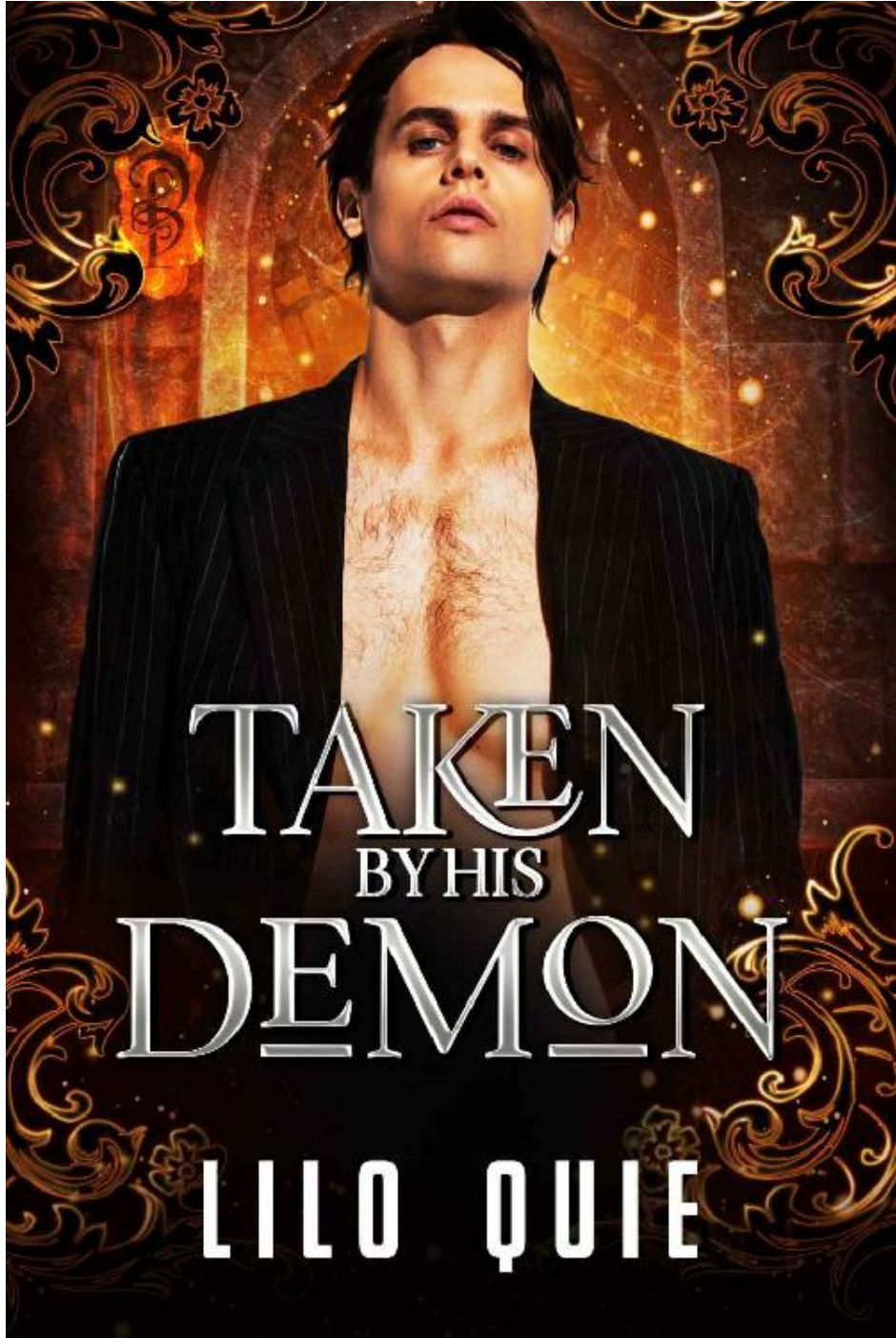


TAKEN
BY HIS
DEMON

LILO QUIE



The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of a copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by fines and federal imprisonment.

Please purchase only authorized electronic editions and do not participate in, or encourage, the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Taken by His Demon

Copyright © 2023 by Lilo Quie

Digital ISBN: 978-1-68361-894-2

Print: 978-1-68361-895-9

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work, in whole or in part, in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means now

known or hereafter invented, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Table of Contents

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty.](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[About the Author](#)

[By Lilo Quie at Decadent Publishing](#)

Abaddon isn't ready for a mate. His touch alone gives partners immense pain, and his heart has yet to melt for another. But when he solves the puzzle of an ancient box and finds his prize inside, he's delighted to find someone that can handle him for all he is, pain and all. Just in time, too, for danger is coming and Xander's rise to power is imminent.

Arwyn is an oracle, mind stuck bearing the weight of the past, present, and future. He has fallen in love with Abaddon in so many ways, and has known him since his birth and until his death. Can Arwyn keep his mind in the present long enough to truly love his mate for who he is?

Warning, contains inappropriate uses of hummus, Timothy, Timothy's new friend, adorable babies, a semi-truce in the ongoing duck war, and piercings. May contain trace amounts of Walter.

Welcome to the next to the last book in the Inner Demons series. Please subscribe to my newsletter on my website www.liloquie.net , for the last book will be a free release featuring Isaac and some new beings in this world. But that's not the end of the story. Keep an eye out for the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Xander, Kir, Samael, and Rafael will ride proudly out as they take over their family's business.

For questions and comments: Liloquie@gmail.com

Taken by His Demon

Inner Demons

by

Lilo Quie

Prologue

Simon

The devil always knocks thrice.

Simon wasn't privileged with that honor, but it seemed fitting, to announce himself. After all, he was on the devil's business.

Knock, knock, knock.

A slat in the door in front of him slid open with a jarring clack, much lower than where Simon's eyes would have met. A bright blue eye with a goatlike pupil flicked up and locked onto Simon's face. Simon kept his expression schooled and neutral, hiding years of seething anger and rage only barely kept contained.

"Simon?" Isaac Bast, the groundskeeper for the Lesser Evils, a club for half-breeds and demonkind adjacent, peered out. The front of the building had always been a strip club, at least from what Simon could remember. The back and underground teemed with illicit activities mundane by human standards but at odds with the muddled theories behind the current regime.

Simon nodded, waiting to be let in and with a hesitant click of the door, scooted in.

"It's been a while. Usually you text. How is everything? We need to talk in my office?" Isaac prattled on, his swoop of ginger hair flitted off to one side.

Simon made a noncommittal noise. Anger boiled in his gut, searing him with blind rage that threatened to make him shift. Every tooth in his mouth held a sharp point, tongue curling, salivating for the taste of imp blood. He couldn't speak, not until fully shifted, as his body fought the contorted shape.

“Ah. I've been hearing things about this school you're starting up. The princeling looks like a promising candidate. He's your nephew, right?”

“Mm,” Simon acknowledged, eyes scanning the building. For as long as he'd remembered, it'd been a ruddy lounge of a room with chipping linoleum floor tiles and mismatched diner booths slid around. Beyond it lay a bar with a vibrating mirror pulsing to the beat of some music, where a thin strip of dark purple and pink light flickered at the seam between the wall and ceiling. To the left was a small door leading down a set of creaking wooden steps. Simon glanced up, catching his reflection in the mirror as his eyes flared with silver light. All traces of color melted from them as his horns pushed and swept back over his head, the world beneath him shrinking as he grew in height. His shoes slipped from his feet and hooves clipped the floor in their place. At Simon's back, his long tail swished, curling with satisfaction at being allowed out.

Simon tore his gaze away and descended the stairs. Reaching behind him on the way down, he casually shut the door with a sharp click, the dead bolt shooting into place.

“Believe it or not, I've been meaning to talk to you. I know you have Lucifer's ear now, and I was—” Isaac glanced up and blinked at Simon's superior form, head tilted. “Whoa.”

The little imp was so confident in what he'd done that he didn't even realize he was in danger.

Simon slipped his shirt off and dropped it on the steps, thin fingers and sharp claws parting with the fabric with ease. Even having shifted, the sensations weren't complete. He tilted his head with a sharp crack and opened his mouth, situating his jaw. His transformation rarely progressed to the point of changing his face. This was rage.

"Simon?" Isaac swallowed hard, throat bobbing as he backed into the laundry room. So many memories flashed through Simon's mind, all tainted.

"I know." The words came out of Simon's mouth in a hiss, curling about his teeth. Frozen in place, Isaac's cheeks flushed in the presence of Simon's raw sexual incubus energy.

A strangled noise rattled Isaac's voice, and his pupils constricted into two tiny flat slits, body trembling in a haze of lustful fog. It worked well at obscuring the fear shooting through him. Simon could scent it on him. "Kneel."

"I'm s-sorry." The fractured thread of a whimper that spilled free of Isaac's throat may have worked on Simon once, but not after everything.

"You think *sorry* brings Caroline back? Tiffany? You think *sorry* undoes the trauma my kids have lived through?" Simon's upper lip curled.

"They have it better with you and Elliat anyway!" Those strange slitted eyes of his held only a sliver of black for his pupils. Certain death would come his way.

“They would have had me and them if you’d left well enough be! To what end?” Simon seethed, teeth gritted.

“Father said I had to turn over someone for an example and I—everyone has kids and family, man. Those kids were the only ones with a backup plan.” Isaac retched when Simon lunged forward, his long, thin fingers wrapping around the half-imp’s neck.

“And who, exactly, is your father, Isaac?” Simon lifted Isaac, fingers tightening to choke breathless noises from him as the tips of his hooves swept the floor.

“Zathir! Zathir Corinth.”

Simon jerked his hand back as if burned, letting the imp drop to the ground. “The head of the imp council?”

Isaac rubbed his throat and coughed. He barely nodded, keeping his eyes cast down.

“Are you even a half-breed?” Simon stared down at the pitiable imp, skin burning with anger, restraining every bit of heaven and hell within himself not to end the boy on the spot.

“N-no. Hybrid. M-mother was h-half cambion. Genetics fucked me.” Isaac spit on the floor, the saliva tinged with too-red blood.

Simon leaned down, moving into a crouch. He pitied Isaac, really. But Simon had trusted him, implicitly. He helped the children hide their features, helped so many others perish.

“Why? Why did he need someone to cast down?” Simon trembled, hell itself grinding out into his voice.

“He needs to keep you afraid. To keep the aristocracy in its place. The imps run this world! This is how we keep power!”

Simon stared down at the traitor, all emotion sliding free of him. The angelic nature he harbored rarely, if ever, showed, but when he surpassed the penultimate tier of rage before he unleashed, everything halted.

“S-Simon... I had to. You don't understand.” Isaac crawled back.

“You could have come to me. You had the ear of a viscount all along.” Simon's voice came eerily flat.

“But then you'd take that last bit of power we had away! We're less than slaves, Simon!”

Simon cocked his head. “By your own design. Lucifer declared you equal long before the rebellion. He's always welcomed imps into his circle. The Wilkins family held power until you crushed everything. This wasn't about power for imps. This wasn't about equality. This was about power for yourselves and we were too dumb to think you needed oversight.” Simon sucked his teeth and stood, tail whipping behind him. Ice chilled his voice, so cold and flat.

“I'm sorry, Isaac. I have to make an example of you.”

Rachael

Simon held his hand out, fingers sticky with bright-red blood. Death. Death everywhere. Blood. Years ago, when Moon had been born, this smell filled the manor. Dead imps.

Rachael extended an upturned palm, and two small blue horns with a slight curl fell into her open hand.

Isaac Bast. A thousand truths came to her at once the second the two pieces hit her palm, and she held her emotions tightly. Mr. Lucy had taught her well.

“Still alive?” Rachael pulled a delicately embroidered handkerchief from the breast pocket of her blouse. Carefully, she wrapped the horns before taking off her blazer.

“Barely.” Simon’s voice held zero mirth or victory, no pain or empathy. Nothing. Angelic energy buzzed within him, and a tier of power he’d not yet reached came available to him as large, slender, batlike wings folded free of his back. They snapped gently at his sides. He gave a cursory glance to each side, as if unsurprised. The angel blood in him dulled because of what he was, but time and power made all the difference.

If Simon had manifested, so, too, would Elliat, evidence of their power growing. Inexorably linked for eternity. Rachael couldn’t make herself care though. She averted her gaze to the room, the gory spray all the way into the hall. A choked whimper came from the inside.

“Mister Isaac.” Rachael adopted her sweetest voice and shut the door behind her. He swiveled one eye to stare at her, the other bleeding and bruised. Whether he’d keep it or not

was up to the fates themselves. Genuine fear reflected at her, that wavering panic that she saw in Peter's eyes every time.

