled the smaller one first. In it

was a fancier envelope on expensive paper. It had Sebastian's style written all over it. There was even a hint of brimstone clinging to the stationary. The note card was stiff and blank. She flipped it over and looked at the back just to make sure. She even peeked inside the envelope to check to see if she was missing something.

"So what did he send you this time?" Cindy's comment drew her attention.

Emera put down the blank parchment and rolled her eyes. Cindy had a devious gleam in her eyes at wanting to see what was inside. "Who says it's a man? It could be a woman. I'm an equal opportunity chick. Haven't we had this discussion before?" Emera took the other package and ripped off the brown paper wrapping. An admirer of Emera's had been sending her gifts for over two months. A new one every week. It wasn't anything new to receive presents from her clients now and again, but this was getting ridiculous. She had no idea who was sending the tokens, but it piqued her interest whenever she received them. In the beginning, she thought it was Sebastian giving her the items but dismissed it because his gifts would've been more involved and she would have to pay for them later in screams. She had Cindy compile a list of possibilities of who the admirer might be from amongst her clients. She still hadn't narrowed it down to who it was. The first parcel had contained a pair of miniature handcuffs that now dangled on her key ring. The second gift were a pair of nipple clamps. Then came a pocket vibrator, Ben Wa Balls, and a Cat O' Nine tails whip among other things. Each one was more elaborate than the one before.

"Well!" Cindy clicked her manicured nails on the countertop.

Emera slid the inner box out. It was made of hard wood with a small gold latch holding it shut. A blue bow was neatly tied on around the box. She undid the bow, and opened the latch. Inside the red velvet lined box was a blown glass dildo. She held it up to the light and admired the contours of the glass cock. In the light, the swirls of purple and blue formed a mini-tornado inside of it. The way the light caught the twists of color she thought she saw a sword among the designs. She ran her hand over the phallus imagining how it would feel inside her. First, she'd chill it, then slide the condom on the glass, and slip it inside of her. Her pussy would contract around the glass. She'd pull it

out and plunge it back into her wet depths, rubbing the dildo against her clit, and envisioning it was her secret admirer.

“‘Mistress, I hope this brings you as much pleasure as it does me imagining you fucking yourself with my cock.’ Signed K. Oh, Em, he makes me hot just thinking about him. You have to admit he has a serious thing for you.”

She glared at her receptionist and felt the burn on her cheeks. Her demonic half giggled thinking about what other things it could do with the cock. She pushed the images of having an orgy with the other girls she employed out of her mind. Emera ran her fingers over the smooth surface of the glass dick before setting it on the counter. *I can't think about being intimate with one of my clients. I bring them pleasure and whatever they desire. I'm not on the menu. I really have to find this guy and tell him to stop before Bas gets wind of these gifts.* Sighing, she grabbed the schedule for the night and saw she had five clients lined up. Three were regulars and two were first timers. Her inner demon grinned at the notion of fresh blood. *Newbies. They're so much fun to break in. I'll peel them away layer by layer. By the time they realize what's happened to them, their souls will be mine. Maybe before we give them over to our Master, we can fuck them. It'd be good to have a man between my thighs while we feast on his soul.* The image of her on top of a client running her hands over her breast, and grinding on him, while she sucked out his soul popped into her mind.

A strong current of lust and evil rippled through her. Her horns poked against the flesh of her forehead. She gritted her teeth, gripped the counter, and fought back her inner demon. *I'm reformed. I've put all that behind me. Even though Sebastian hates it, I know where I stand. No matter how much he tortures and taunts me. I'll never go back to being his demonette in training. Not after what happened. Not after I lost him. All bets were off then.*

Emera pushed her thoughts away and ran her finger over the rest of the calendar to see who else had appointments. So far everyone was shaping up to have a busy night. The Denizen employed six other dominas and one dom besides Sebastian. He handled a few humans, but mostly his clientele were exotic: demons, fairies, vampires, or whatever wandered into the Den. He provided them the experience they desired and they paid for it in whatever currency he deemed fit. She had learned that the hard way.

When she fell, he had arrived minutes later. She had first assumed he was human with his dark hair and caramel skin. The brown eyes that smoldered when he looked at her. His smooth voice offering her the experience of a lifetime. Because she had been so naïve to the ways of the flesh, she accepted his proposal and pledged her fealty and lifelong devotion. His sexy looks hadn't diminished over the years. It was only behind the mask that his true appearance laid and she hoped never to see it again.

"Will you get the girls ready for the night? I have to talk to Sebastian for a minute."

Cindy sighed. "Tell him I said hello. Why does he always get the handsome ones? Can't you tell him to save a few pieces for me? Or maybe let me have some of that fine tush of his."

"You really don't want to entice him. Trust me, Bas isn't your type."

The receptionist smirked. "Why? Is he hiding a cooch in those skintight pants of his? I don't think he is by the way those leather pants caress every bulge. He gives me the shivers just thinking about him." She fanned herself and pretended to faint.

Emera giggled and hit Cindy on the arm. "I've told you before. Don't get involved with him. I'm telling you as a friend and not your employer. He can be dangerous. And no, everything in those jeans is all male. Just please, promise to stay away. He'll make you pay for everything."

"I don't mind going stag. And danger is my middle name."

"That's not what I meant. Really, he's not your type. Now go get the others ready, please."

Cindy rolled her eyes but sashayed down the hall to round up her other employees. Emera set the schedule down and ran her finger over the glass cock. The gift stirred her heart. *Who are you? Why do you want to give me gifts? If you truly knew what I was, then you'd run for the hills.* Wetness lined her eyes thinking about her past and what she had done. If she could take it all back she would. The only shred of light in her life was hovering on the fringe of the garden. She'd never tell her master, but the only reason she enjoyed their weekly sessions was that she prayed she might one day



capture a glimpse of him again. This was the one hope keeping her going and prevented her fall into the darkness of her demonic nature. It was why she gave up the taking of souls so she could stop the evil path she was on. So far it was the only thing that kept her sane. She gathered the dildo up and put it back in its velvet lined case planning to use it later.

*Using what later, cher?* Sebastian's velvet voice slid across her mind.

Invisible fingers ran down her spine eliciting a bolt of bliss until her wingtips shook. Emera clutched the counter and fought the spell he had over her. Phantom hands slid along the inside of her thighs. One covered her pussy exploring the folds of her sex. The other clutched the mounds of her ass.

"Nothing," she gasped.

Lithe fingers dipped in her well and began pumping in and out of her slowly. Emera closed her eyes and tried to hold onto her precious control. Within her mind, she saw a man-sized form behind her. She was held against the counter. Her legs were pushed apart and her skirt hiked up. Her inner demon rose up and purred from the attention it was getting from their master. The fingers plunged inside of her faster making her writhe. Her juices slid down her legs while the invisible lover brought her to the edge of an orgasm. A moan built in her throat, but she bit her tongue knowing if she cried out that Sebastian would stop and her gratification would be lost. Her pussy clenched and her hips rocked. She squeezed her eyes tighter. The demon broke through her mental walls and took hold.

"Master, please," she begged. Her training over the centuries had formed her into his toy. She couldn't help but love every touch, pinch, or lash. The pleasure it brought her was beyond bliss. Times like this when he surprised her were the greatest of all because she never knew what he would do to her.

Instead of answering her, a loud smack split the room. Emera's hips jerked forward from the strength of the blow to her left ass cheek. The burning of the open handed slap faded to a dull throb when her right buttock was attacked. She needed more of him. She needed to please him. Sebastian was close. His breath blasted against

her ear while he dealt another spanking. The reek of brimstone wafted around her.

“What do you have there?”

Her ass was on fire now. The fingers inside her slowed their pace. Emera yearned to crawl out of her skin. Her wings pressed on her back for release. She could barely think. The demon had her now. “It’s a gift, Master.”

Sebastian nibbled her earlobe and then plunged his tongue into her ear. Ghostly hands clutched her hips and controlled her rhythm. This time a small gasp left her lips when another blow came. She was almost there. The fingers pulled out of her pussy and played along the divide of her ass.

“Something for me to use on you later? Maybe slip it into your pussy or...” the fingers probed at her anus, “other orifices. Is that what you meant?”

“Yes .Whatever you want,” she cried.

“Oh, I love it when you let your other half out. It’s a shame I don’t get to see her more often.”

Another hard slap against her ass pushed her hips forward. The fingers slipped inside her darker passage. She cried out then when the orgasm took her over. “Yes. Yes.”

He patted her on the ass lightly and kissed her cheek. “That’s my girl, Em. That’s my girl.”

His hard body pressed against her back. His erection poked her ass. She heard him breathing heavily. He always got off on watching her squirm. His fingers played over her breasts and gave her nipples one good squeeze. After that, his power over her dissipated. It took a moment, but she was able to shove the demon back inside her mental box. Once that happened, she straightened her clothes, and took in a few breaths regaining her composure. She didn’t want the staff to come in and see her disheveled. Many of them thought they were a couple, but if they knew the real truth behind their boss, they would run screaming from his establishment. Once she had readjusted everything, she noticed a sharp pain in the palm of her right hand. Glancing down she found the wooden box had been crushed. A large sliver was embedded in her hand. She

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plucked it out and saw the front of her dress was covered in small pale shards. The glass cock was now dust. An overwhelming feeling of hatred overtook her.

*He can't let me have one thing that's mine. He took the last good thing from me, but not this time. He can't have this. I want one thing that's mine and makes me feel special. He might have bound me to him, but I am not his to control. Not anymore.*

## Chapter Four

The first moment Keenan stepped into the Denizen his senses were on edge. It had been this way every time he walked into the place. He couldn't alert his mistress just yet to who he was. It would defeat the purpose of him trying to infiltrate the Den and flesh out who was really a demon and who was an innocent working for the demon. It was his job to eradicate the foul souls that plagued the earth. His latest assignment wasn't supposed to be this long. Normally he was in and out of a place in a month tops.

Originally Van had briefed him on the job and informed him that he was going to be taking out an upper level demon. That was nothing new to Keenan. In all his years of catching supernatural criminals, he had staked vampires, beheaded werewolves, killed incubi, and demons from all realms of hell. Killing them was easy. They never suspected what he was until the very last moment. However, once he made his first appointment at the Den, he realized this was going to be his hardest assignment yet.

He had altered his appearance and made up a cover story. He went in as a washed up stockbroker who needed a fix to get his life back on track. His girlfriend had left him for another woman and he wasn't sure what to do with his life. Somehow he had ended up at the Denizen. She swallowed his cover hook, line and sinker. Keenan didn't want to believe this was the same woman who had begged for his life ages ago. She wore the same smile. Her eyes were the same deep blue that lured him the first time. And her voice was just as sweet. They didn't start their sessions until a couple of weeks later. He had explained to her that he didn't want much only to play with her feet because he had a massive foot fetish. She indulged him by wearing stilettos and

boots. He sucked on her toes and played with her feet until he tired of that façade. Then he became a balding salesman who needed a break from the kids every once in a while. Sometimes he booked a two hour session because he needed more time to be with her. He told her his deepest and darkest secrets. He was getting a divorce and his ex was a bitch. He needed someone to spank him. Every masquerade he wore, Emera was the one he wanted. She always obliged in whatever his fantasies were. She never came across as anything else but the angelic dominatrix that she appeared to be.

Now he was in the guise of a good looking man. Somewhat muscular with a crew cut, square jaw, who had been doing construction since he'd gotten out of the army. Molding his shape was a gift he had received when he accepted the position of a Demon Catcher. It threw the demons off, they were so smug they didn't bother to look past the outer layers of a human's mind. If they questioned his persona, he was fortified with back stories in his thoughts, memories of the made up life of each person he portrayed. All of the faces he wore had once been real people. He and the other Demon Catchers were allowed to use the cast off lives of those who died and ascended to Heaven to bring in the evil sons of bitches. Demons only cared about collecting souls. The more the better and the higher up the ladder they could climb in hell. His main goal now was Sebastian, the leader of the Denizen.

Sebastian appeared to be a handsome man but underneath the facade was a demon so horrible he could burn the flesh from a human's bones with one glimpse. He was close to Lucifer in the sense he was in the second circle of the fallen angel's leaders, a general among the hell spawn. Keenan wasn't sure if Emera knew where her Master stood in the scheme of things, but if she was loyal to him then her head would roll too. He kept praying that a spark of goodness still resided inside her. If there was, then he could save her. If there wasn't, then her punishment would be worse than Sebastian's a hundred times over, because she had been an angel. When most angels fall and turn to the dark, Heaven doesn't take too well to those who have betrayed it.

He gazed around the opulent waiting room of the Denizen. It looked to be a posh office space. The desk was made of a dark oak. The floors were laid with black marble.

The opaque door behind him had only a suite number written in gold letters on it. Two large black leather chairs were behind him. A coffee table had a row of magazines laid out for anyone to read. He waited at the front desk staring at the receptionist. Her blonde hair covered most of her face. It was obviously a wig, but she wore it well. She chewed on a pen. He waited for her to get off the phone. His persona needed a quick fix after working all day at the construction site. He was wired. It didn't care what was done to him just as long as he got to play out the fantasy he desired. He wanted to be tied down and have his stomach tickled until he cried uncle. The receptionist rolled her eyes and gestured to the phone.

He shrugged. He turned and examined the wall behind him. A picture of a laced up leather corset, shown from behind was hanging there. Another photo had a woman suspended from the ceiling with metal hooks in her back. The look on her face was pure bliss. Everyone had their own kink. Keenan sighed. This wasn't a scheduled appointment. He had to see Emera one more time to be certain. He had to look into her heart and know if her soul was blackened from all the evil deeds she had preformed.

The click clack of high heels on the tile floor echoed down the hall. He turned and peered down the long corridor and saw his angel coming toward him. She was a vision in a black flowing gown. It brought out the creaminess of her skin. It had large slits up the sides which showed off her shapely legs. Her hair was midnight black, but under the lights, he saw the blood red highlights. She flashed him a smile when she reached the desk.

"May I help you?" Her voice hadn't lost the crystalline quality it had when he knew her centuries ago. He yearned to break out of his mask and tell her who he was, but to do that right now could jeopardize the entire mission.

"Yes, I hear this is the place to come if you want to live out your fantasies. A friend of mine highly recommended you all. He said that I should ask for Lady Emera." He gave her a confident grin and hoped she would sense he was eager to please her.

