

DEMONIC
DISCIPLES



MIANTUS

ANDIE FENICHEL

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MANTUS

MANTUS

I have a job to do. I don't like it, but that doesn't change anything. Find the shifters and send them back to hell. That's the work. It's not as if I have a choice. I've been tracking this last assignment for nearly a month. He's a crafty one. I've got him pinned down at a fancy wedding venue when I'm stopped at the door by a woman who clearly doesn't know who I am or have any instincts for danger. As my prey disappears onto a crowded dance floor, I'm struck by just how perfectly beautiful this party planner is.

FELICITY

I don't care how big or how hot a wedding crasher is, no one uninvited gets in on my watch. It doesn't matter that my lady parts are on fire from the moment I see him. He's imposing and grumpy, but I can't take my eyes off him. For the briefest moment when he stares into my eyes, I think I'm too weak to stop this giant. Then I remember I'm the wedding planner and two can play the intimidation game.

ONE



MANTUS

I'm a demon. My purpose is to keep the balance of good and evil in check. At least, that's what they keep telling me. I'd rather stay in my very nice New York City apartment and play video games or go out to a club and bring home a pretty human woman to seduce.

Having to find shifters, commonly known as purgs, and send them back to purgatory always annoys me. Still, it's not as if someone calls me on the phone. It's a genuine calling. A shifter enters my jurisdiction and my gut tells me I've got to go to work.

No choice. No other options. I can't call in sick. Though, as a demon, I don't get sick. On a normal hunt, I find the purg, stab him or her in the chest or slit his throat. That's an effective way to send them back where they belong.

I'm finally on the trail of this creepy purg who goes by the name of Jorge. In general, I try to stay out of any human trouble. I abide by the laws of this world, but I'm engaged in a high-speed chase down Route 22 in New Jersey. Not much for prayers, I sincerely hope law enforcement doesn't see either one of us weaving through traffic.

I stay close to the blue Honda and can't help being impressed by his driving skills.

He turns into a parking lot of Platitudes, a fancy place that holds wedding receptions and other big events.

I have to take the next turn and circle back since I don't want to ruin my entire week by crashing my Porsche. I park next to the Honda and run into the building.

It's stately, with marble floors and a red-carpet runner down the center leading to a grand staircase with an enormous crystal chandelier above.

Catching a glimpse of Jorge at the top of the stairs, I take them two at a time and reach the top just as he shifts into a middle-aged man and ducks into one of the wedding receptions.

Inside, the room is dim, with a band playing dance music.

I cross the threshold and someone grabs my arm. As my temper rises, I'm about to jerk out of the grasp, her crystal-blue eyes grab my full attention.

Still holding me is the most beautiful human I've ever seen. Brown hair cascades in waves around her perfectly symmetrical face, and those blue eyes... She barely reaches my chest, but her grip is surprisingly strong. In a red gown that dips alluringly between her breasts and makes my mouth water, she's perfection. "You're not invited to this event, sir."

Getting a hold of my emotions is not a feeling I'm familiar with, so it takes me a beat or two. "I need to speak to the man who just ran in here."

The cutest crease forms between her eyes. "The father of the bride? You know Mr. Carmichael?" She scans me from head to toe, assessing my jeans and an ironic Meatloaf T-shirt, and twists her lips in doubt.

Oh, what I'd like to do with those lips. I'm so mesmerized by this woman, I lose the scent of Jorge. Unwilling to pull away from her touch and pleased that she's still holding on, I scan the crowded hall. "I guess I've lost him for now." I turn to face her.

She looks at her hand on my biceps, blushes, and lets go. "If you want me to have Mr. Carmichael step out and speak to you, I'll do so, but I can't let you go in."

My job requires me to storm through that crowd and find Jorge. I let doubt roll through me and send it telepathically into her. I definitely don't want to talk to the father of the bride. I need the guy who shifted to *look like* Carmichael and now that I've lost his scent, it could take me a week to find him again.

Human minds are weak and her bright eyes dim as I use my ability to make her doubt herself. In a moment she'll let me through but she'll never understand why she did it. This is the first time I've regretted changing someone's mind.

Her shoulders slump slightly and her red lips turn down. She shifts from foot to foot. I've nearly got her.

She shakes her head and the determination is back. "Do you want me to get him for you?"

"No." I study her. "How did you do that?"

"What?" Confusion puts that little crease back. Back straight again, she squares up to me.

I hadn't meant to ask the question out loud. Honestly, I'm too intrigued by this human to mind about losing Jorge. Sure, it's a setback, but maybe the night's not a complete loss. "What's your name?"

"Felicity Zane." Her lips purse as if she's daring me to kiss her.

It's my turn to shift from foot to foot as my attraction to her grows rapidly. "Are you Platitudes security?"

Nothing could have prepared me for the way crossing her arms pushes her tits to the limit of her dress. It wouldn't surprise me if Satan put her here to tempt mankind. Then I look at her soft kind eyes, and I know that's not the case. She gives me a look that is pure New Jersey gumption with one eyebrow raised and her lips pushed to one side. "Do I look like security? I'm the wedding planner for this event. It's my job to make sure everything is perfect."

"And I don't fit the mold?" I've never cared about fitting in with humanity, so I'm not sure why this bothers me.

Again, she scans me from head to toe and back up to my eyes, which sends a thrill through me. "Mr...?"

"Kohl. Mantus Kohl." Does she like what she sees? Can I talk her into coming home with me? I really want to take her home and show her how much pleasure is in the world when you get in bed with a demon.

Her long lashes catch my attention as she blinks slowly several times. “Mr. Kohl, I’m sure you know you’re not invited to this event and that’s the only thing being judged here.”

Stepping close enough to invade her personal space, I breathe in her scent so I’ll always have her with me. “Felicity.” I close my eyes and let her name, so incongruous with me and my life, roll over my tongue.

She draws a sharp breath.

There are small specks of red in her blue eyes, like freckles. I want to investigate every nuance. “Will you go out with me?”

“I don’t know you.” Her voice is breathy but she makes no move to get away as I back her against the wall, just outside the party.

“So, get to know me.” I’m certain that’s the first time I’ve said those words or even thought them. I’ve never wanted to have someone know me. I’m a demon, I take my pleasure and move on. That’s not to say that I don’t care if the woman is satisfied. I do. In fact, I get off on making women scream my name. The idea of Felicity saying my name has me hard before she’s even said yes to a date.

“I’m working.” Still, she doesn’t push me away, and her hands are tight to her sides.

I lower my head and sniff her neck. “I’ll come back when you’re done or meet you someplace. Do you live nearby?”

“Maybe I’m married or have a boyfriend. You didn’t even ask if I’m available to date you.” She presses her palm into the center of my chest but doesn’t apply any force.

Honestly, it never even occurred to me that she might not be single. Since she’s gorgeous, I suppose it should have. “Are you married, Felicity?”

“No. I’m just not the kind of girl who bumps into a man trying to crash one of my parties and lets him get me alone. I…” She swallows hard. “I’m not going to go out with you, Mr. Kohl.”

This is a first. I've never been turned down before. I could push my influence and maybe then she'd give in, but I find I want to change her mind in a more mundane and meaningful way. "Ever or just tonight?"

She pushes me back, giving her room to put space between us, and smiles. "I'd never say never."

Hope blooms hard and fast inside me. Another first for me. "How about if I get your phone number and call you? That way if you decide against me, you can just block me."

Inside the hall, the music gets louder and the crowd is cheering. "I have to go." She stares at me without moving.

"I'd really like to get to know you." It's true and I'm uncomfortable.

She reaches into the high slit in her gown and pulls her phone from a satin pouch strapped around her thigh. Her legs are long and shapely.

My mouth waters and all the blood rushes from my head. "Wow, you're full of surprises."

A softly wicked grin tugs at her full lips. "This gown has no pockets. Give me your number."

I comply instantly and I'm rewarded not only with getting to watch her a few seconds longer but with her number appearing in my text messages with a little heart emoji. "Thank you."

She turns to walk away.

"One last favor, please?" I don't even mind the desperate tone in my voice.

Looking back, she raises one eyebrow.

"Will you say my first name, Felicity?"

Her cheeks turn the loveliest shade of pink. She whispers, "Mantus."

As soft as she said it, I heard it as clear as a bell. The sound is pure perfection. This woman will be my undoing. I know it, but I'm powerless against it. I have to know her.

“Goodbye.” She walks into the dim ballroom, then I watch her shadow weave between people and finally disappear into the crowd.

“Fuck.” I want to run after her more than I want to breathe. Still, I can control myself. I’ve been living with humans for ages. Their lives are fleeting and their souls are up for grabs. Forcing myself to turn away, I head down the stairs and into the parking lot. Not only is the Honda gone, but the side of my Porsche is also violated with the Latin word *asinus*, carved with a key.

Jorge is right.

“I am a fool.”

Still clutching my phone, I drop it in my pocket. I’ll forget tonight ever happened. Calling a woman who brings out feelings in me is foolish at best and dangerous at worst.

Two



FELICITY

It's not as if I really expected him to call. So why am I still thinking about Mantus Kohl four days after he tried to crash a wedding? I shouldn't be. He was just some guy who thought I'd be an easy mark when finding one at the party didn't work out.

"Stop moping." Rachel is my assistant, but she's also my friend.

Jumping slightly at her scolding tone, I go back to working on the proposal I've been blindly staring at for ten minutes. "I'm not moping. I just hope he calls. At least, I think I do."

Rachel is tall and curvy with honey-brown skin to die for and one of those raspy voices men love. She sits on my desk and pats her black ringlets. "I saw him, and I saw the way you two looked at each other. If the scene were any hotter, I'd have had to find the best man and take him to the coat closet for a whirl."

"Oh god." I drop my forehead on my arm on the desk. "I made a fool of myself."

"No, but if it had gone any further, you might have. I would just call him, but you are not me." She flips one of her curls and pops off the desk. "Maybe the feels were too intense for your Mantus man who looks like sin wearing designer jeans and a graphic T-shirt."

"I'm not calling him. He's the one who made overtures. He accused me of some kind of prejudice based on his looks and dress and then tried to seduce me against a wall in public. He needs to make the first move." My voice gets louder and I have to breathe or I'll start hyperventilating just thinking about how big and hard he felt when he pressed me against that wall.

"But you explained that it was only his lack of invitation that kept him out of the party, so stop fretting about it." She grabs a box of party favors and heads for the table on the other

side of our office, which is a large room at the back of my house in Somerset, New Jersey.

“I did. The entire thing was very strange, and what kind of name is Mantus? Though, it suits him.” It’s so hard to concentrate once I start thinking about him. I pull out my phone from my purse and put it on the desk, check my messages for the tenth time, then turn back to my computer screen.

No amount of concentration is going to get that man out of my head. He invades my dreams with his big hands and sorrowful blue eyes. Grabbing my phone, I pull up his number and hit the message button. I’ll just send him a text and then be done with it.

I thought you’d call, but since you didn’t, I’m deleting your number.

I push the phone aside, screen down, as if that will banish him, and plug some numbers into my proposal.

My phone beeps.

I stare at it.

Rachel looks up from making party favors. “Is that him?”

“Maybe.” My heart is pumping too much blood into my ears and I’m getting dizzy.

“Pick it up and find out what he said.” She stands and walks to the front of my desk.

“I’m not sure I want to know.” My chest is tight.

She picks up my phone.