"What am I, Mister Isaac?" Rachael folded her hands behind her back and stared long and hard at the imp.

"B-baroness..." Isaac spat and a tooth rolled across the floor, bouncing on stained tile and chipped grout.

"And?"

"Scientia practicalis." His choked cough held all the wetness of his broken ribs.

"And?" Rachael took a deep breath.

"The secretary."

"I am the right hand of the first prince and Lucifer himself. I am second only to the family themselves. And I am only half imp. The imps could have had power with me." Rachael stared down and the telltale twinge of a headache ripped through. Her vision blurred as a strong urgency to explore the building overcame her. Something was interfering with her gift, but it was something her gift needed.

Rachael glanced about at all the blood and the mangled mess of the male before her. "I'm sorry nobody ever loved you. Must be hard." Schooling herself, Rachael prepared to do the most difficult thing she'd ever done.

Chapter One

Abaddon

Abaddon stared at the sky above. An angel had been born this day, therefore a new star in the sky should have shined, but a new one didn't. An old one, one that had dimmed in the last five hundred years, flickered in the sky and grew brighter than it had before, tangential to the morning star. *Israfil*. The healer. And like every angel born unto the other side, Rafael's namesake power might corrupt.

"And behold, he rides upon a white horse... The third born of four." Abaddon waited for the files on his phone to download.

Someone's getting a pony for their birthday. Abaddon snorted to himself. The harbinger needed his horse.

Pestilence. Abaddon smirked in thought to himself as he lit a cigarette, a burned offering to whoever or whatever was out there pulling the strings of fate. He exhaled and relished the blood rush. Being half angel and half immortal made him a confusing thing. Lilith and Lucifer had made no more like him, none to study. But whatever small part immortal he was still reacted like a human to things, substances being one of them. *Nicotine.*

Images flicked across his phone's screen of the inside backdoor club of that forsaken strip club the mongrels called theirs. Lucifer had let the thing go on being an open secret for years to keep some semblance of peace, but Abaddon wanted to guide Xander into breaking those walls down. When the

final few images loaded, Abaddon's heart skipped a beat. A severed tail lay amid a flurry of blood and rich streaks of hellfire. His heart cinched. As devilish of a creature as Abaddon was, he wasn't a fan of death.

He took another drag and thumbed down and saw something he'd not seen in thousands of years. *Babylonian spell script*. A black door, inlaid with silver, bound by chains with swirls of folded proto-steel, pre-Damascus, occupied the center of his screen. Each layer of material held a metal segment through each crossing, bearing the seal of destiny.

Abaddon, a voracious lover of puzzles, stared at the writing on the door, zooming in by pinching his fingers.

Once around the sky each day.

In a month, my phases show.

Four seasons in a year.

Spring is gone.

Summer stays.

Autumn is the time for threshing.

Winter is the oldest time.

Above that lay a more innocuous text, warning the user that what they'd trapped within was a mistake of nature, to never be released. They'd said that of Abaddon before, but after the birth of Rafael... Abaddon was in the mood to break some seals and bring forth the new reign. In any case, the sooner Xander could take over, the sooner Abaddon could go back to hell, where it was warm and away from the rain and stink of humans.

Literal frozen flakes of rain fell from the sky the months before. *Snow*. What sort of horrid place was Earth, even? Too much green.

Abaddon stuck his hands in his pockets and shimmered, far more angel than he was anything else. The cigarette came with him as he stared at the back door to Lesser Evils. The bumping, grinding music of the strip club up front grated his nerves. Blatant sexuality like that did nothing for Abaddon. Of course, in his thousands of years of life, he'd had plenty of women in his bed, plenty of men, and other. Sometimes both. Never satisfying.

He remembered a time in his youth where the thrill of the conquest had him competing with Malacoda to see how many lovers he could lure in his bed in one night. They both fought for the prize but the one who never played always won.

Falcalor.

The jerk.

Abaddon took a drag and stepped in, the door unlocking under his fingers, giving way to his whim.

A musty scent laden with stale air and mildew hung about the place, as if the club hadn't been open in a while. Below that filtered in a fetid scent of blood and *home*. Abaddon breathed in sweet relief, brimstone and sulfur. It drew him down into the grizzly path of an old basement corridor. To the right lay a small laundry facility and to the left a security room. A bay of computers with screens showing all angles of the building lit the room from within. The eerie whirring of hard drives and hum of computer fans pushed him away. He gave the laundry room a cursory glance. Blood, the limp tail,

fire from the pit. Or was it holy fire? Either way, it was the secretary's doing, the final blows.

“Simon?” Abaddon walked past the grizzly scene and down the hall. To the right was a sort of apartment where Isaac had lived. Farther down, the door at the end led to a rather open space that held the charm of having been whimsical and inviting once upon a time. In recent times, it was merely a dilapidated speakeasy from the prohibition era days. Sheets lay over everything, shelves bunched up against a far wall, freshly moved from the looks of it.

“Sir.” Rachael stood in acknowledgement, giving a curt little bow. She scented of brimstone and fire, blood and gore. She could barely stand, eyes reddened from tears and strain. She'd traveled to the pit...

“I take it Isaac Bast is gone.” Abaddon hid his concern and migrated to a better vantage point so he could inspect the object of their attention. Rachael avoided his gaze, and he made a note of it for later. It wouldn't have been her proudest moment, her first kill. No. Rachael was ruthless, not stupid. Something else was going on.

“Isaac has been the rat all along for Corinth.” Simon's tone was far too cool and flat, so angelic it gave Abaddon goose bumps.

“Unfortunate.” Abaddon eyed the wall before him, the yellowed outlines of shelves and a piano pushed away to reveal an ancient recession in the wall hiding the cage. “There's someone in there. Rachael?”

She shook her head. “Unfortunately, my gift is no good here.”

“Why call me? Surely, this is something that can be handled on its own?” Abaddon glanced at Simon and Rachael. Simon pointed at the door and from a miniscule slit in the door, a single sliver of paper fell. It fluttered, landing amid a pile of others, all of them with the same word written on each. Each in a feathery, delicate scrawl in reddest ink.

Abaddon.

Abaddon knelt and reached for the papers, plucking them off one by one before glancing at the slit in the door. Another piece of paper poked through and landed. *Abaddon.*

The door was thick, and no light came from the other side, no sound at all.

Abaddon reached out to Rachael, fingers twitching, and she promptly stepped over, fishing a pen from somewhere on her person. She handed it to him and waited for Abaddon to scribble a few words on the paper.

I am here.

He poked the paper through the slot before another could come through.

The chains over the door rang with his energy, synchronizing before they crumbled, cracking like chalk as they scattered on the floor. Startled, Abaddon stumbled back a step.

A long moment passed before another slice of paper flipped free. Wet droplets coated the page.

I've been waiting for you. A salty scent, sadness and male all encompassed the paper, all things that intrigued Abaddon.

“What does he mean by waiting for me?” Abaddon ran his fingers along the iron door, trailing the bluing and the silver inlay that hadn’t tarnished in the many years it’d been there. “Once around the sky each day…” Abaddon ran his fingers over the door and pressed two letters, cuneiform pressed into the hard metal as if it were clay.

“Utu,” he whispered. “The sun goes once around the sky each day.”

The metal of the door creaked and the black sheath of it collapsed into a pile of grains of black sand, leaving another door behind it. Abaddon kicked the sand away and Rachael, ever the wonderful assistant, came running by with a dustpan and broom, making busy work between his feet.

The thing before him was a relief carving of a scene. The cosmos above, the sky and earth below. He racked his brain to remember the next part of the riddle.

“In a month, my phases show.” Abaddon glanced around the scene and locked eyes with the moon. When he reached up to press it, it rotated in its socket, and spinning it changed it from full to waxing, waning, and new. Something clicked in the door as if it agreed with his actions, and Abaddon grinned widely. *A children’s puzzle box.*

“Hold on. Does anyone think it unwise to open this thing without question?” Abaddon stepped back, but saying it out loud felt preposterous. Whatever was in there was waiting for him, and that sad, soft script resonated in his heart.

Rachael canted her head. “My gift is blocked, but I know we need him out. That’s it.”

“Here goes nothing, then. Four seasons in a year.”

Abaddon dragged his gaze over the scene once more, looking for signs of the seasons. And sure enough, the earth portion of the panel transitioned as it moved from barren winter to spring with soft flowers. Another movement went to summer with tall wheat that led into the end, where a crudely illustrated farmer held a threshing scythe.

Abaddon pressed on each panel, finding it loose in its frame, and one by one, they recessed into their cavities, sending gears turning inside.

“Spring is gone...” Abaddon touched the spring panel, finding it on a track that let it easily slide straight down behind the carving and out of sight. It revealed another illustration behind it, obscured by other panels.

“Summer stays...” Abaddon didn’t touch summer’s panel but moved to autumn and found that if he pressed the farmer, the scythe swept over the wheat with a sharp click.

“Winter is the oldest time...” He turned his head toward winter’s barren panel and fidgeted with the other panels. In moments, he discovered the autumn one could slide away as well, revealing a summer scene.

“Winter is the oldest time...” He muttered and glanced back up. The languages had changed so much over the years.

“Rachael.” Abaddon gestured toward the sign and stared it down. “It says that winter is the oldest time.”

“Nights are longer in winter. You sleep more when it’s cold. Winter seems to stretch on forever...” Rachael’s eyes

spun as she stared up, her scientia gift struggling until Abaddon rested a gentle hand on her shoulder.

“Easy, my competent little one. I think I have it.” Abaddon offered her a smile with the teasing note of size, but he wove praise into it. She thrived on appreciation, and Abaddon would need to grind that into Xander, to appreciate her fully.

Rachael sighed with palpable relief, relaxing under his touch. The only time she allowed herself a moment of weakness, only after her gift had ravaged her.

He reached up and spun the moon to its darkest point and traced his fingers over the planetary bodies. The sun was immovable...but when he reached for Mars, he pressed it and grinned at a series of rattling clicks in response.

“Mars, winter sky, long nights.” Clicking and grinding noises drew from the door and Abaddon stepped back, holding a hand out to block Rachael, Simon taking her other side. Thankfully, Rachael was the sort to take a cue and stepped back. She was intel, not a warrior.

The sun popped out of the relief, its comic rays drawn with sharp edges, easy enough to grip. With a tentative step, he motioned forward once more and pulled on the sun. He then pushed and turned it experimentally, finding grinding mechanisms moving under a gentle twist.

Simon winced at the screeching and stepped back, tail swishing, when the door opened.

Sitting on the floor, balled up, was a young man with long, dark hair, staring up at them with wavering eyes full of

silver and skin far too pale for his features, angelic.

“Hello.” Abaddon focused on the words of old, Akkadian, the blend for those that spoke Assyrian and Babylonian.

The resident of the cage cocked his head. “I speak the tongue of this land.” His voice was soft, full of angelic tenderness, but there was so much emotion in his eyes, relief and joy. “Abaddon. You are mine. Yes.” A statement, not a question.

“I don’t know how to answer that?” Abaddon glanced from Simon to Rachael, looking for answers. “I am Abaddon, first prince of Lucifer, Firstlight of the morning star. High Duke of the pit.”

The caged male flinched. “The failure.”

“Failure?” Abaddon locked eyes with Rachael and she shook her head.

“I am failure, too.” Words cracked in his dry throat, and he pitched forward, long hair spilling over lean, pale shoulders. He’d not seen the sun in far too long and something constricted his pale eyes to pinpricks even in the dank light of the cellar. “I failed Am—”

In a rush, Rachael gasped hard. “Quiet! Nobody talks. Nobody moves. Mister, in the cage?”

The too-pale eyes flicked toward her, confusion swimming until some sort of realization flashed in his eyes.

“Scientia! I am oracle. I will be silent,” he said, and Abaddon would have done anything to keep listening to him

speaking. He turned his head up and gazed back at Abaddon, seeming to take him in, studying him.

Not wanting to question Rachael in a moment of need, Abaddon remained silent, taking in the male's androgynous face. Abaddon appreciated the clean cut of his muscles. The general ruddiness and dust surrounding him, smeared over his skin amid tatters of what must have been his clothing at one time, ruined the image. Behind him, in the dark of his cage, two great wings shifted, dust and shed feathers shaking free, fanning his scent.

Thankfully, Abaddon didn't catch a breath of body odor or foulness, only dank and unstirred air. Beneath it, though, he caught hints of salty tears. Cloves.

A flash of a shimmer broke Abaddon's attention, Lucifer appearing at his side.

"Holy fuck!" Abaddon nearly jumped out of his skin.

"Watch your language! There's a young lady right over there." Lucifer swatted Abaddon's arm.