A twinkle came to her eye. "Well, you've come to the right place." She extended her hand. "I'm Emera. Nice to meet you."

After a moment's hesitation, Keenan took it and brought it to his lips. He put a small amount of his power behind the gesture so she would feel an instant connection between them. It was against the rules, but he didn't care. He wanted her to be his fantasy girl. She scrutinized him. He sensed her uncertainty. Her eyes widened when he slid his hand along her inner wrist. *Maybe I overdid it. But damn. Just being around her makes me want to break protocol and scoop her up and make love to her. Maybe I'm kicking myself in the ass and the outcome will be me taking her head. I guess I have to make the best of it while I still can. I think that's why I keep seeing her. Oh, Emera, please be good under all the evil that I sense. I don't want to see you put under Heaven's torture.*

"I'd be honored if you could make room for me in your busy schedule."

She laughed and pulled her fingers away. "Well, I might be able to make room. Why don't we go into my office and we can discuss what you desire?"

He nodded. "I'd like that."

She turned and began to head down the hallway. He hesitated and then walked after her once she turned around and gave him a coy smile. The twinkle in her eye made his heart tighten. He began to follow, but then her boss appeared from out of nowhere, separating them. Keenan resisted the urge to cover his nose from the sulfuric stench that permeated the air after Sebastian's arrival.

"What do we have here?" the demon purred. He walked around Keenan sizing him up.

Emera stopped and came back to rescue him. The little gesture secured it in his heart that she wasn't evil to the core. That she was only playing the part to keep the demon at bay. "I was just taking Mr.—" She glanced at him since they hadn't exchanged names.

"Nomen. Able Nomen." Keenan met Sebastian's butterscotch colored eyes and didn't look away. The demon's power settled on his thoughts.

"I was about to take Mr. Nomen to my office so we could discuss arrangements for his sessions," Emera told her boss.

Sebastian pushed his power upon Keenan's thoughts. His ghost persona was a competitive man by nature. He was always drinking his workers under the table and

played a lot of poker or basketball. He was used to getting his way. Finally, he dropped his gaze. If he came across as anything but a mere mortal, it might give Sebastian an indication that there was more to him. The demon stroked his chin. "Em, why don't you let me take Mr. Nomen? I'm sure I can meet his needs just fine." His voice was velvet smooth. "Won't you, Mr. Nomen." Within the statement, he heard what he really said. "Come to me." The mental suggestion was only a small nudge, but the longer he stayed it would become more powerful until the demon had bent him to his will.

"I'm sorry, sir. Although, I'm sure you're very proficient at your profession, I'd prefer a woman in my fantasy. If you don't mind." Keenan forced a smile.

The demon chuckled. He ran his finger down Keenan's cheek. "It's such a shame really. We could've had a lot of fun. Unfortunately, we can't all swing both ways. It seems then that we don't have anything here for you then." *\$I think it's best if you leave.\$*

Keenan tried his best not to jerk away from the sudden touch. The unspoken warning was something he knew he should heed. He glanced at Emera once more. Her eyes locked with his. At that moment, the longing to stay and protect her washed over him. *I can't let myself get caught up in this right now. I have to remember the mission. No matter what happens, I'll rescue you in the end.* "I'm afraid not. It's a shame. I had quite a lot of money to spend. Forgive me for wasting your time." Keenan smiled once more at Emera and then walked out the door. Sebastian's gaze burned into his back while he exited the Denizen. He waited for the demon to say something else to him, but he didn't.

Once he was outside, he drew in long draughts of air to purge the sulfur from his lungs. The brand over his heart began to burn. He rubbed it absently. The sensation meant a demon was close or his handler was coming and he wasn't happy. He stared into the night sky marveling at the full moon. In all the centuries he had been alive, the beauty of the world around him had never ceased to amaze him. The night air wrapped around him, but did little to cool his spirit. Walking a few blocks to contemplate what had transpired tonight, he spied a small abandoned park. Keenan strolled over and slumped on one of the benches. The gentle wind kept blowing the perfume of the



magnolias around him. It did little to rid Emera from his mind. The sweet scent only made him want her more. The image of her being held down and reaching out to him haunted him. Suddenly the pain of the fire licked the soles of his feet once more. The sound of screams filled his ears.

"What the hell were you thinking going to the Denizen tonight?"

Keenan didn't acknowledge Van. All the handlers were Warrior Angels who led a special garrison in Heaven. There were only a few Demon Catchers in the world and each one was blessed to be given the chance to work for Heaven. At least that was part of the propaganda he'd been given before he made his choice to become one. In the end, he wondered what his reward would be. Vangelis said that all Demon Catchers were given an extraordinary place in Eden when the time came. He didn't want anything like that. All he craved was for the woman he loved to be in his arms once more and to put down the fiend who had separated them.

"What do you want me to do? Lately I find that I can't keep away from her. I'm drawn to her inner light. I had to see her once more before I revealed myself to her."

"I fear Sebastian is on to you. Going to her again is not a good idea, Keenan. I can only do so much to keep you safe."

"I don't care about that demonic asshole. He's the one who did this to her in the first place! And I never asked you to keep me safe. I can take care of myself," Keenan barked.

Van grabbed his shoulder. "You should care. I understand that you can take care of yourself, but sometimes human thinking becomes clouded by emotions. Remember your mission, Keenan, take the demon out and then you can try for Emera. This is what you've wanted for centuries. You won't get another opportunity like this again. Don't blow your chance. You do realize that the others didn't want you to have this assignment. I had to talk them into it."

The amazing power of the celestial creature pushed against him stronger than the breeze. This was news to him. "And why is that?"

"They felt that you were too personally involved. I told them you could get past

your human emotions and do this the way you would any other job. You're one of our best warriors. Don't fuck this up. Remember the plan."

"I remember. I don't plan on being distracted again."

The angel patted his shoulder. "Good."

The weight of the angel's presence lifted. Keenan glanced up at the sky and saw a star shoot across the horizon. He wasn't sure if it was Van being a smug bastard or if it was a natural occurrence. Either way, it didn't do anything to warm his heart. It only brought him back to the night when he had first seen Emera. It was the omen of the comet which got his attention and had driven him from his humble home. Where the star had fallen he found his angel humming by the water. She was everything to him. She was his reality and in all the centuries he had been away from her that still hadn't changed.

## Chapter Five

Emera attended the weekly staff meeting and kept her first few appointments, while her mind was in a daze. Her thoughts were on the man who had come in earlier asking specifically for her. He was just an attractive guy, nothing to rave about, but there was something in the way he had touched her hand. The gentle caress of his lips had aroused her more than any of the humans she'd ever punished. Sebastian hadn't wanted her to discipline him. It was quite clear in the way he used his power on the man to push him out of the Denizen that he wasn't welcome. She hadn't sensed anything out of the ordinary about him.

*Bas has never driven away clientele before. There has to be something about that guy that I'm not getting. What is it that got Bas so riled? He'd even snapped at Cindy after the staff meeting. She didn't dare ask her master in case he retaliated. He had been on edge ever since their last meeting. Even though she ached to see the heavenly garden again, she wasn't about to request an early session. Maybe I'll ask him once he cools down. I could offer him a little treat. Maybe then he'll be more cordial. She ran her hand through her hair and forced the man from her thoughts. I have to focus on my clients. It would ruin my reputation if they departed unsatisfied. Not that anyone ever has. She bit her lip and smiled.*

Her next victim, client, squirmed on the chair waiting for his first session to begin. She stifled a yawn and found she was bored. *Maybe I'm too old for this. I used to get off watching them writhe. Here I thought falling would be worth it. I don't even remember why I did that. The once crystalline songs of the angelic choirs are lost to me. I used to be able to recall*

*them so clearly, but now nothing. I never thought I'd miss them. The only one I really miss is Keenan. My beloved. I can only hope that your soul found some happiness in the afterlife. If it weren't for me you never would have been put through such hell. Maybe my punishment is to do this work for the rest of eternity and I'll never get out from under Sebastian's yoke.*

"Um...do I call you, Mistress? Ma'am...?"

She blinked, being called back from the pull of her past memories and regrets. Her client wore a rumpled suit that was a cheap knock off. The polka dotted tie was too snug around his neck. His remaining blond hair crowned his head in a bad comb over in an attempt to cover his bald spot. His face had a pinched look to it. She felt a little bad for him. Either he had been referred by his therapist to work out some of his issues or he'd gotten the gumption up to ask a coworker to recommend the best leather bar in town and instead he was given the Den's address. She sat on the bed across from him and wondered what his thing was. From the look of him, she assumed that he could use a good whipping. Her new client fidgeted. Smiling, she crossed her legs giving him a view of her shapely calves. His eyes trailed from her face down to her breasts.

"So how does this work? Do you spank me now or later?"

She chuckled. "Mr. Rafkin, I appreciate your enthusiasm about all of this, but the first meeting I have with clients is to get to know them better. It builds trust between you and I. It's a very rare occasion that I immediately start crafting scenes. That takes even more time and planning so we both get more out of the experience." She watched his expression and saw that he wasn't happy. There was something more about him than he was telling her.

Following her hunch, Emera rested her hand lightly on his knee. Her power flowed over him wrapping him in her spell. He closed his eyes and quivered. His breathing intensified. His pleasure washed over her. The pain of her horns twisting through her skin made her bite her lip. Once her seductive abilities twisted around his heart and brought him to the verge of orgasm she could do whatever she wanted with him. Right now he hovered right on the edge. Once he came, he would be completely bespelled. Her inner demon demanded his soul, but she squelched the urge immediately. The darkness inside of her was not going to win.

His hips rose up off the chair. His erection pushed against the seam of his pants. "Please fuck me," the man gasped.

Emera's lust rose. Her horns grew a little longer. She knelt before her client and pressed her palm against his length. "All in due time," she purred.

She leaned up and kissed him lightly on the lips tasting the sourness of his breath. He moaned again. Her inner demon nearly cheered feeling the man slipping more and more under her power. This was only part of the abilities she'd inherited from Sebastian for her loyalty along with the horns. From him, she had learned the art of seduction. Part of her inner demon's powers was that of a succubus. She could drive this man insane if she wanted. The only thing binding Emera to her master was the contract she had signed. She was his in all ways and to do his bidding she had to collect souls.

*The more the better,* her demon said.

"I'm yours."

She giggled and ran her finger down his cheek. "I know, dearest. Now open your eyes and tell me why you're really here. Are you a cop? If you answer my questions, then I'll let you do whatever you want to me." She kissed his lips lightly.

Tears leaked from his eyes. His expression changed from pleasure to shock at seeing her horns. Her power had him now. He drew in a breath. She licked her lips sensing his need for release. It would soon be so painful he would crawl over nails to do anything for her. His hips thrust forward when she squeezed his balls. "Fuck me!"

"Not just yet. First, tell me why you're here. Then I'll climb on top of you and ride you all night."

"I-I'm a reporter."

*Figures!* She kissed his cheek tasting the sweet hint of fear "So you thought you could do a story about the Denizen, go undercover, and write about how my employees are really giving blowjobs and riding their clients? Is that your game?"

"Yes."

His very response fully awoke the demon she carefully kept at bay. The walls around her inner beast fell away. The temperature rose in the room. Her nails

lengthened and curled around the contours of his cheek. The weight of her wings unfurled around her blotting out the light over head. Sebastian had once said the more souls she enslaved, the more her feathers would drop off until her wings were completely leather. Only a few had fallen off so far. She licked the side of his face and straddled him. Wrapping her hand around his neck, she began to grind against him, drawing out his ecstasy. He was so close, but she locked her power down on his mind and wouldn't let him release. She trapped his body so his arms were locked at his sides. He ached to hold onto her. To feel her breasts pressed against him. To have her legs wrapped around his waist while fucking him until he was raw. Emera rocked against him until he lifted off the chair fighting against her hold on him. *He has some spunk, but he won't be able to get away from me that easily.* She pushed deeper into his thoughts, peeling away the visions of what he wanted to do to her.

"Oh, you *are* a dirty, dirty boy." His twisted fantasies about young girls popped into her mind. No matter what she did to him, it wasn't the worst thing she could do. He was a pedophile. At that cold, dose of reality, she pulled out of his thoughts. He left a bad taste on her tongue. Her wings folded across her back and disappeared from sight. "Well, it's too bad you'll never get to tell your story."

"I'll do whatever you want me to do. Just fuck me."

Emera eased off of him and then patted his knee. "I know you will, but it won't be me you'll be screaming for."

With a flick of her hand, the man was bound in silver manacles. The chains were forged in the bowels of hell that could trap any angel, demon, or soul. Emera had done her stint in them on occasion when Sebastian was feeling particularly cruel. Within the bonds she didn't heal, but had to suffer the pain and pleasure of her master's ministrations. Once the metal touched his flesh, her spell was broken. She walked away and smoothed the hair from her face trying to purge the images she had gleaned in his mind. There were enough gruesome visions stored in her mind, she didn't need his baggage too.

"What kind of bullshit is going on here? Let me out of these chains, bitch. I'm going

to call the cops on your ass and they'll shut you down so fast you won't have time to blink."

"I doubt that." She jabbed her finger under his chin and lifted his head up to meet her eyes. "You see the police chief is a good client of mine. I have something else for you in mind. "Sebastian," she called. Velvet fingers crept along her spine. She did her best to squelch her rising disgust. He could never be allowed to know she wanted nothing to do with him now. The only thing she wanted from him was a continuation of their sessions. That was the only thing their relationship was good for as far as she was concerned.

"You called, *cher*," Sebastian nibbled her throat while he cupped her breasts. He rolled her nipples and pinched them just hard enough so he elicited a moan from her.

Even though he raised her desire, she hated how her body responded to him. "I have a gift for you."

His cock pressed against her ass. "I love presents. Are you sure you don't want to unwrap him yourself? He looks ever so tasty."

The man's eyes widened. "Keep that freak away from me." A horrified look froze on his face.

Sebastian's tail wound around her leg and tickled the folds of her nether lips. She ground against him playing the part as she had done for so long. Soon she would have to figure a way out from under him. First she had to placate him. Hopefully, this man would be a start.

"I figured you wanted to peel him away and mold him. He's more your kind than mine."