“Don’t.” I cringe.

She smiles and reads his message. “Sweet Felicity, don’t delete me just yet. Have dinner with me on Friday night.”

I snatch the phone out of her hand. “I can’t have dinner with him this Friday. We have the Julius wedding on Saturday and their rehearsal dinner on Friday.”

“I can handle the rehearsal dinner. See if he’s worth this all-consuming thought and either bang him or dismiss him, but please, girl, stop pining over him.” Rachel goes back to the table.

Of course, Rachel can handle the dinner. I wanted Mantus to call and now I’m afraid to respond. “If he breaks my heart, you’re going to have to pick up the pieces and bring ice cream.”

“I’ll bring two gallons of rocky road and extra chocolate syrup if it comes to that.” She winks and cuts a long piece of ribbon.

I read his message again, then type my reply.

If you’re serious, I’ll meet you at the bar at Scarpone’s in Somerset. It’s near New Brunswick, at 7:30 on Friday night. If you’re just playing some stupid game, then don’t bother showing up. I have a lot of friends that go there, so I won’t be left in the lurch if you don’t come.

I watch the little dots move for a second and then my phone rings, startling me. It clatters loudly to the desk.

“It’s him.” I may throw up.

“Answer it.” Rachel’s voice brooks no argument.

I hit the green button and put him on speaker. “Hello?”

“Hello, Felicity. I want you to hear my voice. Texting is very impersonal.” His deep voice cuts through the line and shoots directly between my legs as he enunciates every word.

Rachel’s eyes are wide and her mouth is agape.

“I can hear you.” I bite my lip to keep any nerves out of my voice. Though, I’m only partially successful.

“I’m not going to stand you up. I’ll be waiting for you when you get there. You’re all I can think about.”

How is it possible that this is even sexier than when the man was pressing me against a wall? “I don’t believe you.”

He lets out a long breath. “I know, but it’s still true.”

“Why didn’t you call or text?” I may as well ask or I’ll regret it when he doesn’t show up on Friday.

“It’s complicated, but it’s not because I’m playing games with you.” There’s hesitation in his voice, like he wants to say more.

I don’t know if he’s holding back because that’s the kind of man he is or if there’s someone else in the room, listening in, like Rachel. “I guess you’re entitled to your secrets since we don’t know each other.”

“Not secrets, so much as things you probably don’t want to know about me anyway.”

Every word he says makes me want to know him better. “Don’t I get to decide what I want to know?”

“No.” His voice takes on a hardness. “I’m probably not good boyfriend material. Well, I’m definitely not.”

“Then why are we bothering to have this conversation?” I have no idea when I became so bold.

Rachel is silently *You go, girl-ing* me from across the room with a fist pump in the air.

His chuckle cuts through the blood still rushing through my ears. “Because I can’t seem to stop wanting more Felicity.”

I gasp a little. My cheeks are on fire. “I’ll see you Friday.” I hang up before I say something I’ll regret, like come over now and fuck me hard and fast. I don’t even know who I am since that’s not a thought I’ve had with any man ever. I like to be romanced and seduced slowly and thoroughly, but that’s not how I feel when I think about Mantus.

“Damn!” Rachel slaps her palm on the table. “That was sexy and no one even said anything hot. You need to get naked with that man, girlfriend.”

The thing is, she’s probably right, but I just pretend to go back to working on the proposal on my computer.



I changed clothes three times before I decided on the tight, short blue skirt and a pale-pink shirt that ties at the waist. It's too sexy for this date and fancier than the jeans or shorts I would usually wear to the neighborhood bar and restaurant my friends Phillip and Gene own.

It's within walking distance of my house, so it's perfect. When Mantus isn't here in fifteen minutes, I'll just visit with my friends and walk home. I pull open the door and the noise of a full Friday night crowd hits me. The tables are to the left, so I turn right.

My heart stops.

Sitting at the end of the long bar, holding a whisky on the rocks and looking twice the size of any other person, is Mantus. His blond hair is cropped short, and his frown is foreboding enough to send a sensible woman running, but the way he looks at me, I have to go to him.

He stands as I approach. "You look beautiful."

My entire body is ready to burst into flames. "Thank you. You look nice too."

It's no lie. He's in a button-down white shirt with the sleeves rolled up and black pants. He's like something out of a dream with all the bulging arm candy a woman could want. He points to his drink. "I had planned to wait until you got here, but when your friend behind the bar learned I was waiting for you, he poured me a whiskey."

I wave to Phillip. "We went to school together. He and his husband, Gene, own this place. Gene is the chef."

Mantus nods. "I've been here for a little while and heard all about growing up in Somerset, New Jersey."

Oh god, what did Phillip say? "He didn't tell all my secrets, did he?"

“Nothing embarrassing.” He grins, and I swear it makes my clit pulse.

Get it together, Felicity. I sit on the stool and Phillip brings me water, a cosmo, and a wink. “I’m glad to hear that.”

For a long moment after he sits, he stares at me as if I’m a novelty. Finally, he asks, “How did you get into party planning?”

I breathe. Small talk I can do. “At my aunt’s wedding when I was eight, I saw how the planner was so in control and how happy she’d made everyone. I knew then that’s what I wanted to do. After I got a business degree at Rutgers, I went to work for a big firm in New York for a few years.”

“Now you’re on your own and killing it.” He grins at me again.

Damn. “I’m doing okay. I can pay the bills and my assistant’s salary.”

Gene steps out from the kitchen door at the other end of the bar and smiles warmly as he strides over and kisses my cheek. He looks at Mantus and his eyes widen. “I’m Gene Scarpone.”

Mantas stands and shakes his hand. “Mantus Kohl. Nice to meet you.”

“Do you two want to sit and eat or drink here for a while?” Gene asks.

They both look at me for a response. The doubtful part of me thinks about staying in the bar and not committing to a meal. If he’s a jerk then I have my one drink and split.

He runs his hand over his closely cropped blond hair, which seems like a nervous habit. Somehow that’s even more endearing than him showing up early to wait for me.

“We should eat, right?” Not exactly the strong command I wanted, but it’s the best I can do. I’m only bold when party planning. When dating, I’m waiting for doom.

The smile touches his eyes first and then spreads to the rest of his heart-stopping gorgeous face. “Dinner would be great.”

Gene grins wide. “Follow me.”

We take our drinks with us and I wave to Phillip as we cross to the restaurant.

Gene seats us in a quiet corner. He cocks his head. “Will you trust me with your meals?”

“Of course.” I love it when Gene feeds me and I’ve never been disappointed.

With his gaze locked on me, Mantus says, “If Felicity trusts you, then I do.”

“Great. I’ll have Beth bring you some water.” Gene returns to the kitchen.

“You don’t even know me.” I can’t stop staring into his eyes. It’s as if I’m under a spell. “How do you know you can trust me?”

THREE



MANTUS

I have no idea how to answer her question. “I just know.”

Her eyelashes almost touch her cheeks as she looks down at her hands in her lap. Then her gaze returns to mine and my heart pounds from just that.

I may be losing my mind, but this woman has me twisted in knots.

The waitress arrives with glasses of water and a basket of bread. She asks if she can get us anything else. Beth is a very pretty woman with an ample chest, which she lets brush my arm when she puts the glasses down.

I ignore the obvious attempt to gain my attention. My focus is on the woman across from me. There’s suddenly no room for anyone else in my world.

Once Beth is gone, Felicity lets out a breath and cocks her head. “Most men would be flattered that Beth paid so much attention to them.”

“Not interested.”

She blushes the prettiest pink, and it goes all the way down to the vee in her shirt. “What do you do for a living?”

It’s odd, but I don’t want to lie to her. “I find people and send them back where they belong.”

Her nose scrunches up. “Like a bounty hunter?”

“Sort of.”

She frowns. “You don’t want to tell me what you do. Is it illegal?”

“No.” Since the beings I rid the earth of are not human, they’re not subject to the laws here. “I just don’t think you would like it, and I’d like for you to know me better before I tell you everything.”

“Were you working on Saturday night when you tried to get into that wedding reception?” She’s as smart as she is pretty.

“I was working.”

“So, the father of the bride is in some kind of trouble?” Her voice drips with doubt.

“Not exactly. Tell me, did the rest of the reception go as planned?” Purgs cause chaos. That’s what they love. It’s usually how they get sent down from heaven. Once they escape purgatory, they’re a real pain in the ass.

She sighs and combs her fingers through her hair. “A string of mishaps had to be dealt with, but most of them didn’t affect the party. The bride never knew anything went wrong, so it was a success.”

Jorge couldn’t just leave without trying to make a mess of things. “The person I was tracking, who was not the father of the bride, likes to upset order.”

“I don’t understand.” When she tilts her head, her hair shifts, covering one eye, and she’s adorable.

“It’s difficult to explain.” I’m saved when the first course arrives and it’s a burrata with tomato and basil dressing poured over the top. The cream inside the mozzarella skin is perfection. I want to spread it all over Felicity rather than the delicious toast points rubbed with garlic.

The rest of the meal is equally spectacular, but all I can think about is how I can extend the evening and not watch her walk away.



In the parking lot, she says, “Thank you. It was a nice dinner. You didn’t have to pay.”

“It was my pleasure.” I want to take her home with me. If I’m honest, I want to keep her and not just for tonight.

“Where’s your car?”

“I didn’t bring it. I only live a few blocks away.” Her shapely legs are a total distraction in that short skirt.

Pulling myself together, I ask, “Let me drive you home?”

She shakes her head. “I’m not going to have sex with you, Mantus.”

Even though she’s shooting me down, my cock thinks any sentence from her with the word sex in it sounds pretty good. “I didn’t ask for sex, Felicity.”

“Then you weren’t offering to drive me home so you could then ask if you could see me to the door, and then ask if I have coffee? This isn’t my first date ever, you know.” She pushes her hip out and puts her hand on it.

“You’re adorable.” I can’t take my eyes off her. “I won’t lie to you. Sex is not the furthest thing from my mind. I’ve imagined you naked since the moment we met. However, I can be patient.” I never have been before, but I’ve lived long enough to know how to wait for what I want.

“Maybe when you tell me what you really do for a living and who you are, instead of evading or giving half-truths, I’ll be more inclined to bring you home.” She steps backward. “Goodnight, Mantus.”

“Goodnight.” I close the distance between us in two steps and wrap my arm around her waist.

She gasps and clutches my shoulders. Eyes wide and mouth slightly open, she stares at me.

“May I kiss you?” I can’t help how hard I am. I’ve been at half-mast since she walked into the bar, but now, my cock is fully engaged with the idea of seducing this woman.

The tip of her tongue peeks out and she wets her bottom lip. Her voice is breathy and sexy as fuck. “Just a kiss.”

“One kiss.” I lower my lips to hers. The spark of energy when they meet nearly knocks me off my feet. Holding it together, I nibble her full bottom lip. Then suck her top one gently.

“Oh.” She wraps her arm around my neck.

Never one to let an opportunity pass me, I take advantage of her open mouth and slip my tongue inside the soft wet heaven.

She slides her tongue along mine and makes the most alluring purring sound in her throat. Moving her hips against me, the purr grows louder before she pushes back and breaks the kiss. Covering her mouth with her hand, she’s wide-eyed and shaking.

Reluctantly, I let her go. It takes all my strength not to pick her up and take her home. If she were any other woman, she’d willingly come with me. My hands are fisted at my sides, and I force them open.