"Mister Lucy, you say 'fuck' all the time." Rachael's brow fell and she crossed her arms. That was bad enough, so when Lucifer gave in before she made with the tapping foot, Abaddon relaxed.

"Yes, but I don't say H-O-L-Y." Lucifer turned his nose up and Rachael stared at him deadpan.

"Fine! You've got ten minutes. Any longer and Jericho threatened to nurse Ella." Lucifer's upper lip twitched before he swiveled his gaze to the male in the cage. "The fuck is that?"

“I am failure, too.” The male gestured to his chest.

“Does this failure have a name?” Lucifer waved his hand a bit.

“I am Arwyn.” He blinked at Lucifer. “I am like you.”

“You’re not a demiurge.” Lucifer stared at him hard.

“I am oracle. You are demiurge. We are...we are for the same purpose.” Arwyn gritted his teeth, eyes twitching as he opened his mouth to form words that didn’t come.

“You are a bearer? I’m not understanding. Why is this... creature...in an antique kennel?” Lucifer narrowed his gaze, taking in all the strange features. “And, Rachael, dear, turn your head or something. I fear he may be nude. I’d like some semblance of mystery left for you when you reach your rebellious years.”

Rachael retreated from the area around a shelf with a polite cough, and Lucifer nodded in appreciation. As if taking it for permission, Arwyn crawled forward, stretching limbs that hadn’t moved in so long. A broken feather lay on the ground amid a thinning stack of papers. When Abaddon glanced back down at the papers he’d written on, in dark-red ink... From the healed cuts on his hands, he’d been writing in his own blood.

“I am bearer. But I am also like you. I am for—” Arwyn paused, almost as if searching for the right words. “My grip on this language is small. But I am the same. We share... We share ex-boyfriend!” He smiled, pleased with himself.

“What? No. Who do you mean when you say ex-boyfriend?” Lucifer stilled.

“Amenadiel.” He blinked up at Lucifer and all the color faded from his face. He swayed in spot almost ready to faint.

“Father!” Abaddon rushed toward him, joined by Simon.

“You, thing! I command that name is never spoken again. Do you hear me?” Lucifer’s eyes lost their red glamour, the silver of them glinting. Abaddon had never seen his father react like that before.

“I dislike him, too. I wish him dead.” Arwyn crawled farther out and gathered his feet beneath him, joints cracking as he attempted to stretch to his full height, about equal to Abaddon.

“Fortunate you are that he no longer breathes. I ended his life.” Lucifer sneered and stared him down. “So why are you here, in this cage?”

“I did not make a child for him. He could not kill me. I am oracle, and my brothers weren’t born yet. I waited for Abaddon.” Arwyn clearly struggled with words, his pauses uneven and foreign. He shuddered, placing a hand on his chest as he struggled to take even breaths.

Abaddon gazed downward, trailing the sculpt of the male’s belly, the dip of his tight navel, the delicate slice of his hips jutting into that delightful gutter leading toward his hanging cock and soft, hairless balls. Abaddon kept his glance cursory and quick before returning to his eyes. Those pale silver things.

“Dammit!” Lucifer glanced between them, upper lip curling. “I’m going back to get Ella and getting Malkiel to

meet me at my office. It's safe there to talk. Simon? Rachael? Come with me. Neither of you out of my sight."

"And you, Arwyn, was it?" Lucifer pointed at the male who sagged under his own weight a little, filthy from years of dust and very...green. Abaddon hadn't noticed before, but his dark hair shimmered green in the light, as did his feathers, dark black and green. He possessed a pattern in them, but at his feet, a long, slender tail curled, feathers adorning the tip.

The male nodded.

"Why were you waiting for my son?" Lucifer gestured toward Abaddon.

"Our power will be agreeable. He has commissioned no mate for himself, nor has he found power that agrees with his own. I shall fill that void." Arwyn blinked with a slow squeeze of his eyes, as if trying to work free the dust or stay awake.

"Uh—" Abaddon stood straight. "Father, I don—"

Lucifer gestured toward Abaddon to silence him. "You're an oracle, one of three brothers, right?"

Arwyn nodded emphatically. "Yes. I need a powerful being to unite with, if I unite with anyone at all. You will not permit me freedom for what I am and who I once belonged to. I know it will be the best decision. I miss my other pieces, so I do not know how or when, but I wait for Abaddon."

"Rachael, dear, stick your fingers in your ears, please." Lucifer gritted his teeth and, after a soft noise from Rachael, he swore an unholy plethora of blessings that didn't bother Abaddon as much as it did others.

Simon glanced over. "Nice."

“Okay. Simon, you will accompany me and Rachael to Firstlight. Malkiel will join us and potentially Zirriel. I’ll have to pick up Ella... Abaddon, take your mate home and get him cleaned and dressed. Meet us there.” Lucifer took a terse breath and shook his head before shimmering, leaving Abaddon standing there wide-eyed and his stomach in knots.

Simon turned and strode over to Rachael, grabbing her hand and followed suit. Abaddon stood there alone with Arwyn and the terrifying prospect that it meant.

Chapter Two

Arwyn

Thousands of years ago, before stories of the Nazarene first came into being, before sky silver from Kieroth became a man and the idea of a father was only then forming in the minds of humans, a single angel opened his eyes and called for his other half.

As more of his kind came into being, the never born, the endless, this angel called among them as they called among one another. He craved love, or what humans had shown him love was. Arranged marriages and servitude. Children and legacy. It seemed rather like trading livestock, and Arwyn never understood it. Then again, Arwyn had been the livestock once, himself.

On the eve of his manhood, they selected him to marry the village patriarch's daughter. Arwyn was of inconsequential blood, a half-breed from a line of commoners and dubious blood, unfit to move up, but they needed fresh blood in livestock sometimes. Even the gangliest buck could be better than a stud if the lambs were being born cross-eyed.

They had a grand feast to celebrate the night before their union. And certainly, she was a comely girl with doe-eyes and full lips. But Arwyn didn't feel the urge to rut and frolic among women. Still, she batted her lashes at him, stroked her hand down his arm, and filled his cup many times that night. She wished him a full belly for the morning's ceremony so he

would have energy to take her time and time again and give her many sons.

Arwyn only wished someone would take him time and time again, a male pushing him down like a bearer, making him subservient. Even as a powerful male, he craved being beneath.

When Arwyn stumbled outside his camp that night to make water and have a few minutes of alone time, a vision came unto him. Before him stood a magnificent male with wings and eyes like clouds, so white and stormy. *Amenadiel*.

Arwyn never made it to his wedding that morning, nor back to his village again, for he had been claimed by the creature that had bartered him long before the village patriarch set eyes on him. And when two seasons passed and Arwyn had not made a child like a woman, even though he'd come fully into his gifted, blessed form, Amenadiel sent Arwyn away. Disgraced.

Arwyn had nothing left to give and wandered for many years before he came across his father once more. The wandering Saxon spurned him for failing to complete the angel's bargain and caged him in the many layers of the puzzle box. There, he left him frozen in time and stone, unable to do more than live through terrible thoughts in his head.

When one day Arwyn opened his eyes, the thinnest sliver of light shone back at him as a single piece of paper fell to the floor of his cage. Even in the dark, he could see. *Oracle of the box. Can an imp rule the underworld?*

He hadn't recognized the script at first, but his mind seemed ambient in how oracles could be, though shut off and

frozen in time. His mind took in the new things of the world, new language, unfamiliar sights. His brain caught up to the world around him as his body remained in stasis.

And for many years, he'd wake in fitful dreams as some unseen being shoved papers into the slot, some blank, some with questions. There, he wrote an answer before time stilled once more.

Can an imp rule?

Yes.

And slowly, Arwyn fed them information, little pieces of time, telling them what to do as a single little imp rose higher than any other. *The secretary.*

The questions asked if an imp could, and the instructions to move them up, but never stated specifically who it was that would rise.

Then things changed. A whisper in his mind kept him lucid. Abaddon! The word had orbited his mind for years, *Abaddon*. The name called to him; it owned him, and so many years he'd ached to hear that name said aloud, to know what he'd waited for. *Abaddon. Never alone again.*

Lucifer Morningstar barked orders and called Amenadiel Abaddon's mate before leaving. He didn't appear happy about it, by the flat press of his lips or the hooded droop of his brows. Resignation schooled his features.

"Would you like to come with me and get clean?" Abaddon extended a hand, his slender fingers so inviting. Arwyn would have loved to get clean and also dirty, but he took Abaddon's hand anyway.

“I would.”

They shimmered, drawing away from the darkness of his cage and the basement into the well-lit cavernous expanse of a bedroom. Gilded light filtered through dark curtains against stone walls.

“This is a king’s room.” Arwyn turned in the space and gasped when Abaddon’s warm hand circled his waist and gestured him into a lovely restroom. The concept of ridding one’s waste in the *house* where they *slept* and *ate* made Arwyn squeamish, but it had certainly improved life for humans. Bathing indoors was new, too. All the squeaks and chirps of the finery resulted in a flow of abundantly warm water, like the waterfalls of his homeland in a lazy flow over sun-warmed stones. He groaned with relief as Abaddon shrugged free of his jacket and pants, neatly folding his clothes over a rack to join him in the shower.

He was appealing in all Arwyn’s favorite ways, watchful, but so cold in his eyes. He got that from his father, that angelic spirit. Were he to smile? Arwyn’s heart might flutter.

“Put your glamour up,” he murmured, not hesitating as he drew forth a fragrant bathing soap that he lathered and laved across his skin. Dark silver eyes traversed him so calculatedly, like one might inspect a steed.

“I’ve never done so before.” Arwyn turned to face Abaddon, finding the male only the barest bit taller than him, their faces close. Being so close to Abaddon made Arwyn fear his cock would stir, rising to attention, but nudity among men wasn’t uncommon in his time. There was restraint. Bathing with male companions was the norm.

“Hmm. Okay. Close your eyes.” Abaddon pursed his lips and Arwyn obeyed, knowing in his heart that Abaddon would learn to want him in time. “I need skin contact to make it work better.”

A moment passed between Abaddon’s words and his action, a heartbeat. Arwyn gasped in surprise, something that he’d not had in a long time. Even in his days before the cage, when time mattered. Abaddon’s firm body pressed in against his own, turning him in his arms until his hands circled his waist and slid into his wing’s bases.

In his mind, he knew the kind of male that Abaddon was. Experiencing it was another story, as magic like cool spring water flowed through him, angelic power that drew his wings away. It shivered through him, reminding him of what it was like to be human, to not be a creature of chance. His long and slender tail curled and slipped into the ether, and there they were, two ordinary beings tied in embrace.

“You’re warm,” Arwyn said, gaze falling to Abaddon’s gently pouted lips then up to his eyes where that almost-bored expression stared back.

“I was born in the pits. I’m made of hellfire.” He blinked, a flash of fire flickering behind the windows of his eyes, into his soul.

“Yet your brother, Falcalor, is the one who burns.” Arwyn couldn’t help himself. He knew so many things and so much of what he held wasn’t a secret he should hold. He absorbed too much, broken away from his triad, bearing past, present, and future memories.

“What would you know of Falcalor?” Abaddon drew those beautiful eyes of his away, gathering a different soap for his hair. It surrounded them with an unfamiliar scent, rich and full of stories he didn’t recognize from this world yet. Not floral but of the earth, for sure.

“I know that you have a brother that is of shadow, born of the other side of Lucifer’s light. He has a mate that is as a bird. From great luck, he gave the shadow a demiurge. I know that your other brother has fire in his soul and has born two embers and a spark from a gem. I know they are of war and desire.” Arwyn couldn’t resist reaching a hand to Abaddon’s face, studying the reality of his soon-to-be lover. There was no adoration there anymore, but there would be in time.

“What are you looking into me so deeply for?” Abaddon’s bored expression shifted to something that one might consider curious, but the notion faded.

Always so withdrawn. Angels. Arwyn twisted his lips, no nerves or butterflies in his belly, because his gift showed him what lay in store.

“Because I’ve known you since you were a warm whisper on your mother’s lips until the day your hellfire will burn no more. I’ve had you in youth and old age, victory and defeat. I see all there is to know about you, my stoic one.” Arwyn didn’t want to blink, couldn’t stand that moment of darkness when his lids flicked, how Abaddon disappeared from sight. Knowing and seeing were two strangely different things. A thought didn’t have touch or memory.

“That’s no way to have lived a life, is it?” Abaddon brushed Arwyn’s hair back, fingers grazing his scalp, lightly

and with care.

“It depends on what you say is living. I will blossom unto you in time. These words are not mine yet, foreign to my tongue. I am far more playful, I promise. You will enjoy me.” Arwyn could tell by the coldness in Abaddon’s eyes that he didn’t believe him.