His spaded tail slipped deep inside her while he grasped her hips and pulled her against him. His tail moved slowly with a mind of its own. Her body responded with the rhythm he culled. Emera stared at the man in chains. His gaze was transfixed on them. His lust touched upon her mind and fueled the demon inside her. The demon smiled and escaped her mental holdings. It didn't despise what Sebastian was doing to her. Her inner demon wanted everything her master gave her. It yearned to please him.

It would do anything to see that he was satisfied even if that meant flaying the man before her and then fucking his corpse. Just so long as her master was happy. The angelic side of her slipped away and the darkness took over. Emera tried to hang onto the light, but at the moment she was drowning in the shadows.

"How can you let that monster touch you?" her appointment asked.

"Monster? He's my Master. He only wants the best for me."

Emera turned and smiled lovingly at Sebastian. Now that her angelic persona was behind mental bars she could please her master. She kissed him lightly on the lips and met his tongue with hers. The salty taste of brimstone clung to his tongue. He deepened the kiss and plunged his tongue far into her mouth. Sebastian's hands trailed down her stomach and played with the elastic of her skirt. All she craved was for him to fuck all of her orifices. Tie her to the bed and make her beg for release. He pulled away after a moment and faced the pedophile.

"This monster, as you call me, has had more cocksuckers than you can ever imagine. Soon you'll be worshipping me as your god. Like this fine piece of ass here, you'll come to the understanding that everything that's yours will soon be mine." He ran his hand down the reporter's cheek.

Emera giggled when he moaned. The lust that Sebastian culled in him was only a small smidgen of his power. Humans were lucky to even be touched by him. Normally his fare was other supernatural creatures who knew what true delights he could give. Sebastian's tail increased its speed inside her slick well. His hands settled over her sixth energy point, the one that governed her sexual organs, and sent intense bursts of energy into it. When the first pulse hit, Emera came. Sebastian held her tight to him and continued his assault. She was beyond herself and Sebastian was her puppet master. He pushed his cock into the cleft of her ass and funneled his desire into her spurring on her inner demon. He pushed the shoulder of her shirt down and kissed along her shoulder. The angel inside was screaming to be liberated from Sebastian's sexual haze, but the demon sank into it.

"Tell me how much you love this, \$her!"



"I fucking love it, Master. I'll do whatever you want. Please don't stop!"

"Tell him what will happen to him once I taste him."

Pleasure nearly drove her insane. Inside her mind, she saw the dark and fathomless pits of hell before her. Flames jumped and danced around tortured souls. Their screams were music to her ears. They reached out to her. Their cries filled her heart with a cold delight that she wanted to see all of them burn.

"Tell him, love," Sebastian urged her. His fingers trailed over her stomach and snuck under her shirt. Once his warm hands touched her flesh, she ground against him. "Oh, Em, I do so love it when you let out your naughty self. It makes things so much more fun. Now tell him what I can do."

A cold smile turned up the corner of her lips. She locked her gaze with her appointment. "He'll fuck you until you bleed. He'll bring you so much desire you'll weep for him to stop. You'll crave his touch until you're his slave. And when you think he'll finish you off, he'll leave you suspended in yearning until your soul has been burned away. Only then will you know his true nature. Only then can you call him Master."

Sebastian caught her cheek between his teeth and tugged on her skin. His tail plunged into her one final time. At that moment, he bit down hard into the meat of her shoulder. Her pussy wrapped around his tail and she shivered in his embrace. The demon inside of her never wanted to let him go, but she sensed he had plans for the present she offered him.

"I'll take it from here, *cher*. He'll be yummy. Thank you for the gift. I forgive you for your earlier show of disobedience. I know it was only your lighter side getting in the way. Sometimes I wish I could separate the two of you. I love it when you get to come out and play."

"Please don't leave me, Master," she whimpered.

Her master kissed the side of her neck and then snapped his fingers. Emera was freed of his influence and collapsed to her knees feeling empty. Her angelic side quickly surged forward and pushed the demon back into its cage. Her body still trembled from

the desire that surged through her. A vision of Heaven unfolded in her thoughts. The beautiful garden was there and then it exploded in flames. No way would she ever escape Sebastian's hold. This was his way of letting her know she was his forever. Tears ran down her cheeks seeing the beauty destroyed. The one place where she had found sanctuary.

His velvet laughter exploded behind her. "Like I said in the beginning, *\$cher\$*. Everything you have is mine. You can't keep anything from me. You'll never be free of me. Even if you let out your inner demons. Both sides of you are mine always. Now, I appreciate the little snack you've brought me and I meant what I said. I forgive you. For now, let me have some fun with this one. He'll be ever so delicious."

Emera didn't answer, but wiped her eyes. She got up on shaking legs, gathered her things and left the room. The weight of his words settled on her soul. Everything he said was true. She was his. Forever and ever, until the end of eternity.

## Chapter Six

Keenan glanced at himself in the mirror. It was almost time for his regular appointment with Emera. He hated that he had to appear to be weak. A balding man with thick lenses in his glasses, short in stature, wearing a mismatched suit looked back at him from the mirror. He had a green bowtie around his neck and purple suspenders holding up his pants, he felt like an escaped circus clown. Everything in him yearned to walk in and smite Sebastian. That had been his original plan. However, when he first walked into the Denizen, to get the lay of the land, he was taken aback. He couldn't be sure, but he thought he had seen Emera. His first glimpse was only out of the corner of his eye. The instant that she greeted him, he was floored. This was what he had been waiting for all these centuries. She was there. His angel. He smiled at the memory of seeing her for the first time.

He adjusted his bowtie once more. It didn't matter if his handler was pissed with him after all was said and done. The assignment was going to happen on his terms. He already had it worked out in his mind. Sebastian was going to burn under Heaven's scrutiny. He didn't want to imagine what the Warrior Angels would do to him. He had heard stories of what the angels did to demons, putting them through torture until they were completely cleansed. *That can't happen to Emera. I won't let them take the woman I love away from me. I know there's an angel still inside of her.*

The weight of his sword hung heavy across his back. *I should take it with me just in case. I can't predict when Sebastian might strike.* He shook his head, lifted the sheath, and then threw it on the bed. *It can wait. I don't want to spook her.* Instead, he walked over to

his bureau and opened up the small box sitting on top of it. Inside the velvet interior was a small white feather. It could have been the inner down of a bird or something as ordinary as having come from a pillow that had lost some stuffing, but it wasn't. It was a very special token that he'd hung onto all through the centuries. It was the one thing keeping him connected to Emera.

The second time they had met in secret by the lake was when she had told him she was an angel. He hadn't believed her at first, but when she spread her wings and blotted out the moon, he'd fallen to his knees before her and began to worship her. Her smile had been sweet and kind. He'd known she was special, but in that moment he understood exactly what she was. Emera had never wanted that kind of prostration. She only ached to be loved. In his naiveté, he had offered her his soul. She told him no. That she couldn't have anything happen to him. They had to keep their meetings hushed. Not even the wind could know about them. She had never told him about her sordid past. They only spoke of love and the garden she had fallen from. The pain in her voice at the remembrance cut him to the quick even now. He had tried to placate her, but nothing seemed to work. That night she told him that she loved him and that she would do anything to keep him safe, but she wasn't a guardian angel. To be sure he knew how much her heart was with him, she plucked the single feather from her wing. He wore it over his heart for many years after that.

He caressed the spot where she had touched him on that last perfect day before they were discovered. The smooth touch of her fingers on his cheek was like the brush of a flower petal. After all these years, her touch was present, burned into his memories. Deep in his heart, he knew what he was doing was the right thing. He ran his hand over the brand. It was a net, shaped like the Dream Catchers the Native American's used, so that he could catch demons. Nothing could slip through his web.

He plucked the feather out of the box and laid it on his bureau. *The feather will be the last gift I give to her. For now she only gets the box.* After his encounter with Sebastian, he thought about going to meet with him and taking him on. However, he didn't want to make it too obvious. There were other ways that he could infiltrate the Denizen. He had

the power to do it. Van wouldn't be too pleased, but he didn't care anymore. Being so close to her and yet so far away made it hard. Tonight he was going to be the gift and see what she did with him. If she turned him over to Sebastian, then he knew all was lost. If she didn't, then she was still his angel. His love for her hadn't died. It had only gotten stronger. Each visit he made, along with each little present, was his way of proving to himself that she was still pure. That she was still his angel. Tonight would be a big step. He would delve into her heart. If all went well he would use some of the gifts he'd sent to her. Already his cock tightened thinking about the meeting he had dreamed up.

He took the small key next to the feather and placed it inside the box. Then he slid the box into a brown envelope and wrote her name on it.

"Will you take this to her?" Keenan asked.

At once Vangelis appeared in the room with him. The angel was more of a guardian at times, watching out for him. Of course he was off doing his own job, but even after centuries of being together, Keenan barely knew an inkling about Van and what he did. He wasn't sure if he had another Demon Catcher assigned to him or not.

"I'm tired of being your messenger. By the way, I know what you're planning on doing. It goes against what we worked out. Why are you doing this now? Why haven't you done this sooner?"

"I have my reasons. I'm not going in there guns blazing and have her die in the crossfire or be used for cannon fodder. After all this time, I have to tell her who I am. I have to look into her heart with no walls around it and see if she can be redeemed. When I know the truth, then I'll go after Sebastian."

"They want to know what your altered time line is."

"I don't care what they want. Tell your bosses that it's my way or nothing this time. I've done everything you ever asked of me. I've never complained. I've always done everything by the book. I appreciate you giving me this chance, but I need to know if she still loves me. Your kind can never understand exactly what human love is."

His handler laughed. "I know more about love than you, dear boy. I love my

creator with all the passion in the universe. That is *pure* love. Human love is diluted. It bends the heart and mind until it becomes a mockery of itself. It is *your* kind that doesn't comprehend the true meaning of love."

Keenan didn't respond. He didn't agree at all with what Van just said. "Love is pure. No matter whose heart it lives in. I'm going to see her. Nothing is going to stand in my way. I don't care if you strip me of my powers."

"There is no need for that. I assure you. But be warned, it could be dangerous. I'm not talking about the demon getting involved either. Other factors have come to light now too. That is the real reason I have come tonight. Not to be your errand boy."

This made him pay more attention. He didn't appreciate it when his missions got more complicated. It only meant the best laid plans would go to waste. He handed the envelope to Van. "I don't think of you as an errand boy. What are the other factors?"

The angel examined the envelope and ran his finger over Emera's name. A flash of white arced between the angel's palm and the brown envelope. He assumed his power was reacting to what had once been in the box. "What's in this?"

Keenan was stunned. He assumed that the angel knew exactly what it was. "Nothing actually. It's more of a promise of more to come. When she looks inside and doesn't see anything, it will make her wonder. Now what's the other complication?"

"We've learned that Sebastian is in league with another demon. We're not sure of the plans of the other demon, but it's something far worse than what Sebastian is. Their union could create a rift in the very fabric of the universe. Whoever this other demon is, it's strong enough to entice Sebastian to join forces with it. He's always worked alone. You have to watch your back. Something powerful is going on below. All the information we have is from an angel who risked his life to get the intel. We don't know if your beloved Emera is involved or not. If she is, you won't have a choice but to also cleanse her. The evil in this is too great. According to our lost source. If all of this comes to pass, this power will be greater than Lucifer. Do you know what that will mean?"

"I don't care what it means. You will do *nothing* to her."

The angel straightened up and clutched the package close to his chest. "It's not my

choice. I'm only following orders the same as you. I'll bring this to her. But no more. If you have anything else planned, then it's up to you."

Keenan nodded. He stood before the mirror again and straightened his hair. He glanced at his sword and debated taking it with him. If there was something else going on at the Denizen, then he might need it. *Damn it. I don't need any more surprises.* Sighing, he took up his sword again and slung it over his back. He gritted his teeth trying to figure out what darker power could be unfolding at the Den. Whatever it was, he prayed that Emera wasn't involved with it.

## Chapter Seven

Emera opened her eyes slowly. She got up from the bed. Trying to stand, her legs wobbled. Her arms shook. Everything about her hurt. It felt like she had been beaten up. *Oh wait, I was.* Sebastian had chained her to the rack the night before. Her remembrance of their meeting was faint. Her demonic half had pushed her angelic personality aside to please its master. Emera never enjoyed having the split personalities inside her mind. During the first century of her existence, it had been a constant battle to keep the demon at bay. Sebastian had told her, if she accepted her demonic half, then they could integrate personalities. The thought of succumbing to the pure evil he had spawned inside of her turned her stomach so she fought tooth and nail until her dominate personality was in control. That was who she was all the time, the angel.

Taking a moment, she fought through the murky memories. The demon hadn't relinquished its hold on her body and for the first time in months during their weekly sessions she hadn't glimpsed the garden. She had orgasmed the same, but there was no light at the end of the long dark tunnel. Her muscles cried out when she stretched. She didn't enjoy the fact the demon had gotten the better of her. *Next thing you know, I'll be the one in the cage and the demon will be ruling. I can't let that happen.*

Taking her time she showered, changed, and ventured downstairs into the Den. Cindy was at the desk wearing a bright pink sundress, four-inch white platform sandals wrapped around her calves and a plastic pink rose ring that matched her dress. She was busy attaching her white fake eyelashes when she saw Emera. Her blond wig was



longer today and braided.

"Hey, girl."

"Hey, Cindy. You got a date later?"

"Yeah with a mega hot body." The receptionist glanced up at her. "So when was the last time you went on a date?"

It took her a moment to answer, stunned at the question. Cindy normally didn't ask about her personal life. "Ahh...gosh I can't remember. Why?" Emera picked through the mail Cindy had set aside for her.

The receptionist shrugged. "I don't know. You seem kinda lonely. When was the last time you got laid? And I don't mean whatever you have going on with Sebastian. I know that there's something between you two."

Emera closed her eyes trying to recall the last time she had actually made love to a man. The last time someone held her and told her that she was something special. It had been a long time. The last and only man she'd ever let get close to her came to mind. His smile blazed in her thoughts. She tried to squash the rising emotions before they washed over her, but wasn't successful. A lump of emotion balled in her throat. "I-it's been a long time." She swallowed back the tears. "And there's nothing going on between me and Bas." She gave Cindy a small smile and focused on the two envelopes she found in the pile of mail.

"Sweetie, I know you try to push off the sadistic hold that he has over you, but it's wearing you down. I see it every day you come in here. Why don't you call the cops on his ass for what he does to you? It's not right! Women shouldn't be treated that way."