“I—” She pushes her hair out of her face. “I don’t know what to say. I’m not like this.”

“If you’re worried that I think badly of you, I don’t. I think you’re perfect, Felicity.”

She backs away and her voice shakes. “I don’t kiss men I don’t know, and I definitely don’t kiss them like that. You bring out things in me that are not me.”

“Would it make you feel any better to know that I was equally affected by that kiss?” There’s something out of the usual but I can’t quite put my finger on it. Why is she different? What’s happening to me?

Shaking her head, she says, “Goodnight.”

As a demon, I want to chase her. My gut instinct is to follow her. My good sense says to go home and call her once I’m back in New York, and she feels less threatened. I make the sensible choice.

As I pass Newark, I sense Jorge is nearby. I should follow the calling to find him. The desire to go to my apartment and call Felicity is stronger, so I continue north on the New Jersey Turnpike.



Once I'm in my apartment, I stare at my phone for a long time. I should let her be. In fact, I should never bother her again. She's not the kind of woman who deserves a demon in her life or her bed.

Wait. Why am I thinking about more than her bed? There's nothing more than sex with a human woman. They are strictly for pleasure. So why does my high-rise apartment feel so empty and why am I staring at her name on my phone?

I press the Call button. I can hang up once I hear her voice.

"Hello." Soft and sweet, the sound goes directly to a place in my chest I thought was only for pumping blood.

"Hi." I'm a fucking idiot.

"Where are you?"

"Home. Are you alright?" Why does it matter? She's just a woman.

"I'm a little freaked out, but I'll survive."

"You being freaked out about kissing me isn't great." I don't recognize my own voice, so full of concern.

She chuckles. "It was a wonderful kiss, Mantus. I'm just not the kind of person who loses herself in a passionate moment with someone I barely know and..."

"And what?" I love the idea that she's never been overcome with passion before and that I caused her to lose control.

"You have secrets, and I feel like they're big ones. That's not going to work for me."

There's a pause.

I don't know what to say. She's right, but telling her I'm a demon and my job is to send fallen angels who are shape-shifting assholes back to purgatory isn't an option.

She asks, “Are you still there?”

“I’m here.” I wish I was with her, holding her, loving her. “I don’t know what I’m supposed to say. I want to see you again. I want you to know me, but my life is complicated.”

Her soft sigh is heartbreaking. “My life is not complicated. I feel drawn to you, but I don’t see how this works.”

“Don’t give up so easily, sweetheart. Give me a chance.” I can’t believe I’m fucking begging a woman for her attention. Yet, the idea of never seeing her again or touching her soft skin is unfathomable.

“Tell me one real thing about you.” There’s a small hitch in her voice.

“I couldn’t wait to get home so I could call you tonight and that’s never happened before. I don’t pine over women. I don’t beg them for a date. Until you, I never considered a woman more than company for a few hours.” It doesn’t exactly show me as a man of great character, but it’s completely honest.

“What makes me different?” The sound of fabric ruffling comes through the phone. Is she lying in bed talking to me?

Closing my eyes, I force the wave of desire to abate. “I have no idea, but you are most definitely different.”

“I have to get some sleep. I have an event tomorrow.”

When she doesn’t immediately say goodnight, I ask, “Can I meet you after that?”

“To have sex?” It might be my imagination, but I swear she sounds needy.

I grip my cock through my pants and close my eyes. A low groan escapes my throat while imagining her hand instead of mine. “Felicity, I would give anything to take you to bed.”

“Then what I require is total honesty, Mantus. I’ll meet you after my party tomorrow if you promise to tell me exactly who you are and what you do.” Her voice is rough with either passion or emotion. Maybe she’s as turned-on as I am just from talking to her.

“If I tell you the truth, you will never want to see me again and we won’t be having sex, sweetheart.” Gripping my shaft tighter, another grunt escapes.

She makes a tiny noise that could be pleasure or pain. “You’ll have to take the risk or the answer is no. I want you, but I can’t lose who I am to have you.”

“Do you know you’re driving me to a lustful death over here?” She’s pure, kind, and she wants me. I don’t deserve her, but I’m not a good enough man to back away.

“I know. I’m turned-on too.”

Unable to stop the growl, I let it roll through me. “I don’t want to take anything away from you. All I want is your time. After that, whatever you’re willing to give will be more than I deserve.”

“Oh,” she gasps. “I’ll text you with my address. Meet me at ten thirty tomorrow night.”

“I’ll be there.” Feeling hopeful is not something I’m accustomed to.

“Goodnight, Mantus.” She disconnects the line.

“Fuck!” I head for the shower to relieve my desire down the drain. It’s a lousy substitution for Felicity’s sweet body, but it will have to do for tonight.

FOUR



FELICITY

What is it about Mantus that made me invite him to my house? Maybe I'm having a breakdown or something. I mean, it has been a while since I've had sex. Can a person lose her mind from not getting laid? Probably not.

Rachel was all for the hookup. She thinks that one night with Mantus will cure me of my obsession.

I have my doubts. Besides, I don't believe he's going to come through with his part of the bargain. Something tells me that revealing the entire truth about himself is not something that Mantus does often, if ever.

I pull into my driveway nearly twenty-five minutes late.

He's already there, leaning against his shiny black Porsche. Standing up straight, he waits for me to stop, then opens my car door. "How was your party?"

"It was great." I have to move the slit of my silver gown so I can step out of the car. It reveals my legs to the top of my thighs. The gown is strapless and has a twist between my breasts. One wrong move getting out of my Nissan and I'll reveal more than just legs.

"You're fucking gorgeous." He offers his hand to help me out.

Just our fingers touching is electric. Standing brings me so close I have to look up to meet his gaze. "Thank you. Have you been waiting long?"

"Long enough to have to explain to your neighbor who I am and what I'm doing here." His smile lights his eyes and triples my heart rate.

"Sorry. It was mayhem at the end of the night. The champagne tower fell, broken glass everywhere, with no apparent reason for the incident. I've never seen one fall

before. Then the groom's uncle had to be escorted out because he was so drunk that he'd started a fight. The vodka ran out and had to be replaced. It was total chaos." I walk to my front door and unlock it.

Mantus is still by the cars. He's staring out into the street.

"Is everything alright?" I call back.

"I'm sorry. It's my fault. I'll find Jorge this week, and he won't bother you again." His brow is furrowed as he strides toward me.

"Who is Jorge? What are you talking about?" Waiting for him to reach me, I'm totally puzzled by his reaction to my crazy night. "It all worked out fine. Platitudes is very good at clean up and quick to replace things. I don't see how any of it was your fault."

He takes a deep breath that causes his chest to stretch the limits of his graphic T-shirt with another eighties' hair band on the front. He cups my cheek and rubs his thumb along my cheekbone. "Do you still want the entire truth about me, sweetheart?"

Between his touch, the passion in his eyes, and the low rumble of his voice, I'm pretty sure my ovaries will never be the same. I open my mouth to say yes, but nothing comes out, so I nod.

He sighs. "Then you should invite me in."

I push the door open and flip on a light.

Walking inside, he looks around. "This is nice."

It's a Cape Cod that was built in the sixties. I've renovated it and modernized all the fixtures and appliances. "Thank you."

My cat, an orange tabby named Pumpkin, trots over. She stops when she sees him, hisses, and bolts into the office at the back of the house.

"Pumpkin can take a while to warm up."

Not bothered by the temperament of my cat, he sits on one of two stools at my small kitchen island.

Dropping my purse, phone, and keys on the foyer table, I kick off my shoes. Mantus Kohl sitting in my kitchen is oddly right. He shouldn't fit in with my tidy cross between contemporary and classic decor, but he somehow does.

I take a bottle of white wine out of the fridge. "Would you like a glass?"

He nods. "I thought it would be more bohemian in here."

Taking two glasses out of the cabinet, I like that he was trying to figure me out. I even like that he got it wrong. Once I've uncorked the bottle, I pour. "What made you think bohemian would be my style?"

He shrugs his wide shoulders. "I don't know. You have an earth mother kind of vibe."

Sitting beside him, I sip my wine. "I like order, though I'm not a neat freak. I like taking care of myself and not worrying about the people that love me. My brother gives my mom enough to worry about."

"Does your family live close by?" He drinks the wine, then takes my hand as if he's examining each finger.

"Yes. I grew up six blocks from here. My mom was on her own, and she raised us. Now she's across town. She got married a few years ago. My brother struggles with some mental health issues, but he's doing okay. You said you would tell me about yourself, not pry information from me tonight." I need to learn to not answer. I'm too honest. Damn.

He drinks the remaining wine in his glass, then presses my hand between both of his.

The slit of my gown has fallen open, leaving my legs bare, and with the stools facing each other, my legs are caught between his. His jeans look as if they can barely contain his thick, muscular thighs.

"You won't believe me, but I'm going to tell you anyway." He holds our hands up as if in prayer and lowers his forehead

to touch our fingers.

“I’ll try to keep an open mind if that helps.”

He looks me in the eyes while caressing my hand. “I’m a demon. My father is the ruler of hell. I’m one of those chosen to find fallen angels, who are called shifters or purgs, and send them back where they belong. The man you thought was the father of the bride last week was actually a purg named Jorge. He escaped almost two weeks ago. He must know I’m interested in you, and he probably caused the chaos at your party tonight. I should have caught him already, but I’ve been preoccupied with you and haven’t been doing my job.”

He’s insane. I’ve let a madman into my house. “You’re right. I don’t believe you. Either you’re crazy or you’re making fun of me.”

Gripping my hand tighter, he kisses my fingers. “I’m not either. I’m known in some circles as Belphegor, and I bring with me doubt and uncertainty.”

The first time I met him, I had a moment when I felt as if I wasn’t capable of managing him and the party. There was an instant when I considered letting him pass and going home. I had to shake it off then, and I do the same now. “I don’t know what to say. You need help. Is there someone I can call for you?”

Pure despair darkens his eyes. “I’m not ill, sweetheart. He lets go of me and stands. “Don’t freak out and don’t try to kill me with a kitchen knife.”

“What are you talking about?”

His face elongates and his tongue juts out like a snake. I swear it’s even forked. His arms disappear and he turns into a very large deadly looking snake in front of my eyes. His clothes lay in a heap on my kitchen floor. The snake looks me in the eyes and reveals fangs dripping with venom.

Terror tightens my chest and I clutch it while gasping for air. Just when the scream building inside me is about to burst free, Mantus is back, and the snake has vanished.

My head spins and I grip the edge of the countertop to keep from falling off the stool.

Warm and completely naked, Mantus wraps his arms around me. “Don’t pass out, sweetheart. I’ve got you. You’re safe.”

I press my cheek to his tattooed flesh and grip his waist. His scent is masculine and clean. “You were a snake. Is that some illusion?”

He lightly pets my hair. “No. I can become a cottonmouth. It’s part of being a demon.”

“I’m having some kind of delusional breakdown from stress.” I try to breathe, but it’s a struggle to find air. “You’re naked.”

Everything spins and goes black.



I wake up in my bed with Mantus hovering over me. His face is full of concern and he’s still naked. “There you are.”

“How long was I out?” I sit up, but the spinning room forces me back to the pillow.

“Just a few minutes. I hope you don’t mind me bringing you to bed.” He helps me sit and gives me a glass of water.

Handing him back the glass, I look into his bright blue eyes. “You’re a demon?”