“I’m uncertain you are my mate, Arwyn. Let’s see what my father wants, okay? Even then, you may not want me.” Abaddon stroked his fingers through Arwyn’s hair again in a gesture that would become so familiar in time.

“You don’t have to be certain. All you will need recognize is that I am yours when you wish.” Arwyn cupped Abaddon’s impassive face and roved his thumbs over sharp cheekbones, down to soft lips that tempted him to kiss.

“Fair.” Hitching his shoulder, Abaddon shrugged, far too passive about everything, like the spark in his heart had long gone. For someone made of hellfire, he certainly had nothing left to burn.

“It’s strange. Forgive me.” Arwyn rubbed his thumbs over Abaddon’s lower lip again, studying it as he remembered what it would taste like for the first time.

“There are none others like me, so strange is apt.” Abaddon’s impassive face made Arwyn’s heart squeeze. Rectifying this, Arwyn dragged his thumbs to the corner of Abaddon’s mouth and tilted the corners up in a sort of smile. Even then, it was not nearly as beautiful as the one he would give him in the afterglow of sex.

A single huff of a broken laugh escaped Abaddon's lips, the smile going from forced to a flicker of genuine amusement. "I think I want to know you better. I see you searching me for things that have yet to come, so stay here in the present with me. Okay? We are now, and now is eternal." Abaddon pulled away and finished rinsing Arwyn off, pulling him scrubbed and warm from the shower and into a waiting towel. The fibers were as soft as fur, embracing him with a gentle scent of sandalwood. Something about the potions they used for laundry.

Arwyn didn't want to part from it, but Abaddon was on a schedule to satiate Lucifer's fears.

"Put this on." Abaddon pushed a shirt into Arwyn's arms, a rich green V-necked T-shirt, far from any clothing he'd ever had before. He fumbled with it for a moment before Abaddon said nothing, reaching forward to help Arwyn slip in. The odd sensation of being half dressed to the waist as his ass and cock stayed exposed didn't miss him. By the time Abaddon pushed a pair of underwear into his hands, he had a better grip on what was involved in putting them on.

"I understand the concept, but I do not understand why humans have put viewing windows in undergarments. Was much easier to wear naught but a cloth and lift the hem to relieve oneself." Arwyn took a pair of dark denim jeans from Abaddon and slipped into them, unsteady on one leg, as he tried to mimic Abaddon's gestures into clean clothes.

By the time Arwyn figured out how to work the zipper and button on his own, Abaddon had fully dressed and obtained a brush. "Do you want to stand or sit?"

“Stand, please. I’ve sat for too long.” Arwyn halted when the brush made tender flicks at the ends of his long locks, silken and trailing his back.

“Do you know Vize? I understand you’ve not met, but you remember so much already that’s yet to come to pass.” Abaddon’s hands worked gently down the trail of his hair.

“My visions are very singular, I’m afraid. I am leading myself into my future, so my visions told me what happened in the world in my absence. It tells me wonderful things to happen with us.” Arwyn offered a little smile that drew Abaddon’s eyes to his lips for a lingering moment.

“Ah, well. He adores long hair. He will want to spend time with you if he’s not obsessing over Rafael.” He made that little snort of laughter again, the singular huff.

“How is Rafael? Is he still as troubled as he once was?” Arwyn frowned, because the name wasn’t solid in his mind, like it was new.

“*That* Rafael passed on, five hundred years ago? Six? Not sure, but Rafael is Malkiel and Jericho’s little one.”

“I do not know this Jericho, but Malkiel I am not fond of. He is too unkempt. But was he not mated to a female?” Arwyn tried to remember, but he’d barely known Malkiel all those years ago in passing. All had known him to be nearly fallen, so they avoided him.

“He and Zirriel broke their binding a long time ago, and he only just a few months ago found his mate in an abandoned, commissioned male.” Each tug of the brush came gentler than

the next as Abaddon picked at a few knots as gently as possible.

“Like me!” Arwyn brightened.

“I suppose, but I don’t think Jericho has a tail.” Abaddon finished brushing before pulling Arwyn’s locks into a low ponytail.

“No. My father said my mother was some part demon, though they separated when I was young. He was not a kind husband.” Wanting to pull his mind from the awful memories, he gazed about, taking in all the features of the enormous bedroom. A sudden sensation of vulnerability overtook him. The ceiling was too high, the windows too big and open, and the nearest door was too far away.

Arwyn didn’t notice his breathing speeding up, but he noticed it hitching and slowing when Abaddon rested his broad hand over his chest. “I see fear. Tell me what.”

“Big. I’m accustomed to smaller quarters.” He offered Abaddon a soft smile that froze when Abaddon wrapped his arms around him, caging him in the comfort of his arms.

“I suppose. What will I do for you when you feel this way in the future?” Curiosity piqued, Abaddon leaned his chin over Arwyn’s shoulder.

“If I tell you, it may change things.” In truth, the fear wouldn’t last, so holding him was all Abaddon need do.

“But what does it matter if it’s not a surprise for you?” The low thrum of Abaddon’s voice made goose bumps spread over his skin.

“I know things like one reads a book. Theory, practice, and experiencing are very different things. What you are doing now? This is nice. It is pleasant.”

Abaddon squeezed him once with a firm gesture before patting his shoulder. “Making things a little smaller. Now let’s go see what Father wants. And so you know, Oracle,” Abaddon said as he lifted Arwyn’s chin with a crooked finger, matching his steely eyes. “No man, mortal, or being alive that has entered my bed, could sate me. My gifts are not comfortable for angels or demons, as I’m something other. I cause pain to those who experience it.”

“And you will see in time. Take me to your father and you may bed me this evening.” Arwyn nodded, self-satisfied, as Abaddon gave him a wary glance. Abaddon would cause him so much pain, but Arwyn looked forward to it.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you.” Abaddon patted Arwyn’s shoulder and took his hand, a deceptively sweet gesture, drawing him in as they shimmered.

Chapter Three

Abaddon

He took the male by shimmer, arriving in what he still thought of as Lucifer's office. Despite having been the head of Firstlight for several months, with no end to the assignment in sight, he couldn't shake the idea. What he wouldn't give to be back in hell, sipping a lukewarm cola on the beach. So far, the only reprieve he'd had since ascending was getting to see his nieces and nephews.

His new niece, Shala, was yet another fine little ginger addition.

"Nice of you to join us." Lucifer glanced up from the desk chair, Ella tucked into the crook of his arm, face buried in his chest. A milling few others stood around his desk, pacing or staring, tensions high. All eyes focused on Arwyn, and Abaddon had a certain urge to step slightly to the side, partially obscuring the male.

"I bathed him and clothed him. We spoke nothing of his past." Abaddon slowly blinked at his father, giving nothing away. Abaddon knew Lucifer's secret, had known it for a while.

"Alright. So you all know." Lucifer reclined and closed his eyes. "I am not one of the never born. I am a commissioned mate, one abandoned by my angel." It was old news to some of them, but Malkiel, Zirriel, and Rachael didn't seem shocked. Simon? His eyes flew wide open.

Simon, usually a little nervous but sweet, had a hard edge to him, and his demonic nature bubbled at the surface, wanting free. “What does this have to do with him?” Simon asked, jerking a thumb at Arwyn.

“Because *this* creature was my replacement, and seems he did about as well as I did for him.” Lucifer locked eyes with Arwyn, his eyes a storm of silver.

“After you, he learned we are dangerous. You are fortunate to have escaped.” Arwyn’s words came with a tremble, not of fear but of shame. But to Abaddon, he didn’t have anything to be ashamed of. Plenty of demons had failed to bear children, plenty of angels as well.

“Which is why we are here, now, Arwyn. You are dangerous. And you claim to belong to my firstborn, and he resonates with you.” Lucifer stared him down, jaw ticking.

“You are a demiurge. And you have a grandson that is one as well. You are shapers of reality. Your songbird has given you great luck, and whoever kept me in that box recently was obsessed with getting an imp to the highest power.” Arwyn averted his eyes, body stiffening.

“True. So what do you want?” Lucifer narrowed his gaze and Abaddon could sense the power raising in the room like static.

“I want... It’s hard to say what I want because I know I have it. Not today, but I remember having it in the future.” Arwyn shook his head. “It’s hard to explain. I want... I want that reality, so I have to follow that trail. I—I have two brothers I must find. My mind will not still until I find them. Until then, I will be incomplete.” Arwyn raised his head and

did what so many never could, met Lucifer's gaze and held it.
"I want a good future."

"Seems as admirable of a cause as anything these days. Amenadiel hated you pretty badly to do that to you. Rachael?" Lucifer nodded toward Arwyn and Rachael approached, staring up at the statuesque male. She reached out to take his hand and held it in hers, patting the back of his wrist. Concentrating, she stared at him, her eyes glimmering a citrine yellow with her scientia practicalis gift.

"He will be useful, Mister Lucy, but I don't know more than that. I just know that you have the little pieces that Mister Abaddon is missing. I don't like it." Rachael released his hand and frowned.

"Specify, dear." Lucifer's face tightened.

"I don't like not being able to access my gift as I please. But it is the same with the oracles. If I knew everything about them, there would be imbalances. But as you have your oracles—Xander will need his." Rachael stared up at Arwyn, eyes narrowing.

Arwyn canted his head and Abaddon tensed with mild surprise when he sank to his knees, a little below eye level with Rachael, head bowed. "My loyalty will be with the new demiurge, and you will hold the ear of the next prince, and the imps will respect you immensely, given time."

Rachael stepped back, shoulders tensed before she glanced over at Lucifer and Simon. Nobody looked surprised, but Lucifer gestured her to come over for a one-armed hug. As adult as she acted, Rachael was still a child. "I don't want their respect, Mister Lucy."

“And that’s why you’ll have it.” Lucifer stroked over her soft curls with a paternal gesture, comforting a child who had lost and gained so much in the same breath.

“Okay, but we’re left to figure out what Arwyn is now.” Zirriel canted her head and gestured toward him.

“I am not sure what I am. I’ll be honest. I am oracle. I am unfinished and incomplete. I want to be loved, like they promised me. Isn’t that what you wanted, Lucifer? I am not as hungry for power as you were, nor am I filled with that anger or rage. I am glad he is gone, but I was made different for him in ways you weren’t. I am neither angel nor demon. I am other, of immortal blood and infernal magic, sculpted for a powerful angel to be more and so much less.” Arwyn tensed and Abaddon reached down to rest a hand on his shoulder, relishing his warmth and the way he relaxed at merely a touch.

“Alright, then. Abaddon, he’s yours. Do as you wish. Everyone in here is under an oath of silence. Send Elliat over once you get home. He and I have words, and I need his particular skillset.” Lucifer inspected the nails on his free hand impassively as Ella whined and spat up over his shirt with a little squeak.

Dignified.

“Yes, sir. Arwyn?” Abaddon extended a hand to help the male stand and found him surprisingly weak, requiring a little more help to stand despite his physique.

He would take the male home, entertain him for the requisite time until such point as their magics collided, and Abaddon would part ways. It was an arrangement as old as

time and he never got his hopes up. Nobody could withstand his wild magic.

“Perhaps you need to rest.” Abaddon glanced about as the others shimmered and dissipated, leaving the two alone in his office.

“I’ve rested too long.” Arwyn glanced up and out of the windows behind them, staring at the bleak cityscape.

The accent of the land was foreign and strong with a heavy yaw, but not suiting to his palette. Abaddon relished the neutral tones of hell, where they’d adopted English over time and more, discarding the old words. Too many new things needed names that only existed in English. Arwyn, he noticed, had that same lilting and neutral accent, and it pleased him. His mind reeling, Abaddon slipped into an old tongue, one he’d been pondering since opening the first seal of the door. “*Truly rest or only the absence of living?*” He spoke Akkadian then, a tongue not hindered by the grammatical rules of the present, a mishmash heavily reliant upon gesticulation.

“*Closing your eyes is no more rest than pulling the reins. It is only stasis, but I wish to keep my mind in the present for a little longer before seeking darkness.*” The words slipped free of Arwyn’s lips, well sculpted and educated. He spoke with the cadence of a wealthy son, highborn and proud, groomed for leadership.

“Come, then. We’ll get you something to eat and a bed. I have a guest room—” Abaddon reached for Arwyn’s hand and pulled him in, stricken by the male’s beauty. When he caught those silvery eyes turning toward him with annoyance and something undefinable, he hesitated.

“I will sleep in your bed. It has been almost two thousand years since someone has touched me. You will touch me and show me this thing you fear will push me away.” Arwyn’s voice gained an edge to it, a huskier note. This was no request but a demand for Abaddon’s compliance.