She was stunned. "I'm sorry. I don't know what you're talking about."

Cindy leaned over the desk and placed a hand on her shoulder. "Look, girl. We all know that pretty package he's wrapped up in hides something dark and sinister. You don't need to be treated like some ho. We all know you run this joint more than he does. Why do you let him treat you so horribly? You're not his bitch. I've seen you put your foot down on harder asses than him."

*If you only knew the truth. I would tell you what I truly am, if I could, but you'd never understand or believe me. God, the cops wouldn't be able to take him down. He owns half of the*

*police force and the other half already comes in here looking for our favors. I'd never get away with calling the law on him. The only way I'll ever be free of Bas is if he's brought before Heaven's justice.* "I appreciate the kind words and that you care. It means a lot, but there's nothing I can do. You could say I sold my soul and now I'm fucked. So please don't ask me again. I wouldn't want to see you get hurt."

Cindy gazed into her eyes and gave her shoulder one more hard squeeze. "Okay, but I'll be keeping my eye out. If he hurts you, he's going to have to deal with me and a few of my friends."

"Thanks, Cin."

"Anytime." She sat back down and focused on doing her makeup.

Emera glanced at the two envelopes again. The first one had the same fancy looped handwriting from the similar letter she had received the week before. *I'm really not in the mood for cryptic today.* She pulled out an invitation card. Once she did, red letters started to appear on the parchment. She read the note knowing that there was a supernatural being behind it.

*If you wish to rid yourself of the darkness that lies within, then I can help you.*

She waited for more to materialize, but nothing. *Probably another one of Sebastian's stunts. I'll ask him later.* She slid the card back into the envelope and then focused on the other package. It was smaller than the one from the week before. *What has he sent me this time?* Her anticipation doubled. Cindy drummed her nails on the counter mirroring her feelings. She glanced at the other invitation again and wondered what the message meant, but her curiosity got the better of her concerning what was in the other package. Finally she ripped it open only to find a small box inside. She set it down on the counter and stared at it.

Cindy swiped it up and examined the box. "Nothing kinky about this! You sure it's from the same guy?"

Rolling her eyes, Emera replied. "Yes. The handwriting is the same. It doesn't have to be sex related. Sometimes I do prefer to get jewelry and flowers too. You were the one just asking me about the last time I was out on a date. Well if I ever find out who is sending me these gifts then I might just ask him. Damn girl, why does everything have

to be about the kinky bling for you?"

"Because that's how I was made." Cindy batted her long eyelashes at her.

Emera ignored her and swiped the box back from her open palm. Cindy stuck her tongue out at her and Emera did the same. When the box was finally opened, all she found inside was a small key. She plucked it out of the velvet container and examined it. It could go to a jewelry box or some kind of miniature padlock. There was a slip of paper inside and which read:

*Soon. K.*

*Who are you? she wondered. Why are you sending me these trinkets? If you knew the true me then you wouldn't want to be with me.*

"He gave you a key? What the hell are you supposed to do with that?" Cindy asked.

She shrugged. "Well open something, duh? Maybe it's the key to his heart. So, who is the lucky guy you're getting all snazzy for?" Emera asked.

Cindy smiled. A faint blush colored her cheeks. Emera had never seen her so bashful before. "Just some hottie whose world I'm going to devastate. Oh, I meant to tell you that your nine o'clock is here. He booked a double session."

Emera forced a smile. "Just what I needed a dual dose of knot tying and spankings. It's going to be a long night."

"Jeff isn't that bad. He worships the ground you walk on. Maybe he's the one who's been sending you all of those wonderful toys."

She snorted. "It's bad you know who I was talking about just by mentioning his kinks. And I doubt he would be the one sending me the presents. He doesn't have the imagination for it."

"Don't underestimate people. Not everyone is what they seem to be. You never know whose hiding behind a mask. I've been here a while. I know a few things about some of our clients. Some have pretty fluffy wings and others have fangs behind their nice human facades."

Emera met her receptionist's knowing gaze. This was the first time she'd spoken openly about the strange beings that came into the Denizen. If she played dumb, Cindy

would know that she was lying. She could wipe Cindy's memory, but she respected her too much and considered her a friend. She placed the key back in the box and slipped it into her pocket. "No one would believe you if you told them. And it would royally piss me off to boot that you broke our client's confidence. Pissing me off is not a wise decision. I've known you for a long time and you've never said anything before now. Why are you bringing it up?"

Cindy placed her hand on hers. "What I know is between you and God's ears. I would never betray your loyalty to anyone. Not even the devil himself. It never occurred to me until now. Something just made me say it. That's all. Maybe I'm a little psychic from all the weird vibes running around this place."

Emera shook her head. "There are some things even the devil will get out of you."

Cindy shrugged. "Not me."

"That's good to know. And I don't think you want to be psychic in this place. Whatever images you would get could fry your brains. Not even I want to be a fly on the wall during some of the other's sessions. I guess I'd better get ready for my appointment. Wish me luck."

Cindy beamed and air kissed her cheeks. "Em, you don't need luck. You got the looks of a demon and the heart of an angel. I'd die for your cheekbones. And that ass. Gets me jealous every time I see it wiggle by me."

"You're a trip."

"That's what I'm here for. Go knock'em dead."

Emera walked away chuckling. It was kinda nice to know that Cindy knew the truth and that she wasn't going to tell anyone. The little exchange lightened her mood and made her ready for her next appointment. Jeff and she had been working together for over six months. He was a regular kind of guy who slaved away at his job, was divorced, loved to suck on her toes and have her beat him with a paddle. When she brought up deviating from the scene, he balked. They fell into a routine and he saw her once a week depending on how stressed he was. Apparently, his wife was suing him for alimony and custody of the kids. Emera stood outside the room Jeff was in and

snapped her fingers. Before the sound had stopped echoing in the hall, her clothes had magically changed. She was dressed in a leather skirt, leather boots, and a studded leather bra.

She opened the door and found Jeff sitting on the leather bench. He was stiff and waiting for her to come in. His cheeks were red. Without his thick, brown glasses his deep green eyes were visible. They were his best feature. His suit appeared to be new and he wore a green bowtie. Even his shoes were polished. She smiled when she saw him. He wasn't a bad guy, she just got tired of doing the same thing to him over and over again. The demon inside of her wanted to do terrible acts to her client, but she wasn't about to let it. Although today it was pushing on the confines of her mental prison seeing if there were any escape hatches she hadn't blocked. It was itching to do some damage after last night's session with their master.

"Hey, Jeff. How have you been?"

He met her eyes briefly and then glanced down at the dark grey carpet. "Ahh. Good. Thanks. Lady Emera. H-how are things with you?"

She began to examine the pegs on the wall that were lined with all different types of paddles, whips, ropes, blindfolds, and other bondage gear to see what she wanted to use on him. "I'm good thanks. Been busy as usual. It seems hard economic times make it easier for my clients to justify that they need to be beaten up or taken over my knee for a spanking. It might suck for everyone else, but my business has been booming. What about you?" She picked out a long paddle. It was made of wood, but wrapped in leather with small rounded metal studs on it. Running her hand over the leather, she figured this would be a good one to use on him. It was one of the new toys that she had bought and Jeff was always a good sport when it came to breaking in new things.

"Ahh, nothing much. Same old shit. Different day. Work sucks. Wife keeps me busy with suing my ass and fighting for the kids. Good thing though is I got custody of them. Judge found her to be an unfit mother because she was whoring around. Serves the bitch right. Sorry...I-I shouldn't have said that about her. I know you have a rule about getting too personal."

Emera faced her client slapping the paddle lightly in her palm. His eyes grew large. It was true she had a preference for not getting too personal, but sometimes in her job she found that getting private was a way to crack down the walls that some people had around them. She had long ago concluded that she was a glorified psychiatrist with a whip instead of a couch. Either way, she needed her clients to trust her before they embarked on their emotional journey into the fantasy world that she provided.

"No, that's okay. You've been coming here for a while now. I think that we get to know each other a little bit more every time and that you trust me. You're looking good. I like the new suit. You got a date later tonight?"

His neck turned red. He ran a hand through his hair. "No nothing like that. Just felt good about not having to deal with that bitch anymore."

"Well good. It fits you well. So are you ready to get started? I have a new paddle we can try out if you want. Or we can go back to the old ones. Which do you prefer?" She smacked the paddle hard against her palm. The sting felt good flowing up her arm. Jeff jumped from the thwack.

He lifted his head and stared directly at her. He normally didn't do that. His expression was unreadable. In general he was a very decipherable man. He wore his heart on his sleeve and if he was having any conflict with what she was doing or in his personal life she knew just by looking at him. He crossed the space between them until he was only inches away. Having him this close made her a little uncomfortable. She was used to calling the shots.

"I really don't want you to spank me today."

She forced a smile and tried to remain calm. Her inner demon pushed stronger on her walls to be let out. It wanted to devour the puny man's soul and use his body for a suit. Emera shoved the demon back into its cage and dismissed its violent urges. "Do you want to try something new then? We have a whole room of instruments and delights that you haven't experienced yet."

He reached up and placed a hand on her cheek. At the instant of contact, she became a little lightheaded. Jeff's appearance wavered before her. She blinked and

everything returned to normal. "I'm so glad that you feel that we can trust one another. Because there's something I've wanted to do to you for a long time."

She placed a hand on his chest. "No, Jeff, you know the rules. No physical contact unless I say it's okay first. And this is not something that we originally agreed upon. I don't mind you sucking my toes, but you're getting a little too close for comfort."

"I know this frightens you, but it shouldn't. You're so beautiful. And it's been so long..."

"Okay... this is enough. Our session is done for today. I'll have Cindy refund you for the second hour. However, I suggest that you don't think that you can come here again. I appreciate all of your business. Good luck with your wife, but you are no longer welcome here." Emera turned and headed for the door. She went to grab the knob and suddenly that dizziness came over her again. She reached out and caught herself on the wall. Closing her eyes, she took in a few deep breaths to steady herself. When she opened them back up, she saw the room where she had been just moments before was no longer there.

Emera spun back around to find her usual space was gone and so was Jeff. There was no dungeon scene but glistening candles all around. The aroma of roses permeated the space and the bed before her was covered in purple rose petals. She walked toward the bed, stumped at how everything had changed. When she spun around, the door had vanished and she was surrounded with only darkness.

"Okay this is fucked up," she whispered. "Jeff, where are you? Are you okay?" she called into the obscured room. Whatever was happening she hoped her client was all right. She didn't want to see the poor guy get hurt. Gazing around she was surprised at the romantic element the room had. *Sebastian couldn't have done this. Romance was not his style. If it was, I'd be in chains by now and suspended a few feet off the floor.*

"Emera." A whisper sounded in the darkness.

Energy sparked against her skin. She spun back around trying to see who else was with her in the room. There was another stroke of energy along her arm, the brush of fingers against her skin. She turned back around to face the bed. On the pillow she saw a box tiny enough to take a small key. She reached between her breasts and pulled out

the key she had been given earlier. She picked up the box, fitted the key in the lock, and opened it. She expected something nasty to jump out, but instead found nothing inside of it.

"What does this mean? Why are you playing these games with me?" her anger started to rise almost allowing the demon to break free in her mind.

"It's a promise of more to come. The idea that the box has to be filled with one more present."

"Are you the one sending me the gifts?"

A breeze stirred her locks feeling like a ghostly caress.

"I'm the one who's been treating you. The one who has been watching you from afar and yet ever so close waiting for my angel to recognize me. Waiting for her sweet voice to tell me that she still loves me as I continue to love her."

Emera shook her head confused at this stranger in the room. Only once had someone said they loved her after she fell. The flash of that doomed affair came to her mind. After swearing herself to Sebastian and being loyal for a century, she thought she was out from under her master's thumb. She had met a young man and fallen in love. Her wings still had white in them and her heart swelled with hope. She told her lover that she was an angel and had given him a feather as a token of her affection but Sebastian found out about them. Her master strapped him to a rack, tortured him, and burned him alive. Right before the light left his eyes, her lover whispered he loved her. That broke her spirit and she became everything Sebastian had wanted. That was when the demon was first born inside of her. It raised its head from inside her soul and split her personalities when she gave into the evil in her spirit. That was over a thousand years ago. Whoever was doing this was pulling on her heartstrings and playing a malicious joke. She wasn't laughing.

"Who's there? I'm getting tired of your games. You don't want to make me mad."

"Just another loyal customer who wants to please his mistress. Nothing more."

"Don't give me that master/slave bullshit. Obviously you're not really Jeff. I get that now. Fool me once. Bas, if this is your idea of some new kind of torment then



please get it over with. You win."

"Don't mention that bastard's name. He has nothing to do with this. Look what he's done to you. Taken an angel and corrupted her so she doesn't even remember what love and hope are."

Emera wanted a witty come back, but nothing passed her lips. Sebastian had beaten and taken those emotions from her. Now all that remained was lust and hatred. Those were so strong in her she feared one day all she would be was the demon he wanted her to be. One day the angel would be gone completely. She would cease to exist. The fury died inside of her. Whoever this was had infiltrated the Den and fooled her. Now she was at his mercy. The demon inside wanted to fight, but she didn't have the strength. She collapsed on the bed, defeated. "You're right. I barely remember those things. I pretend, but every day it gets harder and harder to see the light."

The presence sighed. "Tell me something. When he flogs you, do you see the garden? Can you smell the flowers and see the angels?"

"Sometimes, but I don't go there to see that. I only hope that I can glimpse one thing. Sometimes I try to venture there even when I dream, but I never can. I wish—" she paused and wiped the tears from her lashes. How could she admit to the one sin that she wished she had never committed?

"You wish you'd never fallen, don't you?"

*How does he know me? Who is he that he knows my inner most feelings? "What does that matter now? I can't take it back. I can't return the souls I've sent to Lucifer. I can't take back all of the pain I've caused and lives I've ruined. I'm damned. God would never take me back." No one would ever take me back. I'm used goods. The only one I'm good enough for now is Sebastian.*

The bed depressed from added weight. A hand rested on her shoulder. "What if I said there was still hope. That somewhere inside of you the emotion still exists. Hope, faith, remorse. Love even."

She closed her eyes and shook her head. Misery washed over her. "If only that were true."