The way he smiles sends lust to all my lady parts. “I am.”

“Do demons always date humans? Don’t you have lady demons to seduce?” I lean against the headboard and try not to notice how big he is or how huge his cock is or that he has a hard-on or that he’s in my bed with a hard-on.

“I don’t really date anyone. I seduce women when it’s convenient. Occasionally I’ll hook up with someone from my realm, but that’s not as much fun.” He shrugs. I must look as

horrified as I feel. “You said you wanted the entire truth. I warned you that you wouldn’t like it.”

“So, you just want to have sex with me. That’s what this is all about. Why? You’re insanely good-looking. There are plenty of women who will have sex with you and won’t even ask your name. Why buy me dinner? Why call me and make it so hard to say no to you? Is it the chase? This is some kind of game you’re playing?” Tears clog my throat. I close my eyes to try to push them back, but they escape anyway. I was prepared for a lie or a story about how he adores me. I’m not at all ready to know about heaven and hell or that the man I’ve dreamed about in my bed is a demon who chases fallen angels.

He touches my cheek, and I open my eyes. With my tear on his thumb, he presses it to his lips. “For me?”

“I don’t know. Because this is impossible.” I cry into the crook of my elbow. “You don’t have to stay.”

The mattress shifts, Mantus wraps his arms around me, and pulls me onto his lap. Cradling me, he asks, “What if I want to stay?”

“I doubt there’s anything I can do to force you to do anything.” Despite my brain thinking it’s a bad idea, I relax against him and it feels wonderful.

“You only have to tell me to go, Felicity. I’m not here to force you into anything. I want you more than I’ve ever wanted anything, but I’d never hurt you.” He kisses the top of my head.

It’s impossible not to notice that I’m sitting on his enormous cock. “If I have sex with you, will you be satisfied? Will you leave me with a broken heart, thinking the universe is a mess?”

He gently lowers the zipper at the back of my gown and slides his warm hand along my bare back. “The universe is a mess, and I’m not to blame for that. Regardless of if you say yes or no, I’ll want more of you. If you’d let me hold you like this for a few hours, it’s already more than I deserve.”

My pussy is on fire, and I rock my hips. “I don’t know if I can sit like this with you naked and clearly aroused without needing more.”

There’s a long silence and I’m sure he’s about to bolt from my house and my life. He kisses the shell of my ear. “Tell me it’s okay to take this dress off you and kiss every inch of your soft skin.”

“Oh, god.” My nipples tighten and rub against the fabric of my gown. The way he always asks permission is so sexy. “It’s okay.”

FIVE



MANTUS

She said yes. Not what I expected. I need to be gentle with her, and that's a first for me too. I've never wanted to care for anyone before. The way my heart is pounding can only be fear. Fear of what all this means and maybe of being owned by another so completely.

I capture her lips, half afraid she'll change her mind, but prepared to stop if she does. I desperately need this to be her decision.

She caresses my tongue with hers and digs her fingernails into my shoulders.

I've never been so turned-on by anyone. She's everything I want and nothing I deserve. Felicity is exactly what her name suggests. She's pure happiness within and without. As a demon, happiness has never been in my wheelhouse.

Slipping her gown off her shoulders, I pull away from her lips to kiss her bare skin. Shifting her to the mattress, I pull the fabric past her sweet tits and suck one perfect nipple into my mouth.

Arching her back, she grips her other nipple and tugs. Mouth open on a long moan, she says my name like she's begging.

There's no need, I'll give her everything she wants. I'd give her everything I have if she'd let me. Wetting her nipple with my tongue, I back off and blow on her damp skin.

"Mantus." She pushes her gown down to her waist, and I kiss her ribs.

The scent of her arousal is almost enough to make me come without ever sinking inside her body.

She runs her fingers over my hair and wriggles her legs to work her gown down.

Assisting, I pull the gown away and toss it to the bottom of the bed. In just a lace thong, she's delectable. I lick the crease at the top of her thigh and breathe in her intoxicating scent.

Divesting her of her underwear, I take a moment to enjoy the view of Felicity naked and wanton. "You're so fucking beautiful."

Opening her eyes, she meets my gaze. "I need you, Mantus. Why do I need you so desperately?" She reaches between her legs and slips two fingers between her folds.

It's so hot, I have to stroke my cock. This is not how I want to come and it's definitely not how I want her to come. Though I'd like to see that at some point too. This time, I want to be the cause of her orgasm.

Pressing her thighs wider with my shoulders, I take her hand and suck her fingers clean of her juices. "Dammit, you taste good."

I slide my hands under her ass and lick her slit before settling my lips around her clit.

"Mantus. Oh. I. That's—" She grips the back of my head and moves her feet to my shoulders. Pushing and pulling me at the same time.

Determined, I'm not going anywhere until I see her come. I clutch her ass cheeks and suck, lick, and suck again.

Her hips bounce against my face and wonderful noises fall from her lips.

I press my thumb inside her wetness.

Her body contracts around my finger and her moans echo off the walls.

Nothing in my experience has been as beautiful as Felicity coming apart. I lick up every drop of her cum, even sucking it from my own finger. "I will never get enough of that. You're more powerful than any drug, sweetheart." I kiss her inner thigh and then the other. "Can I fuck you, Felicity?"

She pushes me away with her feet on my shoulders.

My chest tightens because I know she's going to send me away. Resigned, I back off and take a good look at the woman who has changed everything for me. I know I'll never be the same, and I'm not sorry about it.

Instead of covering herself, she rolls to her stomach and lifts her ass in the air. Her wet slit is pink and exposed. "Please, Mantus. I need to feel you inside me."

Cock even harder, it's difficult to believe what I'm hearing and seeing. "Are you sure?"

"Please." She lifts her ass higher.

Groaning like a beast, I grab her hips, notch my cock at her center, and press in an inch before backing out. I have to catch my breath before I thrust deeper and pull back again.

"Oh. God." Her fingers dig into the pillow and she presses back to take more of me.

"I'll stop if it's too much, baby." It would kill me, but I never want to hurt her.

"No. No, don't stop. All of you." She thrusts back, stretching around my shaft.

Holding her hips tight to mine, I let her body adjust to my size. "You're perfect, Felicity."

"You need to move or let me move." There's desperation in her melodious voice.

I release her and caress her back from between her shoulder blades to the curve of her ass. Her skin is silky and soft.

Shifting forward and back, she fucks me with slow, deliberate strokes. Inch by inch, she pulls me in and lets me out. Her body is a perfect fit.

I feel like fucking Cinderella with a glass slipper as the tingle begins at the base of my spine. I set a faster pace.

She meets every thrust and those spectacular noises continue to fill the room.

Wrapping my hand around front, I tease her clit with my fingers and barely hold on as I feel her pussy pulse around my cock.

One thrust, then another, and I spill my seed inside her with a feral growl.

She collapses onto the mattress, and I follow her down. Still intimately connected, I wrap my arms around her and roll us to our sides. “You really are magnificent.” I kiss the back of her neck.

“I never come twice in one night.” She sighs and wiggles her ass.

My cock is already recovering, but I do my best to keep from making her sore without exiting her body. I can’t bear for any space to be between us just yet. I’m clearly insane.

“Are you hard again already?” She holds my hand where it’s resting on her abdomen.

“Sorry.” I try to will myself to not be turned-on but with little success. “I’m not human and my recovery time is faster. Also, you make me fucking crazy.”

Shifting her hips to take more of me, she moans. “I’m, oh. Don’t be sorry. I don’t mind.” Despite her words, she pulls away. Turning toward me, she pushes me onto my back and straddles my hips. “I’m not like this.”

I caress her from knees to her waist. “I like it, so don’t apologize, sweetheart.”

She rises, grips my cock, and lines it up before letting gravity take over. She cries low and long as I fill her sweet body. Then my sweet happy woman rides me like a Valkyrie going to battle. Her ass rises and falls in a perfect cadence. She’s wet, warm, and tight, and each time her pussy caresses my shaft, my orgasm builds.

Pressing her hands to my chest, she changes the angle so my cock rubs her clit back and forth. She cries out. “Maaantuus.” Her pussy pulses as she comes around me. Her body is perfect.

Holding her hips, I pound up and into her until she's screaming my name again and I come in a rush. I wrap my arms around her and hold her tight to my chest. "Tell me I can have you forever."

"Do you want me forever?" she asks softly as her fingers tickle the hair at the back of my neck.

I have no idea why I said that. It was probably just how good the sex was. However, I've had plenty of sex and have never been compelled to have a woman a second time before. If I was compelled to do the right thing, I would leave her alone and let her find some nice human man to fall in love with.

A surge of anger fills me at the idea of another man having Felicity. "I don't want to share you."

"That wasn't the question." She's still relaxed like a blanket across my chest. Her hair is fanned out.

I stroke her soft tresses. "No. I know. I don't think I could stand it if you tell me no, but I know I don't deserve you."

"So, you think you should protect me from you?"

"I should, but I'm not that kind of guy. A good man would tell you to move on. A great man wouldn't have let it go this far. I'm neither of those things, sweetheart. I'm a demon living on earth to keep the balance between good and evil by sending fallen angels back to purgatory." I never want to let her go and instinctively tighten my arm at her back.

"Are you good or evil?"

"I'm neither. I've done some things you might consider evil and I've done some things my family would consider good. I'm here to keep balance, not to decide right from wrong." It's an old argument with myself. I don't know where the lines get drawn.

"Sometimes there is a gray area. Maybe that's where you live." Her voice is dreamy.

I love the weight of her body on mine. "Tell me about you. Did you have a happy childhood?"

The way her fingers toy with my hair is comforting in a way I've never experienced before. It's soft and sweet. No one has ever been tender with me before. Women want to have sex and then most are happy to leave or lock their door after I go.

She cuddles along my body. "It was. I don't have some big sad story like a lot of people. Maybe that's why you like me."

The word "mate" echoes in my head.

I roll to my side and ease her onto the mattress. Sitting up, I search for the source of the voice.

She touches my back. "What is it?"

"I heard something." I strain to hear it again, but there's nothing.

Cocking her head, she listens. "I don't hear anything. What was it?"

"A voice." I sound like a madman.

She rubs a circle with her palm on my back. "What did it say?"

Her touch is incredibly comforting. Turning toward her, I cup her cheek and stare into those blue eyes. Memorizing every nuance of their depths, I kiss her soft lips. "You should ask if I'm insane or whose voice I hear." I kiss her again. "But my sweet Felicity trusts that I heard a voice and only wants to know what it said."

She runs her hand over my hair, which she seems to like touching. "You didn't like what you heard. I can see it in your eyes. What was it?"

It's not that I don't like it. Maybe it is, but not for the reasons she will think. "The voice said 'mate.'"

"What does it mean?"

"Nothing. Everything. I don't know."

She leans her head on my shoulder and yawns. "I think you do know."

“Let’s sleep a while and talk about it tomorrow.” I ease her onto the mattress, wrap my arms around her, and kiss her soft hair.

Yawning and relaxing against me, she’s the most trusting soul I’ve ever met. “Tomorrow. You won’t leave without saying goodbye, will you?”

“Never.” I’m thinking about never leaving, but I can’t tell her that yet.

SIX



FELICITY

I wake up feeling as if I had a ton of sex after being pretty much celibate for over a year. Which is to say, I feel awesome. I stretch my arms and legs and roll over to find the other side of my bed empty.