“Is that what you truly desire? Is this part of the urges you harbor?” Abaddon’s libido perked up like some creature at the back of his mind, begging for scraps. Over time, he’d schooled himself into temperance and Arwyn undid centuries of restraint.

“I think you misunderstand what I was made to do. I was forged for virility and desire. The seven deadly sins represent the oracles’ creation. One sin represents us all, while we each share two. I am gluttony and lust. I hunger to be filled and desire to be sated. I have a brother who is avarice and pride, and another who is envy and wrath. There are far worse combinations to be had.”

“And you are all bound under the desire of sloth?” Abaddon raised a brow.

“It is far more work to be lazy than it is to do what’s needed immediately. I prefer to rid myself of a task and goal as quickly as possible to get back to seeking my pleasure.” Arwyn huffed with amusement, his words flowing a little smoother. As if talking stretched muscles he’d not used in so long.

“Efficiency is a sin? Who’d have thought? I can appreciate it.” Abaddon swallowed hard as Arwyn gently pressed into his side, making him recall their shower, perfunctory and quick, like the bath houses of old. Not

allowing himself to focus on it at the time made Abaddon happier, but he allowed himself to contemplate the rich, dark color of Arwyn's nipples. He took in the way the lean lines of his throat bobbed when he swallowed.

“In my time alone in contemplation, I held myself together by the ambient knowledge of the world building around me. It was stasis, but I lost things, too. I don't think I have patience anymore, nor frivolous senses of propriety in certain ways.” Arwyn took a shuddering breath.

“And what are you impatient for?” Abaddon stroked a finger under the male's chin, studying the broad sculpt of his features.

Arwyn's lips curled at the edges into a brief smile as bottomless mischief danced in his eyes.

“Right.” A surprising flutter swooped in Abaddon's belly, interest in something he'd not had in so many years. “I told you before that I cause pain.”

“And did I not tell you that you would see in time?” Arwyn canted his head gently.

“I don't particularly find joy in hurting others that don't deserve it.” Abaddon chanced moving his hand to Arwyn's neck in a gentle grasp, running his thumb along his pulse. A flash of desire to lean in and bite, claim, and imbibe him unsettled his mind for a moment.

“Good. I'll try very hard to deserve your affections.” Arwyn gasped as Abaddon shimmered, taking them away from his office and back to his home.

Arwyn stumbled back, pinned to a wall as Abaddon descended upon him, taking in his sweet breath and the subtle notes of his body. He yearned for what lay beyond his unique shampoos and their lingering odors. Abaddon guessed he could call it clove, something rich and powerful, sharp, but it had a twist to it that Abaddon couldn't discern.

“What do you want? Food, sex, sleep?” Abaddon was game to give him any of the three. He'd not eaten yet that day, had the middling beginnings of a hard-on, and it was too damn cold on the surface to sleep well. Maybe with a warm body in his bed, it'd be different.

“I want sex, something rich to eat, and then you may sleep by me.” Arwyn lifted his chin and Abaddon let loose a singular huff of laughter.

“Alright.” Abaddon licked his lips, eyeing Arwyn from head to toe, remembering what lay beneath his clothes. “But I set the rules and the pace. I'm particular, but I am not cruel. We will set up a safe word. When you say it, I will stop. It will be over. Are we clear? I don't play games.”

“I understand. This safe word... What word should I use?” Arwyn's breath shuddered, almost in fear. Abaddon lessened his pressure against the male but took in how wide his eyes had dilated, the quickening of his pulse, a rapid flutter in the silence.

Even then, Abaddon's rising lust threatened to take things further. His voice, husky with want, nearly purred from his lips. “*Utu.*” Akkadian for sun.

“Thank you. I will keep this word I have no use for. I know what it is you harbor, and I am willing.” Arwyn grabbed

for Abaddon's hand and pulled it to his neck, forcing him to repeat that gentle gesture, running his thumb along Arwyn's pulse.

Abaddon threaded his hand up the back of Arwyn's scalp, fingers trailing through his hair. Grasping tight, Abaddon tilted his head back with a trembling breath. A distinct twitch grazed Abaddon's leg from Arwyn's groin. *Promising*. Leaning over Arwyn, Abaddon crushed their mouths together, tongues entwining. To Abaddon's delight, both of them were gifted with longer tongues. It was *divine* to suckle on a tongue that could invade him so deeply, as deeply as he invaded their mouth.

Arwyn's eyes rolled back, body tensing. His hard cock jerked against Abaddon's leg. "It's yet to be seen if you can handle me." Abaddon's husky voice muttered over his lips.

"Then please, cease threatening me and do it." Arwyn grabbed the front of Abaddon's shirt and pulled, locking them in a kiss with twining tongues that filled their mouths so deliciously. *Cloves*. Abaddon breathed in the heady scent.

Touching Arwyn was addictive, he thought, trailing fingers over his unflinching skin. There was no thrill of torture or power with the creature, only hope and maddened lust.

Abaddon tugged at Arwyn's shirt before slipping his hand beneath, rucking it up his back to dig his fingers into the flesh there, nails fighting the urge to become claws.

"Let go. I promise you. I was made for this." Arwyn's voice fluttered between their hungry kisses. They parted long enough for his shirt to slide free, and Abaddon's as well. Finally, their bare, hot chests pressed tight.

“I don’t like hurting people,” Abaddon said, his breathy words a coarse growl.

“I can rectify that.” The back of Arwyn’s legs touched the bed under Abaddon’s gentle push. Full of trust, Abaddon focused his heated gaze and Arwyn fell back without looking. His hair fanned out behind him, arms splayed upward, stretching out the pallid lean lines of his sculpted chest. The hairless expanse led to the cut of his obliques, his pants a feather’s touch away from shucking down his hips. With a wandering hand, Abaddon ensured they slid away.

His desert skin tones begged for sun he’d not seen in centuries.

“You play with fire.” Abaddon shuddered as his magic rose within him, crashing at his awareness. It yearned to seek his new partner, to torrent into the creature. *Fire*. It burned within Abaddon.

“I hope to get burned.” Arwyn gasped as Abaddon loosed his pants, tugging them off and to the floor. His body shuddered, perfect in all the ways Abaddon enjoyed. Pert nipples constricted into tight buds and Abaddon loosed his pants to let the tepid air caress him. He was cold, so cold, and Arwyn could stoke those fires, warm him.

Drawn from his thought, Arwyn spread his legs and drew his ankles around Abaddon’s thighs, tugging him insistently. “Kiss me again.” And before Abaddon could answer, a slender tail slithered around and curled against the calf of Abaddon’s leg. His feathers gently brushed the sparse hairs there.

“Insistent pet...” Abaddon lifted a knee and crawled onto the bed, caging Arwyn in. He pinned the man by his wrists,

running his nose along the new male's jawline. "Remind me of the safe word so I know you know how to use it," the beast within him, barely contained, growled out.

"Utu." Arwyn tilted his head back and squirmed, hips lifting. Brushing his lips over Arwyn's neck, Abaddon found his pulse, twitching temptingly. He bit. No warning, no permission. Abaddon couldn't help it, the scent of cloves and raw urgency drawing out the feral nature of him. It wasn't gentle, nor was it neat or clean. The coppery splash of angel blood doused his lips. An aftertaste of spice and rich power. *Magic*. Abaddon buckled down, biting hard, drawing his cock to full mast with a surge of precum that came out in a gentle spurt, a micro orgasm of sorts. His entire body tensed and Arwyn whimpered, not the mournful sound of one in pain but the lustful whimper of someone who needed more.

Abaddon released Arwyn's wrists and pulled his mouth away, staring down at the male whose eyes had rolled back in lust. His parted lips trembled for Abaddon, inviting him in for a kiss. The moment their lips touched, it was reciprocated with fervor, tongues swirling until they parted. A quick glance down told Abaddon all he needed to know about Arwyn's thoughts. His cock was not a spectacle, not large or proud like his own but perfect. The crown of his cock had a beautiful shape, sculpted and smooth, leading to a shaft barely thick enough for his middle and index finger to wrap around. Abaddon's mouth watered for it, taking him to root. He enjoyed being bigger, being in control that way. After all, what bearer had use for a cock other than as their mate's plaything? Still, Abaddon liked cocks in a superficial sort of way, watching them erupt untouched, the way they jerked and

twitched, hardening and softening. Balls, too. Drawing up so tight.

Abaddon palmed Arwyn's dick and gently stroked it, relishing the hardness and the weeping trail of sticky precum sliding down its hard length. Wanting to know its taste, Abaddon lifted long fingers to his mouth and licked gently, relishing that sweet clove flavor, coppery magic, and an underlying unyielding characteristic that Abaddon wanted to challenge and destroy.

The touch was cursory, assessing the male's firmness, the way his balls drew up at the slightest touch. Abaddon drew his hand lower, slipping fingers along Arwyn's perineum. There, he stroked the root of his cock through that silken, firm dip of skin, inexorably drawing his fingers toward the male's smoldering center. He hissed, a soft groan caught in his throat. Abaddon raked his eyes over Arwyn's form, taking in the hitch of his chest and the jerk of his cock bucking up against his belly.

Arwyn's too-red lips formed a soft O of pleasure when Abaddon dipped his middle finger inward, circling his tight ring. Slick, wet heat embraced his digit, drawing him deeper. With blood dashed across Arwyn's neck and mouth, he grimaced, gritting teeth pooled with pink between the white flats. Watching it was enchanting, drawing Abaddon's feral nature to the surface, lurking hard.

"You wish me to lie with you? Do you wish to be bedded and used?" Abaddon delved his fingers deeper, brushing the pad of a single digit along Arwyn's prostate. It made his back arch and thighs quiver.

“That would be preferable. An ideal situation, really.” Arwyn groaned low and deep when a second finger joined the first. With a singular goal in mind, Abaddon’s only wish was to loosen and open Arwyn for his lust to come.

“I’ve warned you.” Abaddon kissed along the healing bite marks at Arwyn’s neck, drawing shivers from the male.

“And I look forward to your affections, when you decide to give them.” Arwyn offered a roguish grin that endeared Abaddon for a blink. He was breathtakingly beautiful when achingly hard and needy.

Abaddon, challenged for the first time in so very long, scoffed and drew his fingers free. Arwyn could stand to be more open, but Abaddon lost patience. He flipped the male over, shoving his shoulders into the bed. “I will give them. I will be merciless, and if you utter that word, I will cease.”

Arwyn whimpered but arched his back all the same, as if inviting Abaddon.

“Good pet. Good.”

Chapter Four

Arwyn

Abaddon shoved Arwyn face down into twisted covers, his cock bunching amid a rough duvet. The coarse texture, compared to the blankets of his youth and cloth so long ago, was finer than anything he'd owned. It wasn't as soft as whatever wool that Abaddon had clothed him with earlier. His senses told him cotton, but he couldn't draw a parallel to it from his experience. Arwyn's mind raced until blunt pressure ground between the cleave of his ass, slicking itself with a rutting few thrusts.

"Do try and relax, pet." Abaddon's warning proceeded a hard thrust, cock grinding to his tender and long-unused hole. Whipping his tail about, Arwyn grappled it around Abaddon's waist and squeezed. He braced himself, hips tilting up, and relished the intense sting of intrusion. Pain, like pleasure, was sensation. And in the throes of pain lay the release of it ending, a pulse of adrenaline and happy brain chemicals exploding inside of him at the ebb of every peak.

Abaddon slammed his hips home, snarling as he wrestled Arwyn's arms behind his back, wrists held tight with one arm. Held in place, Arwyn could do little to move, to increase his touch. But he needed more, needed something else. Even with his arms pinned back, Arwyn never felt so free.

Memories pulsed through him of eons long past when his creator took him to his bed and did *speakable* things to him. *Boring*. How sex could be so blasé was beyond Arwyn's

imagination. Being a superior angel's cum receptacle for a few years held no appeal. As if not wanting another male in Arwyn's head, Abaddon's free hand grasped a handful of his hair and pulled, hips lining up for another fierce thrust. And he delivered.

The shock wave of pure strength that shot through his body sent tingles up the base of his cock, drawing his balls up tight. Twisted covers bunching over Arwyn's weeping cockhead the only thing that kept him from coming untouched. As the gasp of pure pleasure ripped its way through him, Arwyn pulled against Abaddon's restraints, relishing the force of his grip.

"Don't move." Abaddon leaned down, his body coiled tight like a spring, ticking under pressure and ready to snap. Teeth far too sharp to be the flat, square things he'd seen before nipped at a shoulder blade. "You like this... Don't you?"