"You see the garden and that's proof of it. If redemption wasn't in the cards, then I

wouldn't have found you, my angel."

Emera glanced over to see a man with deep green eyes, blonde hair down to his chin and tanned skin. The same eyes Jeff had. He wasn't a body builder, his body could be described as average with defined arms. He was dressed all in black. He wasn't the man who she fell in love with ages ago. The one she loved had scraggily brown hair and the face of a cherub. His eyes were naive. This man's eyes were not innocent. "Who are you?"

He ran a hand down her pale cheek. "It's been lifetimes, but it's still me, Emera. My body has changed, but my love for you hasn't. I'm still the Keenan who fell in love with you. Can't you see my soul?"

Emera shook. Reincarnation was possible, but humans lost their memories once they died. It was rare for them to have flashbacks, but to retain whole lifetimes was unheard of. She peered into his eyes. The demon inside of her stirred at the lust he aroused in her. She pulled away before her power could delve into his mind. "It can't be. Humans don't remember their past lives."

He trailed his fingers down her arm. "You're using that as an excuse not to use your powers. You'll find I'm immune to them. You can touch me with lust or fear. Try to dial up my passion or burn my soul, but it won't work. You're just afraid of what you'll find. I've been watching you now for a year. I've been here so many times posing as different men but you never knew. I've licked your toes. You've whipped me, tied me up, and tickled me for hours. Even with all that your power had no affect on me."

Her eyes widened. "Everyone knows lust. Only Lucifer is impervious to such demonic power."

He lifted up his shirt and over his right pec was a tattoo of a dream catcher only with a sword through it. The more she looked at the net the more it shimmered silver. She gasped in horror and pulled away. Only one other being could kill her besides Sebastian and that was a Demon Catcher. They were whispered about among the fires of hell, beings who worked alongside the angels, bounty hunters who executed demons. They were said to be as unfeeling as angels were and killed without mercy. He

reached toward her, but she retreated.

"Don't fear me. Please don't fear me. I've seen the terror in others' eyes, but I can't stand to see it in yours."

"This is a trick."

He held out his hands. She thought his words were sincere, but the only way to be sure was to let down her guard and search his soul. "It's not a trick. I give you my word. I will not unleash my power upon you. Trust me."

Emera reached out her shaking hands and touched the side of his face. His flesh was cool against her palm. She searched his eyes and then delved into his mind feeling no resistance. A deep coldness was inside of him. The core of his power waiting to freeze any demon who came at him. She waited for it to snap around her, but it didn't. Pushing further, she saw his memories opening before her. She was whisked away to the first time he saw her.

Keenan had seen a falling star in the sky and thought he would follow it. When he arrived, he saw her sitting by the lake admiring her reflection. Once he saw her, he loved her instantly. Through the months of their courtship, he brought her gifts and begged her to be his wife. It hurt him when she said no. He had vowed to protect her from anything no matter what manner of foe it was.

The overwhelming emotions locked inside him brought tears to her eyes. Love had been dead inside of her for so long. Sensing the burning emotion, it drove the demon half of her personality deep into hiding because the creature couldn't face anything so pure. Keenan pulled her away from their clandestine meetings and brought her to the moment of his death. She tried to turn away from it, knowing the sensations she carried within her echoed his pain. But he forced her to watch him being tortured and burned. Sebastian didn't grant him any mercy no matter how much she begged. Emera yearned to escape his mind.

*Why are you making me watch this?*

*Because you need to see and I have to know if your tears are real. Forgive me for bringing this hurt upon you again.* His fingers brushed the tears from her cheeks.

Emera shook from the pain raging through her while she saw through his eyes. His

vision was darkening. He could barely breathe, but Keenan's last thought was freeing her from Sebastian. The agony of the fire died. He saw light. She saw it and felt the peace in his soul. He wanted to go into the light, but before his soul was escorted to the other side, an angel appeared. She was not able to see the angel's features due to looking through Keenan's weak eyes. This angel offered him the opportunity to become a Demon Catcher. He wasn't going to take the deal, unless he could free her one day. Upon agreeing, he was pushed into a dying body and branded with the Demon Catcher sigil. The echo of the pain burned her breast the way it did his. Time went forward and she saw flashes of all the creatures he had caught. He did his job regardless of what the monster was. However, one thing remained constant, he never lost his love for her or his wish to free her. Keenan released her from his thoughts then. Emera shook her head and wiped the remaining wetness from her cheeks.

"I'm not worthy of the pedestal you put me on."

"I don't have you on a pedestal. I know what you are and what you've done. I know all the souls you've sent to hell. Deep down I know you never wanted that. I can see the remorse in you. I sense the demonic half inside you. The piece of evil has grown under Sebastian's tutelage. Yet you fight it every day. You think your heart is completely dead, but it's not. There's still an angel inside of you who cares for people. That is the first part of love. If there was nothing good inside of you, then I never could have found you. Let me rekindle that love. That's all I want." Keenan wound his fingers through hers.

A spark moved through Emera. For the first time in a very long time, her heart warmed. *He's right. I must still have something good inside of me because the demon hasn't consumed me completely. God, I want to trust him. I want to believe that this isn't all some fucked up trick and that he's here.* She stared deep into Keenan's eyes and felt the longing that he'd carried for her after all these centuries. He was being honest. She never thought it would be possible to have someone love her again. A smile spread on her lips. The ice melted inside her soul and she began to feel something more than lust. She wrapped her arms around his neck in a spontaneous hug. Emera inhaled his manly

scent and let it settle into her nose so she could memorize it and this perfect moment. His arms entwined around her.

"You're real. I'm sorry I didn't believe you. You didn't forget about me," she sobbed into his shirt. "I never stopped thinking about you. I had to lock you away deep down so Sebastian wouldn't know. Every time I had a glimpse of the garden I prayed that I might see you there." She tried to hold onto him and merge his being with her own. She sensed his hesitation and he went stiff against her.

Keenan pulled away. Emera sniffled. She heard a doomsday bell tolling in the back of her mind. *Now that he's revealed his true nature to me, he's going to pass judgment. I don't deserve to be spared.* She squeezed her eyes shut and wiped them again. *I know I deserve everything I have coming to me. Thank you. Thank you for letting me see him one more time. Thank you for letting me know I was still loved. Thank you for letting me know he never stopped looking for me. I'm ready for the sword of Heaven to pierce my heart and put me out of my misery.* She had done horrible things to humans. Bending their will until they were mindless automatons. Fucking men and women until nothing else mattered except twisting their souls for Lucifer. Their cries warmed the demonic part of her nature. Now seeing Keenan one last time was redemption enough. Knowing he was still alive was a light in her soul giving her the strength to face whatever sentence she had coming.

He gave her a small smile. "I'm not going to kill you, beloved. Would I have sent you all those presents if I intended to shed your blood?"

"Then why are you here?"

"Because I want to hold you and feel your body writhe under mine. It's been so long since your breasts were pressed against my chest and you called my name. I want to hear you scream while you come for me."

Emera blushed. She hadn't made love to a man in ages. "I don't normally get the romantic treatment. And I can't remember the last time I have lain with a human. Sebastian doesn't have it in him to be gentle. And he—"

Keenan planted his mouth on hers. Emera was overcome with shock, but had no problem melting against him and returning his passionate kiss. Placing a hand on his chest, she ran her tongue over his lips tasting their sweetness. After a moment, his

kisses grew more insistent. She welcomed them with her own hunger, it had been so long. Her hand trailed down to the bulge in his pants. She caressed his hard length through the fabric. He shivered from her slow touches. His tongue dueled with hers, trying to taste and explore her mouth while they kissed. She raked her fingers over the back of his shirt, wanting to get to the flesh beneath it.

He sucked on her top lip and pecked her nose. Emera giggled. "You taste so good, angel."

She yanked his shirt from his pants. Keenan gave her a wicked smile, but let her take his shirt off and drop it to the floor. The tattoo of the demon catcher glowed blue in the candlelight. She hesitated a moment not sure what would happen. Keenan caught her hand and guided it to the brand. He pressed their hands over the mark. When she touched it, a cold tingle crawled up her arm. She held her breath, waiting for his power to capture her and for all of this to be a ruse, but nothing unusual happened. She glanced at him and saw a faint blue halo around him. Tracing her finger over his aura, she watched it bend around her flesh. "This is your power isn't it?"

"Yes. With this and my sword, I've killed hundreds of demons. Eradicated nests of feral vampires and high-ranking demon lords like Sebastian. I've even taken out a few fallen angels who were beyond redemption. I have other plans for you though." He nuzzled her neck and bit at her flesh.

She moaned when he bit down hard. It felt good. He looked up with a worried expression. "You can't hurt me, love. Years of being trained by Bas have hardened me. Now what plans do you have for me?"

She caught the glimmer in his eye. Keenan slid his hand up her thigh and under the leather skirt until he reached her downy curls. His fingers trailed along her moist slit, teasing her. Emera's eyes widened when he hit her hidden sweet spot. His grin grew more devilish when he began to rub her clit slowly. A jolt of pleasure ran up her spine. She groaned from the sudden warmth infusing her. Her lover rubbed her faster until he slid a finger deep inside her wet pussy.

"You like that?"

"Mmmhmm..."

He chuckled. His other hand unsnapped the front of her studded bustier. He pushed the straps from her shoulders and then it dropped to the floor. He kissed down the line of her neck and settled his tongue in the valley between her breasts. His fingers continued to pump into her slowly. Emera's hips rose to meet him every time. The energy coursing through her body was lightning quick and brought her to orgasm almost before she realized what was happening. Normally when Sebastian made her come there was always a darker edge to the pleasure, a knowing that pain would follow. With Keenan, it was simple to give herself over to him. His mouth enclosed her nipple and he bit down lightly.

"Keenan!" she cried out.

"Yes, my love," he murmured.

Emera caught his face between her hands and brought it back to her lips. She kissed him with a hunger and a need she hadn't experienced since she was in his arms centuries ago. The longer they were together, the more alive she became. His cock pressed against her belly while his other hand gripped her ass. She fell back against the pillows bringing his weight down on top of her. Her heart slammed against her breastbone until she thought it would crack. If Sebastian ever found out about this, he would kill her. There were no second chances with him. The demonic side of her personality continued to whimper from the onslaught of the positive emotions overwhelming her.

"He won't. You're mine now. When I leave you'll come with me. That fiend will never harm you again." Keenan read her mind.

A lump of emotion formed in her throat. She glanced into his eyes and saw the truth. She opened her mouth to respond but he licked her lips instead before pulling away. He stood up and stripped off his jeans leaving him completely naked. Emera knelt on the bed, unzipped her leather skirt, and flung it across the room. She didn't care where it landed. Candles flickered and the smell of roses bloomed around her. Keenan cupped her breasts and played with the darkened nipples tweaking them until

they hurt with wanting. Her clit throbbed from the gentle caresses he plagued her with. His hands ran over her flesh in tickling strokes. The demon inside her was silent. She rested her hands on the side of his head while he kissed down the expanse of her belly until he came to her bed of curls. There he found her clit and began sucking on it slowly, winding his tongue around it while he gripped the mounds of her ass. His fingers ran between the cleft of her buttocks holding her steady and learning all of her curves and dark places. Emera's hips bucked forward.

She struggled to hold onto her control. Each quick stroke of his tongue brought her to newer heights. Some she hadn't reached without the sting of the whip against her flesh. In the darkness of her mind, a light appeared. She strained closer to it, but each time Keenan stopped for a split second, it got farther away. Emera couldn't hold on any more. Sweat had broken out on her body. His tongue licked her hard bud in quick darts. She was on the threshold of orgasm, but he pulled away at the last possible second.

A forlorn cry left her lips. "Why?"

He kissed her instead of answering and pressed her down on the bed. Emera wrapped one leg around his back keeping him from getting away. His hand slid down between her thighs and rubbed her clit again. She arched her back and raised her hips. At that moment, Keenan slid his cock into her depths. Her muscles expanded around his dick until they were a perfect fit. He broke their kiss and searched her eyes.

"You're so beautiful. You feel so good. I won't ever let you go this time."

"Then don't."

Keenan increased their rhythm while holding her tightly. The energy of his brand burned her, but she didn't complain. Each time he slid into her, she was losing the grip on her control and loving it. Never had she given herself over to pure pleasure and let her heart fly on unfettered wings. The sound of his heart and heavy breathing drove her higher. Her eyelids were half closed, and then her mind flew upward. The light of the Heaven exploded behind her eyes. She saw the details of the roses. Each soft individual petal. The angelic choirs whispered all around her. The light was so bright she thought



she was in the center of a star. It was never this clear when Sebastian had her on the rack. Among the flowers, she saw another angel who smiled at her. She reached out toward her onetime sister and actually brushed her fingertips. Before she could grasp onto them, Emera fell.

When she opened her eyes, her entire body was light. Her legs wound around Keenan tighter. He thrust into her one more time and the two of them reached orgasm together. A deep sense of serenity infused her. Her arms were around Keenan. She didn't want to let him go. The languid moment lingered and neither moved. The sound of his light breathing and the slight creaking of the bed was all she heard in the room. It was the most peaceful she had been in decades.

Keenan stirred after a while and gave her a sleepy, satisfied grin. Emera returned the smile and ran her fingers through his fine hair remembering the feel of the rose petals in the garden. If she had stayed there only a few minutes longer, she could have felt the other angel's touch. Thinking back on that now, she wondered if it was really what she wanted. With Keenan before her, she didn't have any reason to go back to the garden. Of course it was wonderful to know that she was able to. That there was a slice of her soul that was worthy enough to even glimpse the paradise she had fallen from.

After a few minutes of him staring at her, she laughed. "What?"

"Nothing. It's been so long. I've been dead inside. All that killing can get to you and make you go cold. For a while I did it and didn't even blink."

"I've heard most Demon Catchers are as unfeeling as the angels. Is that true?"

"It can be, but I held onto my love for you. Most of the others don't have that kind of motivation. If they do, they aren't saying. We are a secretive order. But I found you, impersonated Jeff, and had to be sure. That's all that matters now."

Emera blushed thinking about all of the humiliating things she had done to him. She put her head in her hands. "Oh God, you let me spank you. You sucked my toes. What were you thinking?"