Getting out of bed, I grab my robe from the chair in the corner and pull it on. The hallway is quiet, but the scent of coffee draws me to the living area.

My television is on with the volume low. Mantus is wearing jeans, no shirt, and Pumpkin is sprawled across his lap.

He's petting the contented feline and watching a news report about a train derailment west of us.

I love the way his muscles roll as he pets Pumpkin, but a girl can't hide in the shadows and gawk forever. "Good morning."

Turning, his slow smile melts my insides. "You look good enough to eat."

My cheeks heat. "I see you and Pumpkin have come to terms."

Easing the cat off his lap, he stands. "She's a good cat and once I fed her, she was charmed." He closes the space between us and wraps his arms around me. "I went out and picked up some bagels and made coffee."

I breathe in the warm manly scent of him. "You're my hero."

He stiffens. "I'm no hero, sweetheart. I'm a demon." He points to the wreckage on the television screen. "That's because I didn't find and stop Jorge."

My gut twists. I could almost forget that my new man isn't a man at all in the aftermath of a perfect night together. "Are

you going to find him now?"

He kisses my hair. "I promised I wouldn't leave without saying goodbye, so I waited for you to wake up, but I have to go."

Pushing on his chest, I step back. I don't know why I'm surprised or even disappointed that he's leaving. It was just sex. People have it all the time and it doesn't mean anything. "You better go then." I wrap my arms around my waist.

Grabbing his shirt, he pulls it over his head. He's anxious, as if he can't wait to get out of my house. "I may be gone a few days."

"Sure." It feels as if this may be the last time I'll see him. I hold back my disappointment and hurt. If I never see him again, I don't want him to think it matters. One thing I learned from my mother is that being needy never keeps a man. I bite the inside of my cheek to keep my emotions down. I already let him see me cry last night, I'm not going to be a mess this morning.

He tips my chin up. "I have to find Jorge and stop him, but I'd like to see you as soon as I finish this job."

"I understand." It's a lie. I don't really know what this Jorge person has to do with the accident on the news. Things like that happen all the time. He told me he would tell me what the voice meant, but now he's leaving. "Thanks for breakfast and for staying until I woke up."

Taking a deep breath, he closes his eyes. When he opens them, the intensity has diminished. He takes one of my hands and unwraps it from my waist. "Talk to me."

"It's fine. You have to go." I try to pull my hand from his, but he holds it firmly and pulls me close.

Cupping my cheek, he presses his lips to mine. With his forehead pressed to mine, he says, "I've made you upset this morning and that's the last thing I wanted. Tell me how to fix it."

"You said we'd talk this morning. I want to know about the voice you heard and what it meant." A tear escapes as my

emotions bubble to the surface.

With a kiss, he brushes away my tear. “I don’t want to ever make you cry, yet it seems I keep doing exactly that.”

“Maybe I just need some coffee. You should go.” I turn and walk into the kitchen. Keeping my back to him, I wait for the front door to open and close. When it doesn’t, I bite my lip and pour my coffee. Without looking back, I add cream and sugar. Every moment, I expect him to leave, but when I finally turn, Mantus is leaning against the post that stands between my kitchen and dining room.

“Come sit with me and drink your coffee.” He offers his hand.

Helpless to resist him, I thread my fingers through his and follow him to the couch.

Pumpkin creeps onto his lap and stretches one paw to touch my leg.

I scratch the cat’s ear. “My father left my mother when I was three. I guess I just expect men to leave.”

He kisses my hand. “Felicity, I’m not leaving you. Even though you deserve a much better man, I can’t give you up.”

“Why not?”

He presses my hand flat between both of his. “The voice I heard was ancient. In fact, it’s older than time. I’ve heard stories about demons hearing the voice call to them when they find the person who is meant for them. I never believed those stories until last night.”

“So, you won’t leave me because we’re meant to be together, like fate?” I don’t believe in fate or destiny. I’m in control of my life. I made something of myself.

“You don’t believe me. I can see it on your face.” He traces a path around my fingers where they lay on his palm.

“I believe in free will.” I take my hand away and cradle my coffee.

His smile doesn't reach his eyes. "Yes. You have free will, sweetheart. Your life was created by you." He draws a long breath. "My life is a different story. I'm a demon. I have things I must do. I have no choice but to find Jorge and send him back where he belongs. Each time a purgatorian flees, I have to hunt them. It's not my choice. Until a demon finds his true mate, he must continue on the path of keeping a balance between good and evil."

"And you think I'm your true mate?" My heart is lodged in my throat.

"I believe you and I are meant to be together, and yet I know I don't deserve you." He sighs. "Even so, you can send me away."

"Why would I do that?" As much as I don't want to feel as if forces beyond my control are manipulating me, I'm drawn to Mantus.

"Because I'm a demon."

"I don't care." It's completely honest. All I see is the man and I want him.

His eyes get a faraway look and a frown pulls at his beautiful lips.

"Mantus?"

He snaps out of his daze.

"Where were you?" My pulse is racing.

Lifting Pumpkin gently, he puts her on the floor and turns to face me. He takes my coffee out of my hand and places the cup on the coffee table. "When a purgatorian is on the move, I can feel them. I've tried to ignore it since I met you, but the drive to get to Jorge is stronger now. As I said, I don't have free will."

"You have to go." Even though nothing has changed since he first told me he had to go to work, I feel more relaxed and less like he's abandoning me.

He presses his lips to mine and when I open for him, he devours my mouth in an earthshaking kiss. On a growl, he

breaks the kiss. “I will call you.” He kisses my forehead, then gets up. At my front door, he looks back with so much affection, I may cry again.

A moment later, he’s out the door.

I pick up my coffee cup and sip as Pumpkin settles on my lap.



On Wednesday, I meet Rachel for breakfast before we head back to my home office.

She’s scrolling through her phone while I drive. “I heard from the Romano wedding’s mother. She wants blue flowers to match the bridesmaids’ gowns.”

“What did you tell her?” I love my job, but matching a natural flower to an existing dress is not something I enjoy trying to do, especially when it’s not a color that flowers come in.

“I told her that God didn’t make flowers in that color, but we can make a beautiful white centerpiece with tulle died blue to match.” She makes a note. “I’ve already called for a color match at the florist and it’s no problem.”

“Great job.” I pull into my driveway.

“Did you leave your front door open?” Rachel’s voice is sharp.

“No.” I’m sure I locked the door, but it’s wide open.

“I’ve got emergency queued up.” She grabs her purse and holds her phone ready as if it’s a weapon.

We ease up front, and I pull open the screen door.

Rachel mutters, “Who the fuck...”

Sitting on my kitchen island is a woman with the most stunning full figure I’ve ever seen. She’s wearing a diaphanous gown that barely covers any of her attributes. Her red hair

flows in wild curls around her face. With smoky eyeshadow and long lashes, she looks as if she's been to a makeup artist.

Pumpkin is hunched up on the back of the couch, hissing at her.

She hisses back, then dips a spoon in my jar of peanut butter and licks it off, leaving ruby red lipstick on the metal. "I thought you'd never get home."

"Who are you?" It comes out like one word, because I'm too stunned to be very coherent.

Putting the peanut butter down with the spoon sticking out, she slides onto her hip exposing even more of her large breasts. "I'm Kikia."

"Am I supposed to know who you are based on that?" I put my purse, keys, and phone on the table near the door.

"Should I call the police?" Rachel's finger hovers over the Call button on her phone.

"Maybe." I step closer to the kitchen. "Kikia, what are you doing in my house and how did you get in?"

Kikia tilts her head and her hair streams along her shoulder. "I go where I please. I'm Kikia Kohl, little Miss Party Planner. Does that ring more of a bell?"

"You're related to Mantus?" I ease over to Pumpkin, who clearly hates the intruder.

Kikia jumps to her feet and saunters around the island. "I'm his sister, and his name is Belphegor. I'll bet he didn't tell you that, Happy."

"My name is Felicity. Are you telling me your brother's name is not Mantus?" One thing at a time. I have a million questions, but I'm starting with the most obvious.

She rolls her eyes. "It is, but he has many names. Did he tell you he's a demon?"

"The fuck!" Rachel blurts out.

I hold up a hand hoping Rachel won't antagonize Kikia, who feels a little off. "He told me what he is. He also told me

that name you mentioned. Why do you care?”

“He’s my brother. The blood moon is coming. He has responsibilities. I came in through the front door.” She gives her responses while dancing around my kitchen, holding up a glowing key of some kind.

It takes me a moment to realize the last was in response to my question about how she got inside my house. “You need to go now.”

Rachel says, “Hi, you don’t know me, but your crazy-ass sister is in Felicity’s house. Maybe she needs help getting out of here.”

I turn and find Rachel talking on my phone. “You called Mantus?”

“Um, yeah!” She looks at me like it was the obvious thing to do. “He’s on his way.”

Kikia narrows her gaze on Rachel. “You know, I could snap my fingers and destroy you both.”

I put myself between Kikia and Rachel. My employee and dear friend has a look on her face that says she’s about to snatch someone by the hair. Rather than trying to calm Rachel, I look at the mad woman in my kitchen. “I don’t think you’re actually allowed to destroy me or anyone who belongs here on earth. If I understand the rules, there’s balance, and randomly killing people would upset that balance. If you did that, I’m guessing you’d have someone to answer to. Someone who is more threatening than me or my friend.”

Frustration tugs at Kikia’s mouth, and I know I’m right. She hops back up on my island. “I’m still not leaving. Not until you promise to reject my brother. If you reject him, everything will go back to normal. You’ve upset a lot of very important demons with your mating.”

“Mating?” Rachel steps so she’s right behind me and whispers. “What is crazy-hoochie-mama talking about?”

“I’ll explain later.” My stomach is in knots.

“There’s nothing to explain. This human woman had sex with my brother. Not only that, but she’s his mate and if she doesn’t reject him, he won’t be able to fulfill his purpose anymore. She is upsetting the balance of good and evil.” Kikia gives this grave news in a very light tone that makes her even creepier.

SEVEN



MANTUS

I was twenty miles away when I got the strange call from Felicity's phone. Whoever the woman was, she was smart to call me. I'm not sure which of my sisters is at the house, but if I had to bet, I'd guess it's Kikia.

The idea of what that particular sister might do or say sends shivers down my spine. She's spoiled and loves mayhem. If there isn't any to be had, she'll create it.

I break a dozen human laws to get through New Jersey traffic and skid to a stop in front of Felicity's house.

Running up the front lawn, I already hear my sister's cackle. "He'll destroy you the same way he destroys everything he touches."

Once I've eased the screen door open, I can take in the situation.

Kikia is sprawled across the kitchen island, barely clothed, and oddly pleased with herself.

A tall woman with long dark curls has her back to me. I assume this is who called. She looks over her shoulder and her dark eyes widen as she moves to the side.

Felicity was hidden by her friend.

The friend reaches out and grabs Felicity's arm to pull her toward the living room, leaving a clear path between me and my sister.

Felicity frowns, first at being moved, and then at me. "I think your family disapproves of our dating."

There's a lot I'd like to say to her. I want to explain or try to. For the first time in my life, I want to beg forgiveness. It will have to wait. I step into the kitchen. "Kikia, why are you here?"

“You can’t mate with that.” She points a long ruby-painted fingernail at Felicity.