"I love it. Dearly." Arwyn rasped the words. The bare whisper a flutter on his lips as Abaddon lost some sort of battle in his mind and snapped his hips forward. Abaddon's cockhead glanced off his prostate, sending a surge of precum pulsing into the sheets. A near constant stream with every thrust left sticky sensations against his skin.

Abaddon needed no more coercing, the words enough as he bore down, beating his hips into him with sharp slaps in a steady rhythm. Constant points of pain pricked against Arwyn's wrists, Abaddon's nails going sharp and long.

Of all the futures and things he'd seen, never once could he recall the shifted form of his mate, the hidden monster.

Even in dreams, the beast stayed hidden, lurking in darkness. A tail wrapped around his leg, the tip strange, nudging up between Arwyn's legs to coax his thighs apart for more leverage. "Brace yourself." Abaddon's strained voice filtered through raspily, as if through too many teeth.

The hands on Arwyn's wrists released, and he braced himself forward, arching his back more. "Harder." Arwyn needed it, needed to feel Abaddon's cock so deeply, and he gave happily. Eagerly. The force of Abaddon's pounding hips sent ripples through his body. Abaddon slammed Arwyn along the bed until he braced the headboard, hips jerking to gain some sort of contact against his cock.

"Fuck..." Abaddon's low growl rattled from his throat, body trembling. A rough hand grasped for hair again, tightening as Arwyn quivered in ecstasy. White crept into the corners of his vision, a whining noise pricking his ears. Magic bubbled at the surface of his force and with a snarl, the already-fat cock in Arwyn's ass thickened, each pulse of blood making it buck and throb. It stretched him more until he snarled in frustration, jerking free with an obscene noise.

Arwyn's world spun as Abaddon pulled him up and guided him into his lap. Legs curled beneath him, thighs spread, Abaddon settled him by his hips. He speared Arwyn, letting the male grasp onto whatever he could.

Two great horns curled back over his head, his ears long and pointed, eyes a depthless white. Graying skin, like ash had been rubbed over him, flexed over corded, tight muscles. Arwyn could see forever in those eyes, drawing out twin fiery trails of tears in utter bliss. Looking for purchase, Arwyn

reached forward and grabbed Abaddon's horns. He cried out with pleasure from the new angle, practically sobbing with desire. Nonsense spilled over his lips, mind a jumbled array of lust and thought.

Rough arms wrapped around his back, sharp claws digging firmly enough to draw blood, creating lines of fire, not from damage alone but magic that seared so deliciously.

Arwyn's wings forced themselves free, aching to release. Abaddon snarled and shook Arwyn's grip, letting the male scramble for purchase over his shoulders. Blunted fingers clawed for stability as the bed jolted and slammed with their thrusts. The grind of their bodies put the pressure he needed on his cock, and the world welcomed him into its tight embrace. Arwyn's soul sang as a brilliant glow lit his skin from heel to head.

Hard throbbing pulses rose within his center, tingles going up his cock, the slick head dragging along the cut of Abaddon's belly. Their tails twined, whipping about, wrestling amid their actions. Sharp talons dug their way into the bases of Arwyn's wings. They stabbed in to hold him down until Abaddon's knot stretched him in unholy ways, anchoring him as they came in tandem. Arwyn fired streaks so hard up between them it hit them both in the chin. Magic roared through them, the fingers in his wings burning, prolonging Arwyn's orgasm until the brightness grew. The demon before him, if he was a demon at all, spread black feathered wings to wrap around them and Arwyn couldn't help himself. His hands dug into those feathery bases, skin glowing hard. Abaddon, in a single breathtaking flash, glowed back for Arwyn.

“You. Are. Mine.” Abaddon’s harsh teeth crowded his mouth, his face a portrait of terror. Despite it all, Arwyn wanted him more, the holy glow of a fallen angel and the unholy fire deep inside. Abaddon didn’t cause pain. He *was* pain. A breathing contradiction.

A twinge of something made Arwyn’s breath catch. His cock weakly fired between them as Abaddon’s gentle motions slowed. Their glows settled over their skins until their lips met, sharing a kiss that made his entire wait worthwhile. “Yes. Always.”

They sat in that locked position, chests heaving as they waded the murky bliss of post-orgasmic violence. Arwyn didn’t need to look in a mirror to know what Abaddon had done. It still stung, his magic still echoing. The feathers there would be marked for all time. “Abaddon.” Arwyn petted his chest affectionately.

“I’ve never glowed before...” Abaddon seemed hesitant to release Arwyn, clutching to him like a lifeline.

“Nor have I. But I expected this.” Arwyn’s voice squeaked and cracked with hoarseness.

“Sorry... Are you...” The quiver in Abaddon’s voice settled, timid emotion peeking through. His sharp fingers trailed searing lines along Arwyn’s back. He flexed his hips, snarling with pleasure as his knot pulsed and ebbed. Arwyn tilted his head back with a drunken groan, tail uncoiling. Abaddon leaned forward, laying Arwyn back with genuine concern in his eyes.

“I remember this.” Arwyn traced a finger down Abaddon’s cheek and jawline. “And now I know this moment,

have made it part of me.”

Abaddon worked his hips into a weak orgasm, growling and panting until Arwyn grunted with overstimulation. Arwyn shot right as Abaddon popped free, warm cum pooling forth under gentle pressure.

As the glow died down, Abaddon separated fully from Arwyn and flopped back on the bed, gesturing for him to come closer. His pale eyes gained a hint of his silver irises in them, slowly focusing in, no doubt seconds from seeing the marks.

As if on cue, he gasped, and Arwyn silenced him with a kiss. “Shh. It was lovely. You were not meant to bear this pain alone. Share it with me. Take your light and I will embrace your fire. Burn me, Abaddon. You are so very good at it.” The thick words passed near drunkenly over Arwyn’s lips.

“Why me? How can you stand it?” Abaddon shuddered, his demonic features fighting with his glamour to slide back into place. “I didn’t mean to claim you. Fucking stupid of me.”

“Because you are like me, born of immortal and magic. I am made for a purpose that I could not fulfill. We are contradictory things. And how are you so certain it was you that claimed me and not I that spurred you toward that path?” Arwyn traced slow circles over Abaddon’s arm with the tips of his fingers as he moved to straddle his hips.

Head dipped, Abaddon nuzzled into Arwyn’s neck, planting tiny kisses, an excuse to be there. His breath shuddered and hot drops eked down Abaddon’s face and onto Arwyn’s shoulder, neck, and down his back. Each breath wavered, arms tightening. “I know nothing of you. You may very well be dangerous.”

“Fair point. But to me, it’s like I’ve been with you for so long. I know you cry after we make love sometimes, and one day it becomes tears of joy. Right now, you’re terrified of your inner demons, what you are deep down. But you’ll see in time.” Arwyn leaned over and brushed his lips over Abaddon’s ear. “Nothing feels better than the moment the pain stops. The bliss is *thrilling*. I cannot die, Abaddon. I cannot scar or sustain permanent damage. You cannot break me, so play hard with this toy of yours.”

As if his words reached through, Abaddon’s cock twitched, brushing Arwyn’s thigh. “Really?”

“Did you not feel how hard I found pleasure? Do you not still feel my spend on your neck and chin? Your pain drove me to that, forced me higher and harder. I’ll beg for it again, I promise.”

Abaddon choked on a breath and tugged Arwyn to him, refusing to let go. “So you’d do it again?”

“Without a doubt.”

“Thank you. I suppose I made this awkward.” The fear glittering in Abaddon’s eyes shifted to amusement, a soft chuckle shaking his chest.

“Hmm. There will be far more awkward times between us. This? This is learning.” Arwyn angled his hips and pressed his weight into Abaddon, staring down at him, studying his shifting features. The humanity in Abaddon slowly took over, softening his features, rounding his teeth. His sharp ears rounded and eyes returned to that tender silver.

“How much more awkward can it be?” Abaddon huffed incredulously.

“Trust me. There is this time that a brother of yours walks i—” Arwyn glanced over his shoulder as the door swung open. Malacoda stood there, green eyes ablaze before he registered the scene before him.

“Malacoda, get out!” Abaddon reached for some knickknack off of his dresser, lobbing it at the door, missing Malacoda by a mile.

“Fine. You two are boring anyway. Cowgirl, really? Come join us for dinner. Falcalor and our mates are here.” Malacoda shut the door and walked off, his footsteps fading.

“There. That was more awkward.” Arwyn offered Abaddon a half smile. A soft pink crept over Abaddon’s cheeks, and Arwyn gasped with delight. “You can blush?” How had his sight not told him this? Few demons blushed, and knowing what he knew of Abaddon’s history, his past and future, the thought never occurred to him. A small hope fluttered in his chest of all the new things he could discover without his gift on his own.

“Lilith was technically human. Technically... She’s immortal at any rate, and so my father was as well. I still have human blood, but a demon’s fate, and an angel’s mark. I am forged in hellfire and bear no heart stone.” Abaddon curiously reached up and tucked a strand of hair behind Arwyn’s ear.

“Please, continue to surprise me.” Arwyn smiled and slid off of Abaddon, unable to make it two steps before collapsing, weak-kneed to the floor. “I did not anticipate this, either. Why are my legs so uncooperative? I’ve had nothing to drink?”

“I don’t know whether to be proud or to feel pity that you’ve never been fucked sea-legged.” Abaddon swept over the edge of the bed and stood, stretching out in his firm, masculine glory.

“Perhaps both are true?” Arwyn tried to stand once more in Abaddon’s arms but stiffened when he came to a full stand. “What unfortunate timing...”

With his mind fuzzy with post-orgasmic bliss and lost in sensation, his body went limp in Abaddon’s arms. A vision seized his mind, and the fractured nature of it left so many questions unanswered, but one thing was certain.

“Arwyn?” Abaddon shook him gently, scooping Arwyn into his arms.

Unable to open both eyes, letting one open and focus as hard as he could, Arwyn took a shuddering breath and spoke. “They’re letting behemoth loose on earth.”

Who are they?

When?

Where?

Why?

All things that Arwyn needed his brothers for.

Chapter Five

Abaddon

“You fucked him unconscious?” Gemory stood in the hallway outside of Abaddon’s bedroom, giving him an incredulous stare. Falcalor stifled laughter while Malacoda, perfectly schooled in expression, leaned nearby, but Abaddon could sense the bubble of laughter even in his spirit. Robin tried not to piss himself laughing. His choked snickers dotted the silence with emotion Malacoda rarely displayed.

“No!” Abaddon rested his forehead in his hand and sighed. “I think he had a vision.”

“So you shagged him so hard he saw the future? Good grief, Abe!” Falcalor snorted and Abaddon gritted his teeth.

“Little brother, I have no patience for this.” Abaddon halted when Falcalor rested two thick hands on his shoulders, fingers tightening.

“Little? No. And I’ve been mated for a long time, far longer than most have been alive, so do not hold your age above me. Time is no longer relevant, only experience, and I have far more.” Falcalor squeezed once and released. “Now, what did he say, exactly?”

““They’re letting behemoth loose on earth.”” Abaddon shrugged.

“Exactly. You know how Father’s fates do. They have to rhyme or something—” Falcalor gestured and glanced over at

Malacoda for backup. Asking their shadowy sibling to take sides was an effort in futility.

“I don’t think they have to. I think Father’s fates are weird.” Malacoda sighed and glanced toward the other end of the hall expectantly, his expression softening as Robin flounced back. Abaddon couldn’t miss his cheeks, beautifully flushed with amusement. At one time, he had thought Robin was an unfathomably attractive male, alluring with those beautiful eyes and absolutely sharp tongue. Gemory, too, with his fluid beauty and grace. Since meeting Arwyn? Looking at Robin stirred nothing in him, nor Gemory.

Gemory rolled his eyes and picked at a loose thread on the sleeve of his fraying army jacket. He shifted, ankles creaking with new leather boots over sinfully tight skinny jeans. Robin wasn’t much better, always in something one step off of bedroom candy. He had made himself cute, done up with kohl eyeliner, swept back hair, and a tank top from some band he’d never heard of. He complemented his tight jeans with knee-high shit-kicker boots. As if catching Abaddon staring, Falcalor nudged his arm, flicking a brow as he usually did.

Falcalor enjoyed people eye humping Gemory, but Malacoda was a bit more protective. Malacoda inspired covetousness, and he shared none of the things he held close. As evidenced by his reluctance to allow Abaddon more uncle time with Xander.

“Anyway! Before I was *interrupted*—” Abaddon flinched when Malacoda snorted.

“Interrupted you claiming this mystery male you pulled out of some magic box a few hours ago? What the fuck,

Abaddon?”

“Easy there, Mal. You, yourself, should know how hard it is to restrain yourself when it’s your mate.” Falcalor held his hands up, keeping his shadowy brother at bay.