"I was thinking how great it was for this angel to give me what I deserved." He picked up her foot and licked a line down it. When he got to her big toe, he sucked it

into his mouth and began to run his tongue along the ridges of it. Emera squirmed and tried to pull away from him, but he gripped her leg. *Lay back, love.*

Emera did what she was told and closed her eyes. She tried to relax. His mouth continued to draw on her toes, but then his hand began to massage the bottom of her feet. When he hit the middle of her foot, she arched off the bed. She threaded her fingers through the sheets and balled them together. A small amount of his power flowed over her skin. She cried out, lost in the haze of what he was doing to her. It felt as though his mouth was all over her at once and not just sucking on her toe. She felt his teeth biting her nipples. His lips were nibbling her clit. He was inside of her all over again building her to climax. She breathed hard and needed him inside of her again, but then his power stopped and he was kissing her again. He plunged his tongue deep into her mouth and then he kissed down her neck.

“What are you doing to me?” She asked.

He chuckled. “Just making sure that all your erogenous zones are working.”

“Well, they do.”

He bit on her ear and then he slipped his cock into her pussy. She wrapped her legs around his waist and rolled him over. She sat on top of him and began to ride him hard and fast. She scratched her nails down his chest and closed her eyes feeling the length of him inside of her. She concentrated on the building orgasm which was going to claim her fast. He let out an animal sound and met her hips until the only sounds in the room were their heavy breathing and their skin slapping together. Once she cried out, Keenan’s hands tightened on her waist. He spilled his seed inside of her and she found the image of the garden looming on the edge of her vision. She pulled him into her one last time and quivered from the ecstasy she was tumbling into. After she caught her breath, she rolled over and lay next to him on the bed.

She traced her finger over his brand marveling because she was here with him after so many years. Keenan had filled the hole in her soul. It seemed like the demon wasn’t even in her at all. Once they were separated, it would come back full force. Sebastian would be on her again to start bringing in more souls. The weight of her fate would

come back to her.

"Answer me something, how did you get in here without Sebastian sensing you?"

"I have a good friend on the inside who tipped me off about this angel babe who needed a little lovin'. Did you enjoy the presents I gave you? I was hoping to use the glass cock on you tonight." He wound his fingers through her hair. She nestled in the crook of his arm experiencing contentment for the first time since their separation.

Emera sighed. "I crushed it. Sebastian discovered it and wanted it for himself. He took out his punishment on me and it was pulverized in the process. I do appreciate it though. It was beautiful."

Keenan rolled off the bed. He punched the mattress and screamed. "I swear the next time I see him he's dead. I don't care what the angels say." He got up and began to get dressed. Emera snapped her fingers and was clothed in a black gauze dress. She stood up and put a hand on his back.

"Please don't go up against him. I can't lose you again."

His furious expression melted. He took her in his arms and calmed her. She hugged him closer, but he pulled away. His eyes glowed with an inner blue fire. "I'm different now from what I was before. He can't hurt me. I'll take my sword and plunge it through his black heart. There's nothing you can do or say that will deter me from this. Besides, he's been docketed for annihilation. Look, what happens to him doesn't matter. I know now that you're not like him. You have to get back. I don't want him to get suspicious. I'll be back I promise."

Emera nodded. She sensed it was past the time. He swept her up in his arms and kissed her one last time. When he did, the room changed back to the dungeon she had originally set up. He separated from her, leaving her feeling empty and cold. Before her very eyes, his shape changed and shrunk. He was the semi-balding man, dressed in a tweed suit, with a sallow look who had come in to see her so many times before.

"Until next time, Mistress," he said a little too loudly and closed the door behind him.

Emera sunk down onto the bed. She tried not to let her emotions get the better of

her. She had to go on, this was business as usual. No one could know that Keenan had found her. She had to pretend that everything was right as rain. Lying was the first tool she had learned as a demon. If she could keep Keenan buried in her soul all this time, she could keep this hidden too. Her soul was comforted because he would come back and rescue her from the hell she'd been living in. However, if Sebastian found out about it first, then she would burn and her torment would be endless.

## Chapter Eight

Once he closed the door behind him, Keenan walked down the hallway to the receptionist's desk. He stopped for a moment and took a deep breath. Everything he had wished for had come to pass. Emera was not damned. His entire being hummed. Their lovemaking warmed his spirit and gave him the strength to go on. His sword was unseen on his back and now he could use it to cleave Sebastian's black heart from his chest. He gritted his teeth and curled his hands into fists. He was close to losing his disguise because of his rising emotions. *I have to calm down. I can't blow it now. Emera is okay. She doesn't have to be cleansed along with the demon. At least her soul can be saved.* Keenan took a deep breath and set his mind on killing the demon. He would make Sebastian pay for the heartache he and Emera had suffered for almost a thousand years. Before he killed the bastard, he would discover what his plans were. Who was the other demon Sebastian had been cavorting with?

"Were you pleased with your session? Should I make another appointment for you?" the receptionist asked.

Keenan glanced at her and noticed her glittery eyelashes. He'd never paid too much attention to her before, but looking at her now, something about her seemed familiar. "Everything was wonderful as always. I want to book my usual time for next week if it's available. Thank you."

She winked. "Great."

Keenan stared at the receptionist wanting to ask something else.

"Is there something you've forgotten, sir?" She met his gaze.

He scrutinized the receptionist. He pressed his power a little deeper into the receptionist's mind and learned she was not contaminated by the evil permeating the Denizen. He was glad to see not all of the staff were in league with the demon. "No. Nothing thanks. Unless you can suggest something else I should try the next time I come."

The receptionist blushed and chuckled. "I couldn't even dream to know what you and Lady Emera do when you are alone in your sessions, sir. However let me check her schedule for you just to be sure she's free. I'll have to make your next session earlier in the week. Emera is booked next Thursday thru Saturday. Would you be able to come in on Wednesday? Or maybe earlier in the week? I suggest that you don't miss a week, just in case someone grabs the spot. Emera is very popular these days."

Keenan nodded. "I'm sure she is. I wouldn't plan on missing any time with her. Please put me down for another two hour session from four to six in the evening. Thanks."

"I have you down and we'll see you next week, sir."

He turned and headed toward the door, but Sebastian was waiting for him, leaning against the wall with his hands crossed over his chest. The stench of rotten eggs surrounded him. Keenan stopped short before he bumped into the demon. He backed away a step and resisted the urge to go for his sword.

Sebastian was dressed in leather pants and had his hair swept back into a ponytail. An evil smirk spread over his lips. "Well...well back again. Did Emera give you everything you desired?"

Keenan forced a smile. *Just you wait you bastard. It's going to be you and me and I'll make you pay for everything you've done to her.* "Of course. She always does. She must be one of your most valued employees and she's very good at what she does. Now if you'll excuse me I have to get going. I'm running late for a date."

The demon placed his hand on Keenan's chest. He held in his disgust at being touched by the demon, but it took everything in him not to drop his disguise. The stench of smoldering cloth filled the room. He glanced down at the palm on his chest

and saw the blackened cloth that was slowly burning away. He made no move to escape the demon. He met the fiend's butterscotch gaze and felt the pull of the dark power from the demonic lord. It tried to pry his mind open like a closed oyster to get at the pearl beneath which was his soul. Keenan wasn't budging. After a moment, his hand sat on his flesh. The warmth pressed against his skin, but it didn't burn him. He was immune to the demon's powers. Keenan knew that by confronting him he was giving away what he was or at least that, he wasn't human, but he had a feeling Sebastian knew exactly what he was. The weight of his sword tugged on his back. The celestial energy ran cold through him ready to cleanse the evil taint on him.

"Do you really have to go right now?" The demon purred.

"Sebastian, is there something wrong?" Emera asked.

Keenan glanced over not expecting to see her. He stepped back from the demon. He kept his back to Emera so she wouldn't see his shirt. She didn't need to be worried about him. The demon walked over and placed his arm around the angel. He turned and pulled his suit jacket over the black hole in the fabric of his shirt. Fury rode through him. He gritted his teeth, but said nothing. *I'll take care of you soon. She is not yours to have any more you bastard.*

"No. Nothing's wrong, *cher*. Just asking your customer here how he enjoyed his session. He's one of your regulars, no?"

"Yes. Our session ran over. I hope you don't mind." She smiled at him and ran her finger over his caramel toned chest.

Keenan shivered seeing his angel touching the evil shit who passed for human. She glanced at him with a blank look on her face, but her eyes said it all. They were panicked. She was trying to keep it together while he was there. She was keeping his identity a secret.

"Of course not. Just be sure he pays for your extra time and you will *pay* her, won't you?"

"Don't worry, boss. I've already charged his card."

The demon nodded. "Well good. I guess you'll be getting home then. We'll be seeing you soon." Sebastian hugged Emera closer to him.

Keenan gave her a little smile and sent a current of love between their newly formed bond. She didn't return the smile, but he felt her love. He would be back to rescue her from the demon. He itched to free his sword and take on Sebastian now, but he had to regroup. He had to take it easy and prepare. He didn't sense another demon in the Den, but if there was one, he had to be sure it was taken care of also. He met the demon's gaze and in them he saw the demon was ready for him to come back.

Once he was outside, he was able to breathe a sigh of relief. A weight had been lifted from his shoulders because now he knew for certain the angel he loved was still there. Even though the evil from her choices had fractured her spirit, he could deal with the small part of her who was demonic. It would have to be cleansed from her, but he would be there to help her through the pain. The cool night air caressed his skin. He stared up at the moon and for the first time in a long time he was ecstatic just to be alive. The world was new for him again, just as it was when he first met Emera, the way it was when he first became a Demon Catcher. He felt the purpose of his duty in his soul and he was glad to do it. The jobs ahead didn't weigh on his mind like the burdens they used to be. He sensed whatever came after this, he could handle anything and it wouldn't matter. If there were consequences because of what he had done tonight, he would face them and then deal with his angelic handler. The night held so many possibilities he didn't even think about his task ahead. Sure it was there, but the feel of Emera was still with him.

He closed his eyes and pulled in the smell of her vanilla perfume which clung to him. He shivered remembering the feeling of completeness while being in her arms. The past had been washed away in those few short hours while they were together. It seemed he was once more his old self and Emera was explaining to him about her being an angel all over again. She was telling him how they would never be parted. They were forever bound at the soul even if she didn't know it. All the time they had spent together in the past, she had never once tried to brand his spirit with the evil as she was contracted with Sebastian to do. Even tonight, when she was inside of his mind and seeing his memories, he felt the demon half of her, but it hid from him. It withdrew



from the light of the love that he carried for her. It was too weak to stand against the goodness and try to do anything to him. He never wanted her to be afraid. But it had also shown how much she had changed. He finally understood now why she had her dual personalities. Over the centuries the light existed inside of her and had dimmed only slightly. The constant warring with her dual natures had fractured her personalities into light and dark, angel and demon. If he had gotten to her any later then there might not have been a chance to bring his beloved angel back to him. The demonic side of her was getting stronger of late and her hope was failing. That was all behind him now. Emera and he were never going to be parted.

"Your fantasy is very entertaining."

Keenan didn't acknowledge Vangelis' presence, but kept on walking down the street away from the Denizen. After a few more blocks he let his outward persona of Jeff melt away until he was back to his old self. "It's not a fantasy. It will come to pass."

"You made a vow to the angels that you would kill demons until the day of your final death and then you'd be given a place in Heaven. That's the way your deal works. You can't just run off on the job with a fallen angel and then expect to make a normal life. If you did that, you'd be turning your back on the oath you swore. You'd become the hunted. It wouldn't be good for business."

Keenan stopped and faced his handler clamping down on his anger. The angel was dampening his mood. "Did I ever once indicate to you I was going to turn my back on my responsibilities? I happen to enjoy what I do. Just because I found Emera doesn't mean I'm suddenly going to go rogue on you. I do plan to keep on doing my duties."

"Well that's good to know. Forgive my overzealousness. The others are beginning to feel as though you will not perform your duty as planned. Now that you've found your angel, my superiors were wondering when you were going to carry out the final stage of your mission. Is the angel tainted?"

He drew in a long breath so he could enjoy the sound of the night. The noise of the cars rushing around him. The din of the people who were walking by them. The smells of the restaurants a few blocks away came to his nose. It was hard to believe in the

world around him there were evil beings. That vampires existed and werewolves roamed the shadows during the full moon looking for food. Other creatures existed along side of them who were even darker than some of the demons he had fought already. Listening to other stories from the Demon Catchers he knew in the bowels of the pit there were pockets of hell that even Lucifer didn't go to. Hearing these tales only made him shake while he thought about what might be lurking there that even the angels didn't know about. What things could crawl up out of those pockets and take over the world?

"No. She's not completely lost. Although there's a part of her that has been corrupted." He kept his voice low.

The angel sighed. "That's what I thought. She will have to be cleansed. All of her recycled."

Keenan snapped. He launched himself at Van. He grabbed a hold of his jacket and pressed him up against the brick wall of the house they were passing by. Rage so dark hit him that he wanted to kill his handler. He screamed as the darkness washed over him. The angel remained impassive. Keenan lifted his fist and drew it back. He threw the punch and stopped only inches from the angel's face.

"Are you done yet?" the angel asked.

He drew in a breath, released his handler, and then stepped back. He stared into the night and gathered his wits. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have reacted the way I did with you."

"I'm glad you recognize the fact. You know it's protocol for any angel who is tainted by any type of evil, they have to be recycled."

"You knew this all along and yet you didn't share this before now?"

Van fixed his jacket and squared his shoulders. "You never asked and you've never had to take in an angel. We are infatuated to humans, but to one another if there is any sin in us, then we have to bring them back to Heaven."

"You can't ask me to turn her over to you after I've just found her again. That small slice of her spirit isn't big. Please, you have to help me."

His handler ran a hand through his hair. "I can't promise you anything. I will try and see if there is a way around it. However, if I do, then you owe me."

Keenan nodded. "Fine. I'll owe you whatever you want. Just keep her out of the fire. If I lose her, then you can surely guarantee I will turn my back on everything I have sworn. Tell your bosses that." He began to walk into the night and ignored his handler. He didn't care what it took. The angel would not take Emera from him. Even if it meant his death, he would see her safe from the fires of Heaven.