The friend asks in a loud whisper, “Why does she keep saying ‘mate’? Is she talking about sex? Didn’t you already have sex?”

“I don’t know what she means exactly.” Felicity’s voice is tight.

Part of me is flattered that she told her friend about us, but my sister is ruining any joy I might find at the moment. “This is not your business.”

“The blood moon is coming,” she whines.

None of this is how I wanted Felicity to hear about demon lore and legend. I’m not even sure any of this is valid or that she has the power to alter my destiny. “It’s just old tales, Kikia.”

“If that were true, those above and below wouldn’t be so worried about what’s happening here.” She crosses her arms over her chest and pouts. “They’ve let two more purgs out to keep you busy, in hopes the moon will pass without the disgusting idea of you taking a human mate.” She gets giddy and rolls around on the island.

“I felt the shift.” I pull her upright and meet her gaze. “Go home, Kikia. Don’t come back, don’t bother Felicity again. You won’t like it if you make me angry.”

“You’d choose her over me?” Kikia’s bottom lip juts out in a poorly acted sad face.

Tugging the magical key that opens all doors out of her hand, I hold it so she can’t reach it. “You will never see this again if anything happens to these humans. I will hide it in a place you can’t reach for a dozen lifetimes. Do you understand?”

Fury shifts her pretty face to pure evil. “Give it back to me. It’s mine.”

“Swear to leave these humans alone? Swear to never come back here without my invitation?” Magic pours from the key

and I hold it tighter. The magic wants to go back to her as much as she wants it. Still, I'll do as I say if she fights me.

“Fine. I swear to leave them alone and never come back without your leave to do so.” She holds her hand out for the key.

I place the key in her palm. “Time to go, Kikia.”

She saunters toward the front door. Stopping, she looks back at Felicity. “He'll destroy you because it's his nature. Reject him before it's too late.”

Before I can do or say anything, Kikia winks at me and steps outside.

All three of us rush to the door, but she's gone.

“Where did she go?” Felicity asks.

“She used the key to open a doorway. She can get to and from any plane of existence.”

The friend sits on the couch. She stares at me and my woman like a mother about to scold her children. “I'm going to need a few minutes of explanation, Felicity.”

It's hard not to laugh.

Felicity sits next to her. “Rachel, it would seem that my new boyfriend is a demon. His job is to send fallen angels back to purgatory so that the balance between good and evil can be maintained.” She turns to me. “Is that accurate?”

I close the front door and lean on it. “Yes.”

“What was all that shit about a blood moon and mates?” Rachel asks.

Looking at me, Felicity waits.

“Maybe we should discuss this alone.” I think that if I can seduce her, I can thwart the question. It's not nice, but I'm a demon and it's a good tactic. I push doubt toward her, but she pushes it aside, just as she did the other times I've tried it.

“Whatever that is that you do, you better stop.” She stands and faces me. “I'm not going to bend to your will because

you're a demon and if that's what you want, you should go."

"Get it, girl." With her fists tight, Rachel looks ready to start cheerleading. Maybe she's ready to start a fight or defend her friend. Whatever it is, I try to ignore her.

"I never said I wanted to change you. I just don't want to tell you things that will upset you." I use my softest voice, hoping to settle the emotions swirling around the room.

Pointing at me, she narrows her eyes. "You don't get to decide what I want to hear."

Fuck, she's adorable. It's hard not to smile. "I'm just trying to protect you."

"The truth is usually more protection than lies, Mr. Mantus." Rachel leans back and Pumpkin lies on her lap.

I sit on the rolled arm of the large beige chair. A dozen lies come to mind. I could tell her that Kikia is insane and nothing she said is true. My sister's actions would make it believable. Perhaps I could say nothing and come back when she's less concerned with my fate and seduce her. When I look at her though, I want more than a night of passion under the blood moon. "There's a legend as old as earth that claims if a demon finds his mate and claims her on the blood moon, he is released from service. If it's true, you could free me."

She sits next to Rachel. "I don't know what to say."

"None of it matters. The important thing is how you feel, Felicity. If you want me to go, I'll go. But please don't send me away because of something that I can't control. I didn't create the legend and I was born a demon." I'm not above begging.

Rachel shakes her head. "It would be easier if he wasn't so damned good-looking." Standing, she picks up Pumpkin. "We're going in the office to get some work done and give you two some privacy."

Once Rachel is in the office and the door is mostly closed, Felicity sighs. She leans back and stares at me. "If I'm not mistaken, the blood moon is a lunar eclipse?"

“Yes.” I expect her to toss me from the house and her life at any moment.

“Your sister said there are more whatchamacallits for you to hunt now?” She closes her eyes.

“Purgs. Yes. Two more entered this world today. The powers that be are trying to keep me busy, so I won’t have time for you.” They don’t know that I’ll fight all my demon urges to be near this woman. They don’t understand how I feel. Honestly, I’m not sure I understand it either.

“Will that annoying Jorge be coming to all my weddings from now on?” She purses her lips.

“I will catch him.”

“I have to work now.” She gets up. “My next wedding is in the city on Saturday night. Make sure Jorge doesn’t mess it up.”

All I can do is watch as she walks toward her office. “Can I see you tonight?”

“Won’t you be busy hunting purgs?” She stops with her hand on the door.

It’s like fighting nature trying not to hunt the fallen angels. My gut tugs me toward finding them and ridding this world of them. “I have to work now too. If you gave me your permission, I’d come back and take you out to dinner.”

Her shoulders rise and fall but she doesn’t look back. “I can’t help wanting you despite the fact that you withheld information. I see that you desire me, but I don’t know how sincere you are. It’s possible that once you’re freed from the constraints of your nature, you’ll leave me behind.”

Since I can’t imagine what it would be like to be free of my duty, I don’t know how to answer.

Finally, she looks at me. “When is the blood moon?”

“One week.” It’s hard to breathe. She’s so beautiful and when she gazes at me, my chest tightens in a way no other human, demon, angel, or devil ever has had. “I don’t believe I

would leave you, but I've been hunting purgs for centuries, Felicity. I don't know what would happen if my fate changed."

"But whatever happens, the demons are worried about it." She leans on the doorjamb.

"It would seem so." I can't help the thrill of their concern. "I don't hate the idea of those above and below having to do their own bidding while I wake up with you in my arms every morning."

The hint of her smile lights her eyes. I don't know if it's because of the image of waking up together or making my superiors suffer. "I can't resist you yet."

Now I know I'm grinning. "Do you want to?"

She shrugs. "You can come back if you want to."

Pure joy. It's the only way to describe hearing those words. I cross to her in three steps and cup her cheek. "Thank you." I lower my mouth to hers.

She opens for me, and I make love to her perfect mouth. I tease both lips before slipping my tongue inside and running it over her teeth and along her tongue.

Wrapping my other arm around her waist, I pull her close.

She cups the back of my head and grips my shoulder. "Mantus," she breathes as she breaks the kiss. "Go find your fallen angels." Pushing back, she touches her bottom lip.

I back away. As I open the front door, Rachel calls out, "Bye, demon man."

It's as if a giant weight has been lifted off my shoulders. She's not going to let my sister's antics affect her decisions. All I have to do is get rid of three purgs before Wednesday night and I'll have my life. I deserve my freedom after all these years of doing the bidding of those above and below.

I get in my car and head toward the purg I can feel close by.

EIGHT



FELICITY

For the first time in years, I'm nervous about how one of my weddings will turn out. After the ceremony at St. Patrick's Cathedral, I am breathing a sigh of relief. Really for two reasons: Jorge didn't show up and ruin the biggest wedding of my career, and Mantus stood inside the church seeming not to mind the venue.

Of course, maybe my idea of angels and demons is totally off. We're in a Towncar on the way to Rockefeller Plaza for the reception. Rachel went with the bridesmaids to brief them on the photo stop.

"I like this dress." He slips his hand along the high slit in my burgundy gown. The silk feels wonderful on my skin, but not as good as Mantus's fingers on my knee and thigh.

"I'm glad, but you can't mess me up before the reception." I try to scold him, but it comes out playful.

Slipping his fingers higher, he says, "I wouldn't dream of ruining how beautiful you look.

I push his hand away. "You just keep an eye out for Jorge. People who can afford St. Patrick's are not going to be thrilled if he knocks over the champagne fountain. Though, there isn't one in the Rainbow Room."

"I'm glad to hear it." He caresses my inner thigh.

It's a very short drive to 30 Rock, and I'm grateful because if this had been at the Pier 57 venue my high-dollar clients often choose, I know I couldn't resist Mantus for an hour and forty-minute drive.

I thank the driver and let him know he'll be needed after the reception for some partying the bridal party has planned.

Manus takes my hand and we walk into the Rainbow Room. As soon as we're inside, he pulls me into the coat room. "I just want a little taste of you. You smell divine."

Lowering his head to the dip of my neckline, he kisses the top of my breast. As he lifts me to sit on a counter meant for hats, the sheath gown slides up my legs and his hands follow.

“I don’t think you’re taking your job very seriously.” I grip the shoulders of his black tuxedo.

Standing upright, he grins wickedly and looks every bit the hot demon. Turning to the door, he locks it.

The dim lighting makes me wonder how many trysts have been carried out in this closet. “This feels very cliché to me.”

“I don’t care if it is. I want you.” He sniffs the air and closes his eyes. His cock bulges. “I can smell that you want me to.”

There’s little point in denying it. “I do.” I pull my gown up and pray for minimal wrinkles. The cool counter under my ass makes a little moan escape me.

His eyes sparkle with passion. “No fucking panties.” He stalks back to me. “You’re full of surprises, Felicity.”

As soon as he’s close enough, I grab his belt and pull him the rest of the way. I work open the belt, and trousers, and take his cock out. Rubbing his thick shaft along my wet pussy, I massage him up and down. “I need you to fuck me now.”

“Dirty. I love it.” He notches at my slit and pushes inside in one slow thrust, filling me. Covering my mouth with kisses, he drowns out our mutual moans.

Every time he fills me, his shaft rubs my clit until I’m writhing with the building orgasm. Every sound is muffled by his lips and tongue devouring me.

I wrap my legs around his hips, pulling him deeper. I’m so close to coming, I dig my nails into his jacket and lift my hips as he pounds into me, hard and fast. My body contracts around him as the orgasm takes me.

One more thrust and Mantus fills me with his hot cum.

I break the kiss and try to catch my breath. “That’s the naughtiest thing I’ve ever done.”

He hands me his handkerchief. “I hope it’s not the last time you want me so badly you’ll do something naughty.”

I clean up what I can. “I’m going to the ladies’ room.” I get up and put my gown back in place. At the door, I turn back and watch him looking perfectly calm and gorgeous in a tuxedo. “Stay out of trouble.”

“Yes, ma’am.” He winks and smiles.



The wedding is winding down. Everything went perfectly. The father of the bride comes over. “Great job, Miss Zane. My Lila is happy and I can’t thank you enough.” He hands me a fat envelope.

“This isn’t necessary, Mr. Lancer.”

“I insist.” He takes my hand and closes it around the tip.

“Thank you.” I put the envelope in my purse.

Something moves in the corner.

Mantus stalks from the open door toward the movement. Then he breaks into a run and chases something through the kitchen door.

I return my attention back to my client. “I’m just going to make sure all is well with the kitchen. I think your wife has the top tier of the cake already. Let me know if you ever need another party planned. I’m happy to help.”