“Robin. It’s a sensitive subject. Can we have a moment?” Malacoda snagged Robin by his wrist and tugged him in, face softening the tiniest bit.

Robin had one of those personalities people expected to argue, and he did quite often. At that moment, though, he conceded, leaning in for a quick word. “Fine, but we get to harass the new mate, after.” He pressed a quick kiss to Malacoda’s nose and parted, grabbing for Gemory. The two slipped off, understanding the moment a precarious one.

“Is there any way you can undo a claiming?” Malacoda folded his arms. “Because this is going to be a major strain on you and him.”

“Mal. It’s permanent. Abe isn’t getting rid of him.” Falcalor rested a hand on his shoulder. “But we do need to address the elephant in the room.”

“The monster in the room, you mean?” Malacoda’s upper lip twitched. “Father is right, you know.”

“That he is my mate?” Abaddon gestured toward his bedroom door.

Malacoda shrugged. “You’ve gotten worse since I was young. The more your reputation grew, the stronger you became, and the more you changed. You cannot claim him as your mate and make him suffer for it. I cannot abide it.”

Falcalor tensed, glancing between them before speaking in reluctant tones, as if choosing his words carefully. “I don’t often agree with Malacoda, but this one I will step in on. Can you control it without hurting yourself or him?”

The door swung open, a groggy Arwyn at the door, silver eyes glistening. “I could hear you speaking about me. And no, he cannot control it.”

Abaddon took a calming breath and fought the urge to reach out for the male that made him feel so vulnerable in that moment.

“Are you alright?” Falcalor reached out for Arwyn’s bare shoulder. Covered with only a pair of pants slung low on his hips, Arwyn made Abaddon’s libido perk up.

“I’m very well, thank you for asking—Falcalor, was it?” Arwyn patted the ginger male’s hand gently.

“Yes. Aren’t you precious?” Falcalor canted his head and stared the male down, eyes narrowed. Falcalor took in every detail as if to make sure Abaddon hadn’t done lasting damage. “At least Abe was able to hold back.”

“I don’t think he did.” Arwyn blinked up at Falcalor, a slight smile crossing his lips. “I’ll spare you details, but I know what he is. I’m more than suited for that.”

Malacoda’s brows shot up, wicked green eyes darting over to meet Abaddon’s gaze. “Really?”

Abaddon shrugged. “I tried to hold back for a minute, but he seemed to enjoy it after a point, so I got carried away.”

“Carried away... Is that what we’re calling it?” Falcalor released Arwyn and shook his head.

Abaddon steadied his breathing and stilled. Arwyn knew so much of him, things even Abaddon didn't know, and it had been far too easy to become careless in such a moment.

"I lacked restraint. I apologize." Abaddon buried the hurt from lovers past, where he'd withheld his power by sheer willpower.

As a young being, his first few hundred years, the world was his oyster. But as his name and reputation grew, so did his power. So did his legend. So did his pain, and with it, a need for comfort unlike anything he'd ever experienced.

A few lovers found themselves on the receiving end of his power, suffering. Abaddon's reputation had grown from it. He was a lord of hell, after all, a torturer. They said he delighted in pain and punishment.

They were wrong.

"I was made to withstand. I assure you." Arwyn reached for Abaddon but found himself blocked by the bare shift of Falcalor's body between them.

"Abe? Did you really go all out on him?" Falcalor stared at his brother, lips tightening. "Because I've seen what happens to those who irk your strongest emotions. And he lost consciousness."

"Oh, I fainted because I've not eaten in so very long. I'm tapped for energy and my last little bit went into that awful prediction." Arwyn crossed his arms in a cocky sort of gesture, narrowing his gaze in a way that seemed eerily reminiscent of Robin.

“And how did you react to him?” Malacoda shifted position with interest, clearly noticing the similarity. His mate would do well with his siblings!

“I enjoyed it.” Arwyn stepped lithely to the side and circumnavigated Falcalor’s presence, seeking to take Abaddon’s hand.

“Abe?” Falcalor asked in a warning tone.

“He came so hard it shot like three feet.” Abaddon glared at Malacoda, who blinked with poorly disguised surprise.

“Impressive.” The corner of Malacoda’s mouth twitched.

“So, can we all agree that I need more time for you two to decide if I am trustworthy? And we can all sleep better knowing that—”

“You’re a total masochist. Right.” Malacoda huffed a single breath of amusement. “Robin may enjoy your company.”

“Is Robin a masochist?” Falcalor glanced over his shoulder, brows nearly in his hairline.

Malacoda shrugged. “Hell if I know. Robin is horny. Pain has never stopped him from getting what he wants.”

“Gah! Sorry I asked.” Falcalor shivered and glanced at Abaddon, eyes panning up and down. “He checks out, for now. Father says we’re to welcome him and help him find the others. Xander will need his oracles.”

Malacoda grunted in agreement, and Abaddon jumped when Arwyn took his hand and squeezed tightly. “I will happily serve Xander after all. He’s...he will be...” Arwyn

furrowed his brow in thought. “Since I am claimed, I hope to be his uncle if you approve.”

“That’s a sweet sentiment, but Xander will decide in time. He’s quite stubborn like that. I doubt that even if Arwyn is dangerous, Xander would heed my warnings. He has his own way and as much as that frustrates us, he is a dutiful child.” Malacoda waved them off and grabbed Falcalor’s shoulder. “Go get dressed and meet us in the dining room before Robin gets hungry and starts snacking on dinner.”

“Ah yes. Ever impatient. He is a dear though. Occupies my Gemory so well.” Falcalor and Malacoda wandered off, leaving Abaddon and Arwyn alone in the hall.

A silent few moments passed with Abaddon staring at Arwyn, unsure of anything. His world had shifted so fast. There was hope, though, and that was new.

Arwyn tilted his head and drew in to Abaddon’s space. “Let us rinse ourselves. Then we can enjoy food with your family. If I am to be considered one of them, soon.”

Abaddon opened his mouth to say something, still uncertain, heart fluttering. But Arwyn never let the words come between them, only his lips and tongue in a lingering kiss. “I want for food and to have you again before I sleep.”

Despite everything, Abaddon’s cock was on board.

Chapter Six

Arwyn

Dining had changed considerably in the days since Arwyn last walked this world. Tables were obscenely high, like a scholar's table or a tailor's bench. The cutlery had changed, too, no longer eating with their hands but with what could practically be considered weapons. And no two people ate from communal dishes but served onto their own dishes.

“So, I figured you'd have major blast from the past tummy and need something a little less processed—” Robin pulled a few things out of bags and foil-lined boxes.

“Shut up, Robin. You went to the Lebanese restaurant and ordered half the menu.” Gemory snorted as he passed rich foods with interesting flavors and complex plating that only a king surely would have had in his day.

“Lebanon is like...close to where he's from, right? I put thought into this!” Robin shrugged and Gemory rolled his eyes.

“Robin!” Gemory sighed heavily and Malacoda's lips twisted into a half grin, unendingly endeared by the rambunctious male.

“I don't know what any of these dishes are.” Arwyn shrugged. “But they smell nice.”

“This is tabbouli, parsley and garlic and grains and the like. Pretty good. Sour.” Gemory pushed a container of cool greens across the table. “Baba ghanouj. Pita. Warak Enab.”

Arwyn glanced about, delighting when a rich bed of rice topped with dark meat passed by. “I want a little of all of it, but meat sounds fantastic.”

“Lamb and beef.” Robin grinned and bustled over, crowding Arwyn as he helped him dish out a plate.

Arwyn’s heart warmed toward the young man, grateful for such a sweet soul who could trust him so quickly.

“Oh, that looks so good.” Arwyn grabbed a fork and settled down, not next to Abaddon, but Robin, crowding with Gemory.

Robin, preparing his plate, glanced over, eyes scanning the table with a degree of discernment. A bottle of wine sat unopened in the center of the table and glasses on a tray beside it. With a quick motion, Robin moved the tray to the side without purpose. Turning back to Gemory, they made plates for Falcalor, Abaddon, and Malacoda.

Falcalor worked the cork out of the bottle, jerking too hard on the wine key, sending it and the cork flying across the table. Robin plucked it up and nudged it back toward Falcalor as they passed wine around.

Arwyn had never consumed wine from a goblet before, nor one cast of glass so unbelievably fine. Tilting the liquid up to his lips, the rich scent of it enveloped him before exposing his taste buds to the most assaulting, bitter, and somehow still-sour wine he’d ever tasted. He swallowed despite the revulsion and placed the glass down warily. Abaddon pushed the glass farther away from Arwyn’s place and chuckled. “Just water for me, thanks, Robin.”

“Suit yourself, Creepy.” Robin shrugged and Abaddon visibly winced at the moniker.

“Creepy?” Arwyn delighted at how Abaddon forced himself to remain schooled at that.

“Spooky, Scary, Creepy.” Robin pointed to Malacoda, Falcalor, and Abaddon in that order. “Fits them.”

“Why does Falcalor get to be scary?” Abaddon snorted. “I’m plenty scary!”

“Falcalor goes into pants-peeing territory when he gets ‘grr.’” Robin waved a fork in his general direction before snagging an olive.

Arwyn was on familiar territory with olives at least and snagged one, pleasantly surprised by the flavor. They’d gotten a lot more vibrant than he remembered. Same for the bread, the flour soft and so fine. He hummed with delight. Bread had gotten so much sweeter than he recalled. Almost cake-like. It made him moan with appreciation. And hummus? It was nowhere near the paste it was so long ago.

The meat? Rich spices saturated every morsel, and he glanced up, savoring a mouthful as Abaddon gave a very dry swallow, throat clicking. Arwyn hesitated, glancing from Abaddon’s brothers to their mates, all of whom seemed to look the other way, restraining a laugh.

Arwyn swallowed and chased it with water. “Apologies... It’s been a very long time since I’ve eaten.”

“No worries. I was waiting for you to choke something down so I could pester you with a million questions!” Robin

leaned over his plate, those gorgeous blue eyes dancing with delight.

“Feel free to ask.” Arwyn sat his glass down and focused intently on Robin and found he quite liked the male.

“Alright, so Gem and I have to take you shopping. What’s your fashion choice?” Robin bounced excitedly.

“Comfortable, I suppose.” Arwyn had never thought much of it, as clothing was pretty uniform back in the day. Cloth was a premium and fibers so much rougher. The goal was to protect and cover, and clothing had evolved so much since last he knew.

“Comfortable... Anything specific? Colors you like?” Robin gestured and Gemory laughed politely.

“Robin. Back when we were young, clothing didn’t vary that much unless you were noble or wealthy.”

“So what, everyone walked around in church robes and stuff?” Robin frowned. “Neat.”

“Church robes...” Falcalor mouthed the words and blanched, but Malacoda seemed to find it endearing if the moonstruck expression that flickered over his face was to be believed.

“Fucking hell, Robin, you dipshit.” Gemory sank into an argument that made Arwyn smile. They were so passionate.

“I can say that I believe my preferred clothing is no longer socially acceptable these days. I rather liked skirts, but when they were new, the flax itched so badly. I think skirts are more for women today though.”

“Gem wears skirts all the time,” Falcalor said, chest puffing with pride.

“But you are a male mate?” Arwyn blinked politely.

“Some days I feel like looking pretty. Sheesh. Judgey much?” Gem sniffed.

Abaddon snorted into his water, laughing through wet, spluttering coughs.

“What?” Gemory crossed his arms and waited for Abaddon to finish his spectacle.

“You always look pretty. That’s your whole schtick, eroscientia. But you have spent so much time with Robin that you’re speaking like him, and it’s amusing.” Abaddon startled for a second when Arwyn reached a hand out to take his. He hesitated, as if only then realizing something, and shook his head. “I meant nothing by it. You are lovely in a different way.”

Abaddon’s reassurance made Arwyn smile. “Oh no, I wasn’t insecure. Gemory is a beautiful and gifted male. I merely wished to hold your hand.” He smiled and Robin made a little *aww* sound.

“Robin, my vexation. Do understand that Arwyn hasn’t been labeled clear yet, so don’t get attached or trust too easily.” Malacoda waved a placating hand toward Robin and earned a frown and pout in response.

“One way to settle this.” Robin glanced up at Arwyn, then dug in his pockets and held out his fists. “Pick one.”

Arwyn stared for a moment and picked a hand. Robin opened his fist to reveal a coin and tossed it to Gemory, who

caught it flawlessly and pondered the coin, his amber eyes flickering.

“So, I picked two coins, one I labeled the *bad guy* coin and the other the *good guy* coin. You picked that one and Gems is over here seeing if you set off his bad guy radar.” Robin glanced over and Gem gave a thumbs-up.