## Chapter Nine

Emera awoke the next day after her meeting with Keenan not sure if it was real. All her senses said it had been. However, her mind still said it was a made up fantasy which she had allowed herself to concoct. As she got ready for the day and she could smell him on her, she knew it was real. He hadn't been a manifestation of her fractured mind. Even the demon was kept at bay. It hid in the back of her mind and didn't even budge, which made her even happier.

Getting up, she was ready to face the day. Nothing was going to kill her mood. The image of the garden lingered in her thoughts. The pure beauty of it wasn't lost on her. Every moment she spent with him, the peace she experienced in Heaven infused her soul. Even now, whenever she thought about her rendezvous with Keenan, her heart swelled. Nothing was going to bring her down from her high, because in those few seconds of memory she was back in Heaven's garden. Sebastian's raving about his demonic clients or Cindy rambling on about the man who blew her mind the night before couldn't break her mood. The one thing even better was Sebastian had told her he was going to be out of town for a couple of days. Plans took shape in her mind. She thought about contacting Keenan again and telling him about the good news, but she didn't think that was a good idea. The sudden absence could be a trick. Sebastian could be testing her to see if she would run to the Demon Catcher to see what she would do. She wasn't about to break his trust and tell her demonic master who Keenan really was. She had almost died the night before when Sebastian was there and met him in the hallway. He had wrapped his arm around her possessively showing her client, that she

was his and no one else's. She'd held her breath because she had thought Keenan would break his silence and kill Sebastian on the spot. However he hadn't. He'd calmly walked out and left them all alone. It was after Keenan left that Sebastian had told Emera he was going out of town for a couple of days.

*I want him gone so bad. I want Keenan to kill him and free me from his influence.* She stared in the mirror and looked at her wings. Half of her feathers were black and the other half were white. The more evil she committed, the more her feathers would turn. Once they were all black then they would begin to fall out. Each feather was a soul she had corrupted and sent to hell. Each was a representation of the evil she was responsible for. She'd never done any huge atrocity of evil. If she had, then more of her feathers would have turned. She only turned them one by one. If she could, she would pull out all the feathers to bring back the souls she had helped turn over to hell. But she wasn't able to turn back the past. She had to face the future with the weight of the innocents on her soul.

She ran her hand through her dark hair. Staring at her reflection, a realization washed over her. Something she hadn't thought of in a very long time. Her face paled. Her hands began to shake so bad that she had to grab the sink. Angels who were corrupted had to be cleansed in the fires of Heaven and then recycled if they were found worthy enough. After they were processed, they didn't remember anything that had happened to them. Now that Keenan had found her, he would have to surrender her to his superiors and let her go into the fires of Heaven. She would be burned just the way he had been.

The demon stirred in her mind. She pushed it back, but that didn't stop it from whispering to her. *You know now that he has found you, he's going to turn you over to the others. He's going to let the angels swoop in and drag you back to Heaven. Keenan doesn't love you at all. It's all a ruse to draw you out. He'll throw you to Heaven's mercy then you'll be cleansed. You know the stories of others who have had this happen. You won't remember anything. All of your life will be gone. It's better to stay with Sebastian. He'll always treat us right. He loves us. He will protect us from the Demon Catcher. Tell him who Keenan really is. He'll thank you in the end.*

She shook her head. *No. You're wrong*, she screamed back at her demonic self.

She glanced in the mirror, but it wasn't her reflection, it was her other half sneering at her. The image she saw was what she would look like if she was completely evil. Her black horns were twisted a foot from the front of her forehead. Her skin had taken on a pale hue and was almost transparent. Her blue eyes were ringed with black and shot through with red. The tips of four long fangs peeked out from under her lips. Emera screamed and punched the mirror not wanting to admit that was what she would eventually turn into if she gave into the darkness. The pain of her wound only lasted for a moment after she plucked the glass from her hand.

*You can't be rid of me that easily. You think that I'm some manifestation of the evil inside of you, but I'm not. You just can't admit it to yourself that you love doing what you're doing. You enjoy the things you do to them. You love to watch them suffer.*

She glanced at her shattered image and now saw hundreds of the demon staring back at her. It began to chuckle in the back of her mind. She shook her head and tears trailed down her cheeks. What the demon part of her had said was true. She did enjoy it even though the guilt weighed her down. *I should just let Keenan take me and dispose of me. It would be easier in the end knowing he was putting me down and that he was doing it out of mercy and love.* She nodded and realized she had to be thankful for the time they had together.

Running a hand through her hair, she resigned herself to her fate. She wouldn't beg for her life when he came for her. She would go with him willingly knowing he was doing his duty and that what he had shown her in his mind was the truth. He loved her with every fiber of his being. Knowing he loved her, soothed her soul, gave her the strength to go on and push the demon back inside its cage in her mind.

\* \* \* \*

Two days later she stood at the counter of the Denizen. Sebastian had been away for the past couple of days just as he said he would and peace had settled over the Den.

Emera found she was able to relax because she didn't have to worry about Sebastian finding out about Keenan. She had made peace with the fact her days were numbered. Today she hummed a tune that she hadn't since her first days from falling. It was the same tune she had sung when she had first met Keenan. It was nice to have peace of mind when she normally didn't.

"You seem to be in a good mood. You get laid or something?"

She giggled. "No. I didn't get laid. It's just nice to have the boss gone for a couple of days. Things are a lot less tense. So what do we have for mail today?"

Cindy didn't respond, but handed her the stack of mail. Emera focused on the newest unsigned letter. She'd been receiving the envelopes with the red ink and looped penmanship for a while now, with no clue who they were from, or what they meant.

The message appearing on the parchment this time read:

*It's only at the tavern you can find your redemption. Nothing else will soothe your shattered soul.*

Emera shook her head. *What the heck does that mean? Who are these strange messages from? Would Keenan be sending them to me and not telling me? Maybe Sebastian? No he would have revealed himself by now. Maybe it's one of his clients. Whoever it is, I don't care.* She took the other box addressed to her. This time Cindy was silent when she opened it. Inside was a single white rose. She picked it up expecting to be pricked by the thorns. However, the soft and supple nature of the stem and flower surprised her into realizing it was made out of leather. A beautiful rose which would last forever. She brought it to her nose and inhaled the scent of the leather. She loved the smell of leather. Before she could read the note, Cindy grabbed it away from her.

"'To my angel. I look forward to showing you heaven in my arms.' Oh baby, this one has it bad for you. Do you have any idea who it is? Cause if you don't, we certainly have to figure it out. And if we don't I want him all to myself."

"Give me that, Cindy, before I shackle you up. No, I don't know who it is. If I did, I wouldn't be sharing anyway," she giggled.

The receptionist held the note high above her head so she couldn't reach it. Emera jumped for it, but even in three-inch heels it was still out of reach. Cindy waved it in the

air with a large smile on her face. Before Emera could get it, Sebastian snatched the paper out of her hand.

"What do we have here?" he asked.

"Bas, you're back. I wasn't expecting you to return until later tonight. I had planned on a home coming." She reached for the note.

He ran the back of his hand down her cheek. "Em, you are beautiful, but very transparent. I am disappointed that after all this time you haven't learned to lie better. The first instinct of a demon is how to tell a convincing lie. It seems I haven't trained you properly. Now what is this little note that you got and why didn't you tell me about this secret admirer sooner?" When his gaze darted over the words, his expression changed from amused to devious.

"It's nothing, Bas. Just some client who has a thing for me. He's not a secret admirer. Just someone acting crazy."

"Nothing! This doesn't sound like nothing. To my angel! I don't think this is just a client do you? Emera, tell me the truth!" Sebastian fumed. His pupils blackened. He crunched the paper in his fist.

"Bas. Honestly, it's nothing. Someone has been sending me some crazy notes about meeting them at some tavern. I have no idea who has been sending them to me. I'm sure it's the same one who has been sending me these notes and the gifts." She waved her hand at the rose. She tried to remain calm, but she sensed that he wasn't in the mood to be joking around. He snatched the rose from its box and wrapped his fingers around it. Smoke wafted through his fingers. The smell of burnt leather filled the room. She tried not to react.

"Sebastian, love, don't get mad at Em. Her client is insane. Sending her all kinds of weird shit. I've told him to stop stalking her. You saw him the other night when their appointment ran over."

"Cindy, take the rest of the night off," he commented.

"She's right. I told him in our session that he has to stop sending me these gifts or I was going to stop taking his appointments. It's one thing to get flowers from him, but



it's another to send me some of the insane shit that he's been sending. He swore that he would stop."

"Come on, boss. Emera's been doing a great job. She's been booked solid. That's more than any of the others can say. I mean we've been busy, but she brings in most of the moola."

"I don't care about the money." He growled and waved his hand at the receptionist. Cindy flew back into the wall and lay still. Emera stood shocked at what he had just done. She had no reason to believe that Sebastian would ever retaliate against Cindy. He was always cordial with her. She backed away and called upon all of her power. The only thing she could do to get away from his wrath was to flee. She wasn't sure where she would go, but she had to get away. Her power washed over her, but he reached out and clutched her wrist preventing her from going anywhere. The ashes of the leather rose fell to the floor becoming unnoticeable on the black marble. A tear rolled down her cheek. His grip tightened until her bones crunched together. "You're mine, Emera. You gave me your existence and bound yourself to me! I *am* your Master. No man or otherwise can save you from your fate."

He shoved her backward. The scene changed so quickly that she had no time to get her bearing. When she landed it was against the rack he normally whipped her on. Her shoulders hit the hard metal causing her to cry out. Sebastian snapped his fingers causing her clothes to disappear. He waved his hands and she was forced into a spread-eagle. Cold metal wrapped around her wrists and ankles. She glanced at the chains and she knew they were his special ones forged in the pits of hell. They would stunt her power.

"Bas, come on. You know I would never betray you." The demon in the back of her mind grinned and tried to break free of her mental chains. It wanted to show its master that it was the loyal one. She knew if it got out it would tattle on Keenan. She fought against it with all her might to keep it from betraying the man she loved.

He slapped her hard across the face. "You call me Master, bitch! I've given you much too long a leash these past few centuries because I thought you had potential.

Now I find you're fucking someone else behind my back. I had such high hopes for you."

Emera tasted blood on her lip. The sting across her cheek didn't dull. She worked her jaw trying to get the feeling back in her face. "How could I be with anyone else? You're the only one I want. You saved me after my fall and showed me the way. You're the only one who can make me come, Master. You are the one who makes my heart beat. You're the one who calls to my soul."

The crack of a whip thundered next to her ear. The stench of brimstone scented the air along with sulfur. Heat blasted against her body. She tried to ignore it, but the heat got stronger. Sebastian stepped closer. His handsome façade wavered to reveal the demon underneath. His face was longer with spiraled horns protruding out of the side of his head. This was how he had first appeared to her when he began to break her in. She had been so afraid. Now she wasn't sure if she should tremble or if she should try and talk her way out of his torture session. It would be easier if he was human and not in his demonic visage because he meant business. His six inch talons caressed his face. He had a broad chest, a ten-foot leather wingspan, and dark red sagging skin all over him. He had slits for nostrils and no teeth. The top half of him was a man, but his bottom half was scaly. His spaded tail dangled between his legs along with his erect cock. It had been a long time since she had seen his true form. He'd only grown uglier.

"Enough bullshit and backtalk. I know about your little secret admirer. I was waiting for you to come clean and tell me yourself. You fucked your client. I can overlook it once because that isn't your norm. But then you failed to deliver his soul to me. You've grown soft. I had such high hopes for you. You haven't been meeting your quotas. My other demons know what it means not to live up to my expectations. I'd held you so high, handling you with kid gloves because you were a fallen angel. I see the error of my ways. Now you're going to suffer." He drew the whip back and hit her across the stomach.

She bit her lip from the pain. She wasn't going to cry out. He hit her again. The lash marked her breasts and twined around her neck. He pulled it tight around her throat

forming a noose. He ran a nail down her cheek and shook his head. The demon tried to rise from the back of her mind and struggled to get through to its master. "I never meant to betray you. Give me —"

"I don't want to hear any more excuses. I should've sensed it earlier." He placed his palm over her heart. At first it was warm, but it grew hotter the longer it remained. Emera squirmed in her chains. "Hope and love are in your heart. I didn't want to think I was losing you to the light. Our sessions have rekindled the connection you have with the Divine. It's culled the hope in you. I'll gouge it out once and for all."

The aroma of burning flesh filled her nose. The pain was intense. She gripped the bars hard and she began to shake. "Yes. It hurts doesn't it? It's what I should have done to you in the first place. The darkness inside of you might have taken root in your soul, but I should've nurtured it more."

Emera bit her lip. *Please let this be over soon. Please let Keenan know that I love him.* A small sound escaped her lips from another lash that hit across her thighs. He'd never been this aggressive with her.

"Beg me to stop."

Emera shook her head and squeezed her eyes shut. The whip's tail slashed across her breasts again. She waited for another lash, but he stopped for a moment. He pressed his face against her breasts and began to lick at the blood that was on her body. But his tongue wasn't soft, it was barbed and he plunged it deep into her wounds. His tongue worked around her insides opening up the wounds even more while he supped on her blood. His fingers turned her nipples and pinched them, but his hands were burning her. He cupped her breasts and that was what drove a wail from her lips. "Please, Master."

Sebastian looked up and then gave her a knowing smile. He lifted the whip this time and when it struck her back, the tail broke into different lengths of leather with metal tips on the end which ripped away her flesh. Her back arched off the rack. His spaded tail slithered around her leg. "Now this is more like it. Your screams make this place seem more like home. It has been eons since I have been to the pits. You'll be glad

to know that once we're done, you won't be seeing Heaven any more. You're soul will be so dark that you'll be kissing my feet and begging me to bring you to Lucifer to fuck you. He might even get a kick out of you. He doesn't see too many fallen angels these days."

"Let her go!"

Sebastian growled. She opened her eyes and saw her warrior. Keenan stood behind him with the tip of a sword pointed at his back. Sebastian turned around and began laughing. "Did you really believe that I didn't know what you were at our first run in? You Demon Catchers all have the same sterile, cold feeling. You think you're so high and mighty. Your sword doesn't scare me. I've broken other Demon Catchers before you. You won't be the last."

Keenan advanced but didn't break his cold expression. "I said let her go and we can negotiate whether you live or die, demon."

"You *kill* me!" Sebastian snapped his fingers. Keenan's sword flew out of his hand and clattered to the floor.