“I’ve already given your card to my assistant. She’ll be calling about the company Christmas party.” He grins and stumbles over to his wife, waiting by the doors with a cake box.

As soon as he’s gone and it’s only staff, someone turns up the lights.

I run to the kitchen door. Make my way through some broken plates to the back of the building. The door leads to an

alleyway.

Looking left, then right, I find Mantus holding a man by the throat. He bangs him against the brick wall. Reaching down, Mantus pulls a knife out of a strap at his ankle. Pulling back, he plunges the knife into the man's chest.

I scream and cover my mouth. Horror washes over me like boiling water. The man I think I'm falling in love with is a murderer.

The dying man grins as blood seeps through his white shirt around the knife. "I win."

Mantus turns his head to look at me. "He's a purg. This is Jorge."

Jorge's eyes go dim and his head nods forward.

Pulling the knife from Jorge's chest, Mantus lets the body fall to the gutter.

In a strange shadowy moment, Jorge's body disappears.

I run over. "Where did he go?"

"Purgatory," Mantus says. His voice is steady and there's no regret as he finds a piece of paper in the trash bin and wipes the blood away from his knife. He slips the knife back into the sheath strapped to his leg, then walks toward me.

I back away. My heart is pounding. "Stay away from me." It's hard to breathe.

Stopping, he stares. "Are you afraid of me, Felicity?"

"You—you killed him." I point to where Jorge was. My mind is a wash of images of the dead man and the way he first showed pain and then smiled when he said he'd won.

"He's a purg." Mantus holds out his hands wide. "I sent him back to purgatory where he belongs. You knew that was my job." His voice is sharp.

"I didn't know." I can't quite form the words to explain what I didn't know. I run down the alley, gripping my purse in one hand and my chest in the other.

“Felicity.” He calls for me, but I keep running.

At the street, I hail a cab and pay the excessive fair to get him to take me all the way home.



Without any sleep last night, I’m walking around my house like a zombie. I just want to wipe the memory from my mind, but I saw it and there’s no going back. Mantus is a killer. He has no remorse or conscious about it either. He killed Jorge, wiped his knife, and was ready to go on with our evening.

Pumpkin cries.

“What is it, baby?” I follow the sound to the front door. Sometimes, I take her out front to roll on the concrete and nibble on some grass. “Let me get my shoes.”

She cries again and scratches the door.

I slip on a ratty pair of sneakers I wear to work in the garden and pull my hair up into a ponytail in case my neighbors are out early on Sunday morning.

I unlock the door, bolt, and slip free the chain before pulling the door open.

Mantus pops up from sitting on the stoop. “You’re awake.”

“What are you doing here?” My pulse races.

Pumpkin cries and rubs her head on my leg.

In sweats and a hoodie, I know I look a mess. I cried the entire way home from the city. The cab driver was mortified. As hard as I tried, I couldn’t get myself under control. I thought maybe I should have called the police, but the body disappeared, so no one would believe me anyway. Once I showered, I cried it all out, but they build up again with the sight of Mantus.

“I wanted to make sure you’re alright.” He’s still in his tuxedo pants and shirt but without the tie and jacket.

“How long have you been here?” I look down the block to see if my neighbors are out. The street is quiet this early on a weekend.

He shrugs. “A few hours.”

“You sat on my stoop all night?” My grip on the door is so tight my knuckles ache. I let it go.

He shuffles his feet. “Felicity, what did you think I do when I send purgs back where they belong?”

“I don’t know. I guess I thought you escorted them through some kind of portal. I didn’t realize you kill people.” My throat tightens and the last world comes out strangled.

“Jorge is not a person. He’s also not dead. He’s in purgatory where he belongs. He escaped and had to be sent back. He can assume the form of anyone here. That body was a projection he created. It wasn’t real. He’s an angel who did something so terrible that they clipped his wings and sent him down.” He pulls his hands out of his pockets and spreads them. “It’s my job to send them back. The only way to do that is to destroy whatever form they’re in here.”

I saw that man die. “I don’t believe you. He bled. You stabbed him in the heart and he bled.”

“That was a nice piece of drama created for your benefit. To injure me.” He stares at the ground before meeting my gaze again. “I don’t want to lose you, Felicity. I can’t change what I am. Together we can change what I have to do.”

It’s obvious that he’s desperate for me to have sex with him on Wednesday. That’s what this visit is all about. He wants his freedom. I can’t blame him, but I also can’t seem to see anything but the blood on his hands. “I’m sorry. As much as I want you, I can’t look at you right now.”

Misery mars his handsome face as he steps back. “I understand.” His voice is tight. “If you need me, call me, Felicity. I may not be what you want, but I’m still in love with you. I’ll come if you need anything at any time.”

Tears pour out of my stupid eyes. Not exactly the way a girl wants to hear that the man she’s been dating loves her.

“I can’t.” I close the front door, run to my bed, and cry my eyes out.

NINE



MANTUS

I've texted Felicity a dozen times in the last three days. She hasn't responded. I tried calling, but it went to voice mail.

I check my phone for the tenth time in the last hour, hoping to at least see the three little dots moving. Nothing. It's Wednesday. I'm almost resigned to my fate once again. Hope is a dangerous thing. I'll have to let it go.

My phone rings startling me. I drop it and see Felicity's name on the screen.

"Hello." I sound as desperate as I feel.

"Your sister took her." Rachel's stern voice has an edge of panic.

"When?" My brain is in overdrive and my heart is pounding.

"I'm not sure. She was supposed to meet me this morning at the office and when I got here, Pumpkin was crying and Felicity was gone." She may be crying, which is hard to imagine since she seemed so tough when I met her.

"How do you know it was Kikia?" I try and fail to keep my voice even.

"What the fuck?" Rachel yells so loud I have to take the phone away from my ear.

I steady my breathing and close my eyes, trying to force calm into my tone. "I'm not questioning you, but if it was another demon, I need to know. It will help me find Felicity." I feel like I might throw up the eggs I forced down earlier. I should have known my family would do something stupid.

There's a long pause and I'm starting to think she may have hung up. "It's the peanut butter."

"I beg your pardon?" What the fuck is she talking about?

“When your crazy-ass sister was here before, she ate the peanut butter out of the jar. I tossed that jar in the garbage after you left. Felicity must have replaced it. Today, when I used my key to get in, the new jar was on the counter with a spoon sticking out of it. Exactly how your sister left it last time.” She draws an audible breath. “Why would she take her?”

“Tonight is the blood moon. She’s trying to get Felicity to reject me.” My voice catches.

“I thought she already did that.”

I put her on speaker and text my contact at the pier about my boat. “She did, but Kikia doesn’t know that.”

“Why wouldn’t Felicity have just told her?” Rachel asks a fair question.

Hope blooms in my chest like nothing I’ve ever felt before. This must be why humans do good. This amazing feeling of love for another person. “I’ve got to go, Rachel. I’ll find her.”

“You better, demon, or I’m coming after you, and you ain’t never seen me angry.”

I smile at the screen. “I’ll find her. Keep her phone with you.” I disconnect the call and run for a cab to take me to Chelsie Pier.

My boat is ready to go. I jump in and take off. There’s little traffic on the water, as the fall has brought with it cooler weather and rougher seas. The Hudson River is choppy. I head out to the open ocean.

It takes me an hour to make my way to the veiled island of Point Nemo. It’s a quick stop at earth’s demon headquarters for confirmation that it likely was Kikia and not my father or some other high demon or angel.

Back in the boat, I head to the portal in the ocean that will lead me to purgatory. If Kikia was anywhere else, I’d be able to locate her mentally. I feel nothing of my sister or my mate, so they must be in the place between worlds.

The portal leaves me with an unpleasant swirling sensation, but I brush it aside and scan the gray space for my woman. This is not my favorite place to visit since I've condemned a lot of shifters to an eternity of nothing. Not that it's my fault. I'm not in control of my destiny.

Several purgs hiss and curse at me along the path.

"Back off. There are worse places than this." I feel the pull toward what might be called a lake if this place had normal elements. I continue forward, letting my senses take me closer to my mate.



Felicity

The sun had barely breached the horizon when Kikia woke me by snapping some kind of magical handcuffs around my wrists. Holding a long glowing sword, she chased me from my bed.

Pleased with herself, she dragged me through a vortex to a place that is both calm and unpleasant. "Where are we?"

"Purgatory." Holding the chain between my cuffs, she drags me along a path.

The sky is a swirl of grays in every hue. The ground is black with no vegetation and yet, there is a path of a slightly lighter color. We follow the path past forms that are hazy and indistinct.

"Why did you bring me here?" I avoid someone or something that reaches out to touch me.

"Because my brother can't sense you here." She giggles. "If the blood moon passes without your bonding, then it will be some time before he can abandon his destiny. Balance must be kept. You are a hindrance to that law."

“Why not just kill me?” As much as that idea scares me, I want to understand the rules.

We reach a kind of shoreline. The water is as indistinct as everything else, a mass of white that ebbs and flows. Kikia pushes me into a small boat and follows me in.

Without any use of paddles, the boat moves slowly across the water.

She leans back and trails her fingers in the water. “I’m not permitted to kill humans. Actually, I can’t kill at all. My brothers are able to kill but only when the killing restores the balance between good and evil. We can, however, torment humans if we wish. We can turn them toward darkness. You are my little project.”

My stomach churns at the evil in her voice. Her eyes are glowing gold and the way she’s looking at me, I feel like a flounder about to be filleted. “I think you’re wasting your time.”

“We’ll see. Some time on the island with Jorge may show you there’s another way to live in your world, or this one.” She throws her head back, laughing.

“Jorge? The same Jorge who is a fallen angel that Mantus just sent back here?”

Jorge is certainly a prankster, but why would he have the ability to change me in any way?

“Oh, yes. He’s here and ready to take his revenge on my brother. He’ll show you why he lost his wings and make you a believer in chaos.” She sits forward and narrows her gaze on something beyond my shoulder.

I look back at the dark mass of land just as the boat bumps into the shore. I grip the side of the boat with my manacled hands to stay upright.

“Get out.” She pushes me and holds the sword tip to my back.

Once I’m on land, I turn back to her and push the sword aside. “You can’t kill me. You said so yourself.”

Her eyes burn with fury. “I can hurt you though.”

“No need. I’ll take it from here, sweet Kikia.” Jorge is taller than any of the persons he imitated when he was crashing my wedding parties. He must be nearly as big as Mantus, though slimmer and his skin is as light as a fish’s belly. His eyes are black with no white or iris that I can see.

He grabs my arm. “Come, human. I’m going to show you so much pleasure, you’ll be begging to stay in this place. All thoughts of your demon will fade away.”

I kick his shin, but he just laughs and tightens his grip. I wince at the bruising hold but keep fighting.

“Let her go.” Mantus’s voice is like pure heaven to my ears.

Drawing me in front of him like a shield, Jorge hisses.

Kikia screams. “No! How did you find me?”

Mantus steps off a boat ten times bigger than the canoe we arrived in. He narrows his gaze on Jorge but speaks to his sister. “You don’t think I can feel my mate? When I couldn’t find her, I knew this was the only place where her soul could be masked.”

Wrapping his hand around my throat, Jorge growls. “I will kill her. Hell is not worse than this life of nothing.”

With only a slight narrowing of his eyes, Mantus makes no moves. “I will see that your hell is something special if you dare harm my mate, Jorge. Nothing in this plane can compare to the fiery depths of Hades. I can make you burn a million times and never end your pain.”

I gag as Jorge’s grip tightens.

For the first time, there’s panic in Kikia’s voice. “I never gave permission to kill her. I only wanted her to be altered so you’d not want her or she’d not want you, Mantus. I knew that being pleased by a fallen angel would change her irreparably, but I don’t want her dead.”

“Words, sister. Give me the sword and I will deal with you in a moment.”

She holds out her hand and Mantus takes the glowing sword.

Mantus's eyes soften as he meets my gaze. "Trust me?"

I can't move my head and speaking is out of the question so I can only hope my eyes show him that I do trust him. I had everything wrong, and I long for the chance to tell him that I should have listened to him. My heart is breaking as life is being squeezed out of my throat. I gasp.

In a blur, Mantus moves and lops off Jorge's arm.

The hand around my throat drops to the ground.

On a shriek, Jorge stumbles backward.

I run into Mantus's embrace and bury my face in his chest. "I'm sorry."

Mantus holds me. "Unlock the manacles, Kikia."

I have to look as his sister removes my handcuffs.

As soon as I'm free, Mantus snatches the key from Kikia. "I warned you."

"You can't leave me here, brother." Kikia's tears stream down her face.

Lifting me in his arms, Mantus climbs into his boat. He eases me onto a seat and keeps his hand on my shoulder as he backs the boat away from the island. "You can find your own way out of here, little sister."

Soon the island is out of sight, blocked or shrouded in the swirling fog of purgatory. I'm too stunned to scream or cry. Numb, I stare out at the nothingness and concentrate on breathing in and out.

Mantus never takes his hand from my shoulder. He's warm and comforting, but he says nothing as he speeds us to the opposite shore. Without a word, he carries me down the path and into a swirling vortex that lands us on another boat in the middle of the ocean.

The sight of blue sky and gray ocean with waves is such a relief, I let my tears fall. "Thank you for coming for me." I

cover my face with my hands.

Pulling me into his arms, Mantus whispers softly, “I’ve got you, baby. I’ll always come for you. This was all my fault. I never dreamed she would defy me like this.”

A hiccup keeps me from speaking right away. “Are you really leaving your sister in that awful place?”

He smiles and brushes my hair out of my face. “She’ll find her way out. She just always had the key so she never had to learn about portals. I’m going to keep her key. That much, she deserves.”

“I don’t know why I should care what happens to her. She kidnapped me and gave me to that Jorge. Jorge, who you didn’t really kill.” More tears pour out of me. I have no idea how I have this many tears left in me after the last few days. “How did you know I was missing?”

“Rachel.”

“Oh lord, I can just imagine what she said, but how did she know I hadn’t taken off?” I mean, I could have gone to the supermarket.

“Something about peanut butter with a spoon sticking out of it.” He kisses the top of my head.

He takes out his cell phone and makes a call. “I’ve got her. She’s fine. We may not be back until tomorrow.” He smiles at the phone and disconnects.

“What did she say and why won’t we be back?” I know my friend and she’s pretty saucy.

“She said that whatever you’d been through, I had better make it up to you in great sex.” He chuckles. “I’ll be sure to take her advice just as soon as you tell me if you want me in your life, Felicity.”

TEN



MANTUS

Every moment I've spent with Felicity has been full of firsts for me. Once again, as I wait for her response, I'm filled with trepidation. If she still doesn't want me, I'll be crushed. Me. Crushed. I barely recognize myself.

Wiping her tears, she gives me a watery smile. "Of course, I want you in my life."

I wrap my arms around her. "Thank you." I kiss her hair, her temple, her cheek.

"I'm sorry. I didn't really understand until I saw that place and Jorge." She clutches my shoulders and shivers.

In a tank top and panties, it's no wonder she's cold. I tug off my jean jacket and wrap it around her. "She took you from your bed and forced you to learn things no human should be subjected to. I don't know how I will make amends."

Cupping my cheek, she presses her lips to mine. "She did us a favor even if that wasn't her intention."

"She took you to purgatory." I want to go back and find Kikia so I can torment her until she understands what she did.

"If she hadn't, I might never have been able to understand why you killed Jorge and the others. I might never have let you back into my life." She presses her body against mine.

My cock immediately responds. "I'm not thanking Kikia, even if I'm grateful for the results of her madness."

She laughs, then points to the moon rising in the east. "When will it eclipse?"

My jeans are growing tighter. "In a matter of hours."

Looking around at the open sea, she shrugs. "I guess we should go back to land before it gets dark."

Kneeling in front of her, I take her hands. “I want you to know that I love you and you don’t have to do this. I can wait until you’re sure. In two years, there’ll be another blood moon. I’ll wait for you.”

She shakes her head. “I don’t need to wait or think. I love you too. I think I’ve always loved you, even before I knew you.”

Taking her hand, I draw her into my arms. “I have no idea what my life will be like without purgs to hunt.”

“You’ll figure it out.” She rubs her sexy body against mine. “Is there some reason we have to wait for the main show, or can we have a little appetizer?”

“I really do love you, but I think I can do better than this.” I start the engine back up and head to the one place no one will ever look for me during the blood moon. They will figure I’ll stay far away from Point Nemo. I round the west side of the island where few ever go. There’s a stone arch that leads to a sacred pool.

The last of the day’s sun is setting and the moon is just reaching the point where it shines through the trees and cliffs that surround us. I toss the anchor so we won’t drift.

Wide eyed, Felicity stands in the middle of the deck and turns in a full three sixty. It’s warmer here and she takes off my jacket and tosses it onto one of the two benches. “Is this heaven?”

I shake my head. “No. It’s the earthy headquarters for demon kind.”

“Where are all the demons?”

“The other side of the island.” I kick off my shoes and pad to her. Running my hand over her hip, I find I have a few nerves about freedom that I never anticipated.

She pulls her tank over her head and tosses it with my jacket. “Don’t be afraid, Mantus. I’ll always keep you safe.”

“I know you mean that to be ironic, but I like the idea of you caring for my heart.” I strip out of my clothes and watch

as she steps out of her panties.

Sitting on the bench, she opens her knees, revealing her sweet wet pussy. She runs two fingers through her folds and circles her clit. "I've got you just like you've got me."

I step between her thighs and am about to drop to my knees, when she grips my cock and draws it deep into her mouth. She hums as she pulls me in and lets me out.

"Fuck, that's good." I cup the back of her head and thread my fingers through her hair.

The moon is still bright and it bathes Felicity in its glow. Looking up at me, her eyes are full of passion.

Unable to live another moment without tasting her, I pull away. Lying down on the bench, I lift her to straddle my face, with her ass pointed toward my head. I pull her tight and devour her sweet center.

She cries out my name and rides my face as she lowers over my body and again draws my cock into her sweet mouth. She runs her tongue along the vein and licks the head.

I suck and lick her clit, soft and then hard, loving every squeak and moan that makes its way around my shaft. Gripping her thighs, I pull her tight and take her over the edge. She's the sweetest nectar, and I lap up every drop of her goodness.

Her orgasm distracted her from my cock, but she gives the head a long kiss before she turns to straddle my hips. "That was fantastic."

"Do you need to rest?" I'm painfully hard, but I need to take care of her. My new purpose is clear. I'll always care for this woman, my mate.

She shakes her hand and her hair falls in a veil around her face. "I only need you to fill me and love me, Mantus." Rather than impale herself, she turns and looks up at the moon. The shadow of Earth is halfway across.

Touching her cheek to bring her attention back to me, I look into her eyes. "Only if you really want this, my love."

“I want you, all of you.” She takes me inch by inch inside her perfect body.

Her pretty face and the moon beside her fill my vision as we consummate our bond and the blood moon glows bright red above us. “Felicity, I love you.”

Riding me like the queen she is, she pulls us both closer and closer to heaven. I told her this place was for demons, but at this moment, it’s so much more.

The base of my spine tingles and my orgasm crashes. I hold off my final release until I feel her body tighten around my cock.

She screams my name, and I fill her with my seed. Her body shakes with the aftermath as she collapses on my chest. “So good. I love you too, Mantus.”

There’s a shift inside me. Purgatory slips far away. The sense that I have to keep balance in the world vanishes. Peace flows through me and still nestled inside heaven, my cock grows hard again.

Felicity shifts her hips. “What’s happening?” She lifts and lowers. “How am I ever going to satisfy you?”

Gripping her hips, I hold her in place and fuck her from below. “You already do, baby. This is just a bonus.”

She presses her lips to mine and thrusts her tongue in my mouth, making love to my lips and tongue in rhythm with my cock thrusting inside her. Breaking the kiss, she screams to the sky and her pussy pulses around me.

This orgasm is even more intense than the last, and I grip her tight as I fill her again.

“I love you.” Her voice is sleepy.

The moon begins to reveal its true colors above her. I caress her back, from her shoulder blades to the swell of her ass. “I love you. I will love you until the end of time.”

Easing her off my shaft, I hold her in my lap. “I really am sorry about Kikia.”

She sighs. “That’s alright. It was worth it to have you.”

If it’s possible for a heart to explode from too much joy, mine is about to make a big mess. I’ve never been happy before. The sensation is totally foreign, but I could quickly become addicted to the feeling and this woman. “You saved me, Felicity.”

She snuggles in tighter and kisses my jaw. “I would do it a thousand times, Mantus.”

I have everything I could ever want or need and the love of the perfect woman. If this isn’t heaven, it’s sure close enough for me. Lifting her, I kiss her softly. “There’s a bed below deck. How about I take you to bed and in the morning, we find a justice of the peace to marry us?”

Eyes wide, she gapes at me. “Um, I accept your proposal if that’s what that was, but I’m a wedding planner. I’m not getting married on a whim without a great party.”

She said yes. I’m pretty sure my heart grew like the Grinch’s. “Whatever you want, as long as your mine.”

Stretching out on the bed, she’s like a cat. Then she rolls toward me and cuddles her naked body along mine. “I’ll always be yours, my beautiful demon.”

Heaven.



Thank you for reading Mantus. I hope you loved all the books in the Demonic Disciples series. If you want more of my monster books, I think you’ll love [Soul of a Vampire](#).

SOUL OF A VAMPIRE

OLIVER

Vampires don't fall in love. At least, that's what I've always believed. How can you fall in love when everything with a beating heart is a potential food source? Yet from the moment I first saw Britta, nothing else mattered. I don't even care that the story she writes may destroy me and my brothers. Fighting my instincts to claim her isn't an option, but getting her to see beyond my monster may be impossible.

BRITTA

I came to Scrim Hall to unravel a mystery and write a story that would push my journalism career to the next level. I never believed the stories of monsters living in the woods. I was wrong. Though this monster has a hold on me that I can't explain. His bite is magic, but his heart is a drug I can't resist.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andie Fenichel (A.S. Fenichel) gave up a successful IT career in New York City to follow her husband to Texas and pursue her lifelong dream of being a professional writer. She's never looked back.

Andie adores writing stories filled with love, passion, desire, magic and maybe a little mayhem tossed in for good measure. Books have always been her perfect escape and she still relishes diving into one and staying up all night to finish a good story.

Originally from New York, she grew up in New Jersey, and now lives in Missouri with her real-life hero, her wonderful husband. When not reading or writing she enjoys cooking, travel, history, and puttering in her garden. On the side, she is a master cat wrangler and her fur babies keep her very busy.

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