Emera twisted on the rack trying to get free of the chains, but she was nothing more than a helpless mortal in them. She knew how dangerous her master could be. She couldn't see Keenan broken under the weight of his power. She had to help him somehow.

He backhanded Keenan across the room. He landed against the leather sofa and toppled it over. She strained to see if he was okay. The bonds cut into her wrists. Sebastian let out a small sigh. The heat intensified in the room. Sweat stung her eyes. "See what I have to put up with because of you. Why do you make my existence so hard?"

Emera didn't respond. *Please let him be okay. Please let him be okay.*

Sebastian strolled over to the sofa and brought his tail up to spear it through her savior's heart. Keenan stared at him and then rolled out of the way at the last moment. She breathed a sigh of relief when he grabbed his sword. He dodged the tail again and stood to face Sebastian. Her master waved his hand again, but this time Keenan kept his

sword.

"Your magic won't work on me this time, demon. I have the strength of the angels behind me. We *will* see you dead." Keenan held his sword high. Blue light enveloped the blade. He brought it down in an arc and sliced through one of Sebastian's wings.

The demon screamed in pain while the wing flopped helplessly on the floor. He roared and lunged at Keenan. The Demon Catcher dodged out of the way, but not before Sebastian's nails raked his chest. He cried out in pain. Emera pulled against the bindings hoping they would loosen. The energy around the sword flashed a sapphire blue when Keenan lunged at Sebastian's heart, but the edge only grazed him. He picked up the sofa and threw it at him. Keenan dodged out of the way. It gave Sebastian enough time to grab a hold of her hair and yank it back. The cold tip of a dagger pressed against her throat. He pushed it against her flesh and it stung. The dagger was made from the same metal that the cuffs were. Where it touched her exposed wound, it began to burn.

"Stop now or this pretty angel dies. You don't want that to happen do you, Keenan?"

## Chapter Ten

His eyes widened.

"Oh yes. I know who you are. You couldn't hide who you were under the Demon Catcher moniker. So the angels gave you another chance. How about that? I didn't see that coming. I guess I can't be all knowing. It's a shame they didn't tell you that no matter what you do, you can never save her. She can never be allowed back into Heaven. Once they fall, angels aren't granted a second chance. Her essence is tainted. I'm sure that your handler told you that she has to be recycled."

He glanced at his angel and saw tears streaming down her cheeks. It infuriated him to witness her trapped against the rack. She was hurt and bleeding. All he wanted to do was take her in his arms and soothe her hurt. *Sebastian will pay for what he's saying to her. The light of hope can't go out inside her.* "Don't listen to him, Em. He's lying. I found you after all this time. I won't abandon you. You won't be recycled. I swear it. I won't let anyone take you away from me." He implored her with his eyes and sent his love to her so that it would sustain her spirit. If she lost her hope and the demon took over, then she would be lost. *I'll never abandon you.*

She smiled. His love bolstered her soul. She would not let the demon inside claim her. "Do what you want to me, Sebastian. From this moment on, I quit." She spit in his face.

Sebastian scowled, but then his expression turned to one of surprise. "Quit? No one quits on me."

Keenan plunged his sword through Sebastian's chest. The demon dropped the

dagger and released Emera. He spun around trying to grasp the blade, but Keenan twisted the sword through his heart making sure it was shredded. Foul blood splattered onto his face. He wiped it away. At that moment, Sebastian's body ignited in blue flames. Keenan was thrown backward against the wall. It took him a moment to get his bearings. He got to his feet and watched the demon. He stumbled around the room and fell to his knees before the rack. Sebastian reached toward Emera. She cringed away from him the best she could. The demon let out one last ear-splitting shriek. His body began to melt into a pool of black sludge. The flames engulfed him. The dark smoke filled the room and made it hard to see. Emera coughed from the thickness of the smoke. Soon the fire vanished. His remains were completely gone and Keenan's sword fell to the floor. Keenan retrieved his weapon and placed it back in its scabbard. He then began the task of freeing Emera.

Once she was free, she tried to stand, but her wounds were too great. He supported her and hugged her close amazed that she was in his arms. After so many centuries, she was free of the demon's hold. And now she was his. He pressed his lips to her sweet ones. Her pain impacted him and nearly made him stagger. Sebastian had done some damage to his beloved. It was one of his abilities to heal if he needed. He wrapped his power around Emera and drew on the power he had. The blue light encompassed the both of them. He pushed that power along all of her wounds, deep inside of her, willing the slashes to close. It took him a few minutes, but soon he felt that her wounds were closing and nothing would mar her perfect flesh. Kissing her the taste of honey clung to her mouth and he wondered if she was really made of it. He yearned to whisk her away and make sweet love to her once more. However, he knew that he couldn't run from his handler. Eventually they would be found. And he couldn't turn his back on his duty. He had promised his handler that he wouldn't do that.

"Can you stand now? All your wounds should be healed."

She nodded and squeezed her arms around his neck more. He ran his hand through her hair to feel the soft strands. "I-I think so. Why would you do that? I don't deserve to be healed."

"Enough. You certainly deserve to be healed. No more talk like that okay. One more thing." He passed his hand over her body. The red blood that covered her pale flesh began to disappear until she was pristine once more.

Keenan didn't want to have her soft body be away from his, but he reluctantly let her go. A triumphant smile painted his lips. Because she was naked and perfect he yearned to ravish her right there, he snapped his fingers, better to cover up the temptation. She was dressed again in a white dress that hugged her shapely figure. No more of Sebastian's handiwork marked her skin.

"Thanks for the dress. However I don't know if white is the best color for me. How did you know he had taken me captive?" Emera asked. "I thought that I was going to be stuck in hell forever."

Keenan brushed his lips over her fingers. "I have friends here and there. I told you that I would never lose you."

"Oh please, don't let me interrupt. He's being modest, babe. I was the one who told him that Sebastian was being a complete ass and had strapped you to the rack."

Both of them turned to see Cindy poking her sandaled foot into Sebastian's ashes. She wore a white sundress and had a golden halo around her head. Keenan hid a smile seeing his handler in the guise of a woman. It was very disconcerting because he normally came to him in his male persona. When Keenan first saw Vangelis behind the desk at the Denizen as a woman, he couldn't be completely sure it was his handler. Cindy had to blend in to throw Sebastian off. He appeared to be a woman. Van had been scoping out the dungeon for several years working as Cindy. Keenan hadn't been brought into the mission until a year ago. They had to be sure that Sebastian was really a high ranking lord and taking souls.

"You? But how in the world did you know? Sebastian knocked you out cold." Emera was flabbergasted. Keenan watched as the female persona melted away to reveal the true male form of the angel.

"Cindy's real name is Vangelis, Van for short, he was undercover. Van infiltrated the den to get close to you and to get intel on Sebastian. He was the one who first told



me about you. At first I didn't believe it."

The light around Van got brighter. The halo around the angel ballooned. Keenan covered his eyes from the illumination. He stepped away from Emera. Her distress was apparent at seeing the angel. He knew this was the first time she had been confronted by an angel in a long time. He wanted nothing more at this time than to reach out and protect her, but he wasn't able to. Whatever judgment she had to face was one that only she could go through. She glanced back at him. He saw the trouble in her eyes. Van stared at him.

*You promised that you wouldn't take her from me.*

The angel didn't answer. "Come before me, dearest."

Emera took a step forward and then dropped to her knees. She stared at the floor not able to look upon the angel anymore. He watched and had to grit his teeth to keep from butting in. His hand ran over the small box that was in his pocket. The one that held his most precious possession. Knowing what was inside of it, he knew that his angel would be with him again. He had to believe that.

"Oh, Emera. It was a sad day when you fell from the garden. Not to hear your voice among the choir broke my heart. As it is with all angels who fall, they have to be recycled. To rid the evil in your soul, you will have to go through the fires."

"You promised," Keenan butted in.

The angel glared at him. "Am I allowed to finish?"

He nodded. "I'm sorry."

Van sighed. "As I was saying, you will have to go through the fires only to cleanse the evil from your soul. You will not be recycled like other angels have been. You're being given another chance. Though hope may have dimmed in your heart, you never lost it. Before you can gain entrance to Heaven you must redeem yourself. When all your feathers are white again, you will be able to ascend if you wish. The terms of your redemption are this. Join the ranks of the Demon Catchers and eradicate those who pilfer souls the way that you once did. Or become human and do your penance through lifetimes of reincarnation until you have regained the balance for all those innocents

who you helped send to Lucifer's pits."

Keenan felt and saw her shock. He mirrored that surprise. He had no idea that Vangelis was going to offer her a chance to become a Demon Catcher. That was beyond all of his wildest dreams. If she became human, he could lose her to reincarnation. He would never see her again and her memories of their time together would be wiped clean. He couldn't lose her after so many centuries of searching. *Please don't choose humanity.* Holding his breath, he waited to hear her decision.

He locked his gaze with his handler. *Thank you.*

He smiled. *I told you I would try. Now it's up to her.*

He nodded.

She drew in a deep breath. "I-I'll become a Demon Catcher, but I have one request."

Keenan winced at her statement. She wasn't in a position to be making demands. It wasn't good to ask things of the angel even when he was in one of his good moods. He took a step toward Emera to take her into his arms. He stopped and waited for fire and lightning to rain down from Heaven and wipe her out. Nothing happened.

Van crossed his arms over his chest. "Do not try our friendship. If I had not seen into your soul for all these years, then I would not be giving you this opportunity. My superiors are not at all happy with this arrangement, but they're willing to give it a try. What is your request?"

"I know and I appreciate all that you're doing for me. I was thinking. If you want me to infiltrate other demon nests, then I need to keep my powers. That's all I meant."

"She has a point. And I'll keep an eye on her," Keenan chimed in. He wasn't exactly sure what all of her powers were.

"Alright. But the demonic part of your soul must be put through the fire. You have to be purified. One feather out of order and —"

"It won't happen. I promise."

Van stepped forward and placed a hand over her right breast. Keenan held her shoulders. What she felt, he felt. A searing pain shot down her back. He bit his tongue and squeezed her shoulders to help her through this. He remembered his own

branding, but this was worse. The fires of Heaven were searing the demon from her soul. She began to shake, but she didn't cry out. The light which surrounded her was nearly as bright as the halo around Vangelis. When it cleared, he felt the difference in her. The darkness which had weighed on her spirit was no more. She was free of the evil seed that Sebastian had planted in her long ago.

"I have faith in you, *chicha*. I'll give you a little bit of shore leave so you can get acquainted with the rules and regulations and such. Don't get her too exhausted, Keenan. I know the workout regimen you put yourself on to stay in shape. Oh, before I go, I found this sitting on the calendar. I don't know why it wasn't with the other mail. Now have fun you two. Right now, I have some other fish to fry." Van handed Emera an envelope. Then in a blinding flash of light, the angel vanished.

When they were able to see again they were outside in a beautiful garden. Keenan plucked a white rose from a bush and held it out to her. He wondered what his handler was going to do. Even if he asked the angel he wouldn't get an answer. He glanced at the envelope.

"I take it you have another secret admirer?" He wrapped his arms around her waist and nuzzled her nape. Her hair smelled of peaches and her energy was much lighter. He was grateful that Van had given them a couple of weeks of vacation so they could get reacquainted. He would love to show her the ropes and maybe even tie her up in a few of those ropes too.

"Aren't these notes from you?"

He nibbled her earlobe. "Not me. I've just been sending you presents. Speaking of presents, I have something else for you." He dug into his pocket and pulled out the small box. He turned her around in his arms and handed it to her. She had a puzzled look.

"What is this?"

"Open it and see."

Emera opened it. Her expression changed and tears lined her eyes. "You still have this!" Her fingers stroked the small feather. "How could you have this after you died?"

"After I chose to become a Demon Catcher, I went back to the site hoping to find you, but you were long gone. I found this in the fire. It didn't burn. I knew at once it was from you. I've kept it close to my heart ever since. It was the one thing that gave me hope that you were still good. I knew that if it ever turned black then you were lost to me."

She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him close. Feeling her body so near made him want her right there, but they had to see what was in the envelope. He kissed the top of her head. "I love you."

"I know. First though, we have to see what is in this envelope. Maybe those messages are from the other demon Van has been telling me about. Did Sebastian ever tell you he was in league with another demon?"

"No. He never mentioned it. He was too stuck up to share anything with anyone. He was possessive of me. He owned everything that he touched." Her fingers shook while she opened the letter. Inside was another expensive card. Only this time there was an address on it and nothing else.

### **Devil's Tavern**

**369 Two Forks Rd., Tumbleweed, NV**

She flipped the card over. A map began to burn itself into the paper. Under the map a message appeared. *Come and all will be revealed.*

"Do you know where this is?" Emera asked.

"No clue. Maybe it's a trap Sebastian set up." Keenan ran his hand over the map feeling the raised surface. He pulled his fingers away and sniffed his fingertips expecting to smell sulfur. There wasn't anything. Knowing that there was a second factor involved made him uneasy. He at least liked to know what he was getting involved in. *This has to be from the other demon who Van was talking about. Whatever it is, we'll get through it.*

"No, it's something else. This doesn't have his pizzazz. The name of this place sounds familiar. I don't know from where though. Shit."

"Well, I'm sure we'll figure it out. When it's time, we'll be called. I've learned that over the years."

His hands trailed over her stomach. "Something's there waiting for me. I just know it." Emera shook her head and drew in a breath. "I don't know. I can't shake it. I guess you're right. When it's time, we will be called."

Keenan pecked the side of her neck. "Well I think that we have time. Can you try and push it from your mind for a little while? I was hoping I could have you all to myself. Now that you're not evil at all. I have so many plans for us." His hands dipped lower over her belly and snuck under the slit of her dress.

He didn't want to think about the future. He wanted to think about the here and now. He finally had the woman he loved in his arms. Whatever lay ahead of them, they could face when the time came. Right now, all Keenan desired was her.

"Yes. Let's worry about it later." She gazed deep into his eyes.

"I love you, Emera. I've wanted you for so very long. Now you'll be with me forever. I know it's not the garden you came from, but I hope that I can offer you a little slice of Heaven."

Without answering, she flung her arms around his neck and kissed him deeply. A sense of serenity encompassed his being. He was truly blessed. Heaven had shined on both of them. They had forever now. He would teach her the ropes and bring her the redemption that she sought. No matter what they faced, they would get through it together.

To be continued...

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