“I suppose that settles it.” Falcalor clapped his hands once.

“No, it does not!” Malacoda glared at Falcalor.

“Do you not trust your mate? Do you think his gift so weak?” Falcalor raised a single brow, challenging Malacoda.

“I think it best to wait and see. Considering all things. I trust Robin. I don’t trust my teaching. He’s still so young.” Malacoda gave Robin a pleading look, all pretense at his neutral expression gone.

“He’s broken you, Brother! I feel we’re outspoken here. The wise ones have declared Arwyn one of them.” Falcalor snickered and the corner of Abaddon’s lips ticked up.

“I can’t say that I’m comforted or joyous quite yet, but I am slightly optimistic.” Abaddon squeezed Arwyn’s hand. “If he can take my power with joy, then I am willing to try.”

“Alright, the kids are at Vize’s tomorrow. We’re taking Arwyn shopping!” Gemory clapped his hands.

“We bringing Shala with us?” Robin canted his head at Gemory.

“No. Vize would kill me. He’s declared himself ‘supreme wrangler of babies’ and I’m inclined to let him keep that title. I

love my little runts, but I need a break and shopping is it!” Gemory took a bite of his food and tied in, a signal for everyone else to continue.

As the night wore on, Malacoda warmed up a little, unable to hold his face for so long, in love with Robin on a whole other level. The same for Falcalor with Gemory. And in time, Abaddon would come to know their love like Arwyn did. He would be doting and clingy, latched to his side more than not and overly affectionate.

They said their goodbyes and hugged, Robin assuring Arwyn he’d be there bright and early to leave. They said something of trying to wrangle a third in, *Simon*. Arwyn knew him, too, in passing, but Robin and Gemory spoke as if they’d be great friends. Arwyn had more memories, honestly, of Jericho and Vize. But mysteries were lovely!

As they left and Abaddon turned the hall light out, Arwyn slid into his reach and pressed a tender kiss to his mate’s lips. “You are so very sweet. Now, take me to bed and show me this horrible monster they think you to be.”

Abaddon swallowed hard, the beast in his eyes lurking.

“I appreciate the offer, Arwyn, but are you sure you can take that again?”

“I will take it and love it. I told you. I heal fast, and there is no greater release than when the pain stops, and no greater peak than when the first sting hits.” Arwyn nuzzled into Abaddon’s neck and warm hands circled his waist, pawing down to his ass.

“And if I react like I did last time?” Abaddon’s throat bobbed.

“Then we kiss and cuddle until the tears stop and you realize we’re safe and I am going nowhere.” Arwyn reached up to trace a finger over Abaddon’s full lower lip, relishing its softness. He’d gone so long without touch, a blink in his mind at first, maddening millennia at the opposite side. “You are, and have always been and will always be, a gracious lover. What is it I should call you? What name of endearment should I test? I rather liked Robin’s.” Truth told, Arwyn knew the name he’d come to use for Abaddon, but he’d not earned it yet. He would though.

“Please, don’t.” Abaddon snorted as Arwyn smiled.

“Creepy...I have better in store for you.” Arwyn stifled a breath when Abaddon kissed him again.

“Don’t.” Abaddon’s warning tone made Arwyn’s belly swoop and cock twitch.

“I won’t. Not in lust. Because you are not creepy at all.” Arwyn brushed his lips along Abaddon’s cheek, trailing to the shell of his ear. “You will be my wildfire, and will consume me like so much dry kindling. Ravage me like unending heat, and leave not but ash in its wake.”

“Wildfire...” Abaddon spoke the word in a timid mutter, and Arwyn found he quite liked it.

“But I think I know what I’ll call you, too.” Abaddon laughed, eyes twinkling. “Since you’re my toy surprise at the bottom of the box...”

“I find that this endearment annoys me and brings me quiet joy.” Arwyn chuckled before Abaddon could get it out.

“Come on, Crackerjacks. I’ll take you back to bed and have my fill again.” Abaddon stole Arwyn’s lips again for another panting kiss.

“I couldn’t ask for more.” Arwyn yelped as Abaddon scooped him up and carried him off toward his bedroom, the stairs a manageable feat for him. There, they wormed their way into too many covers, lamenting how cold this new world was.

Chapter Seven

Abaddon

“Mister Abaddon?” Rachael knocked politely on his office door and glanced up, worry in her eyes.

“Yes, please, come sit.” Abaddon moved some papers about and sat up straighter. He was dead tired and got little sleep that night, well used elsewhere.

“Have I done something that displeased you?” Rachael twisted her hands nervously.

“No. We’re going to talk about Isaac. I know it was you who *dispatched* him.” Abaddon observed her squirming under his gaze. *Still a child in so many ways.*

“I—”

Abaddon held up a hand. “I’m proud. I really am. I’m concerned for *you* though. Your heart has to be hurting.”

Rachael nodded. “It didn’t do what I wanted.”

“Revenge seldom does. Do you feel better?”

Rachael shook her head. “Worse. And Peter didn’t want Isaac’s horns, either. I tried to—I did it for him, I thought, but he said I’d done it for myself and was mad at me because I can’t know the whole reason Isaac betrayed us.”

“Hmm. I won’t second guess your judgment. You’re okay though?”

Rachael took a moment to think about it. “Not really.”

“Would you like some time off?” He had to offer, but she wouldn’t take it. Her job was so important to her. She loved it and it gave her exercise in her skills.

“No. I’m not sure what I want. I’m lost.” Rachael fiddled with her hands in her lap. “And my mind is kinda screechy here lately, since that happened, like my skills are haywire. It keeps telling me to go back to Lesser Evils and back to that box but I don’t know if I can... I’m fighting my gift and—”

“Well. I don’t have any appointments for the day. Let me text Robin and Simon that we’ll be there and I’ll go with you. Just us two. Is that alright? And don’t feel obligated. I do not wish to make you uncomfortable.” Abaddon gave her a pleading smile. Her intuition over that box may have more details tickled the part of his brain that didn’t want to be separated from his mate so soon. A mate that he wasn’t expecting and didn’t know how he felt about.

“Okay.” Rachael tugged at her skirt nervously, fidgeting. “I don’t want to find something bad and make you lose your mate.”

“Rachael. Father is barely a hundred years older than me, if that. I’ve been alone this whole time, and if I have to be alone again to protect my family, that’s fine, too. I would like to love someone, but I’m okay with it. You won’t be in trouble. And it seems we’re both harboring some unease and guilt. Let’s go be uneasy and guilty together!” Abaddon clapped his hands. “Coffee on the way? I have to tell you about this prediction he made last night.”

Rachael’s eyes lit up. “Yes please. Thank you. I know I get in the way a lot, and this is basically just babysitting me,

but I really appreciate—”

“Hey! No. You are an invaluable asset. You are intuitive, smart, and talented. Father told me to rely on you and he relied on you heavily. I think if anything, we rely on you too much. I forget you’re a child—” Abaddon raised a hand at her huff of indignance. “A teenager, but still a child to me. We’ve different life experiences. I’m not saying it makes you less capable. It makes me more of a jerk for not giving you the chances to fail and develop personally. You’re so successful that I fear your first failure may well break you.” Abaddon gestured for her to stand, beckoning her over.

She stepped over to his side and flinched when Abaddon opened his arms and leaned over to give her a lingering hug. She trembled and relaxed in his grip and sniffled. “I don’t want to do a bad job and get fired. And I messed this whole situation up because I can’t tell what Arwyn is about.”

Abaddon patted her head and sighed. “It’s okay. Regardless of what happens, you did what you thought was right. You called me, and so far, Arwyn is lovely. If he turns out to not be so lovely... So be it.”

“Okay. I’ll try my hardest and you won’t be mad?”
Rachael sniffed.

“Not at all. Now come. They have an iced coffee with your name on it.” Abaddon took her by the shoulder and led her out of the office.

Rachael perched atop a stool, the old speakeasy and its dimly lit lights flickering behind amber glass. She lifted her coffee to her lips and drank deeply. Free coffee was always the sweetest, which is why Abaddon always charged his coffee to Lucifer's account. Bribery coffee with caffeine in it was even better, judging by the brightness returning to her eyes and the childlike swinging of her legs.

Abaddon raised a sledgehammer and struck the wall, watching plaster and concrete shatter and crumble around it. "I think there's going to be more markings outside the box."

"Maybe. That's how these things work, right?" Rachael went back to sipping on her coffee.

Abaddon raised his sledgehammer and struck again, sending a sizeable chunk of wall tumbling down. A few more strikes around the doorway had the box dislodged. And for as much work as it would have taken to get this box into the basement and build it into the wall, they did so little to secure it. Their only clear-cut goal had been to hide it.

Slipping off the stool, Rachael tottered up, wary of Abaddon and the hammer. "It's unseated, so you should be able to pull it out now." She placed her small hand on the wall of the box and shook her head, tensing up as her eyes flickered that bright amber-orange color of citrine.

"Pull it out." Rachael yelped and pulled back, stumbling. Her hand went to her temple, cradling the headache that always flared after one of her more difficult readings.

Abaddon, shirtless and covered in dust, reached gritty fingers to the inner door of the box. He used his superior strength to tug the heavy thing free a few excruciating inches

at a time, revealing the elaborate and extensive carvings over it. Abaddon studied the dark metal, fingers wandering over the deep gouges of Akkadian script.

Rachael met him at the side with a push broom, immediately brushing detritus from the lettering to help make out the words.

“Here lies a creature too powerful to kill, a demigod born of man to sate the first angel.” Abaddon read the hidden script out loud for Rachael. Had they left the box in the wall, they’d have never seen it.

“Well, we know that much so far.” Rachael traced her fingers over the markings.

“Born of Beauty...” Abaddon stared at the word. “That’s a name, I think. Kutzbu... They didn’t use it that way if it wasn’t a name. Agreed?” He glanced down at Rachael, whose eyes flashed. She nodded once. She didn’t know Akkadian, but her powers knew inference, and her practical sense told her many things.

“Beauty and commander, Turtan Isbarri. Warrior of Barri...” Abaddon traced his fingers farther down.

“To be held for all time, lest he meet the son of perdition, the whore child of the morning star.” Abaddon frowned and stepped back. “He was kept imprisoned to keep him from me. But why?”

“Punishment... I don’t think Arwyn was made to be a mate.” Rachael shook her head and growled, hissing through the pain as she forced it.

“Stop. Rachael. You’ll hurt yourself.” Abaddon turned to separate her, but Rachael glared at him.

“Uncle Gemory says I need to push it sometimes. It helps my strength grow.” Rachael furrowed her brows and stared at the markings. “What’s that mean?” Her hand shot out toward some text at the bottom, still caked in plaster.

Abaddon kicked and stomped at the crumbling remains until words revealed. “*Cursed are they, Arwyn, the failure of mortals and gods, the barren one.*”

“Looks like you’re right, my clever imp secretary. That’s exactly what it is. He’s here as a punishment, and he was only made to bear a child for that insane asshole.” Abaddon rotated around the box and stared at the markings, none of which were much better, reiterations of the same. Rachael, however, had an idea and dragged her stool over, climbing atop it to stare at the roof of the box, sweeping her arm about.

“The writing up here says something different. I don’t recognize the words.” Rachael climbed down and Abaddon jumped up, crouching as he dusted the surface with his hands.

“*Congratulations son of perdition, for you have found your prize. Take this broken male, or whatever is left of his fractured mind. He is one of three, the first of three oracles, past, present, and future. Arwyn is the past and knows all things as they happen. While he has failed his master and disappointed his father, he still yet has some use. Enjoy this broken toy. From one immortal to another.*”

Abaddon scoffed at the message and hopped off the box. “Arwyn was meant for me, I suppose.”

Rachael shrugged. “Now we need to get on to the bigger picture because he’s declared that someone will let loose a behemoth on earth.”

“It appears that way.” Abaddon wiped his brow and checked his phone. A few texts from Simon, Robin, and Gemory had come through, all assuring Abaddon that Arwyn was doing wonderfully. Another buzz signaled a warning from Gemory that Robin taught Arwyn to say *on fleek*. Sharing this with Rachael seemed to amuse her endlessly into a fit of giggles. *Caffeine kicking in!* She’d be Simon’s problem soon enough.

On my way home with the secretary. Meet you there. They’d arrived a few minutes ago and Abaddon threw his button-down shirt on over dirty flesh and fastened his jacket. The pants had seen better days, but such was the price for information.

Rachael took his hand politely, and they shimmered, drawing back home in time to see Arwyn step into the foyer. Someone must have told him he was coming.

He wore his hair down, trimmed to his shoulders and thinned, the green highlights in his hair over dark locks shimmered in the low light. Formless cargo pants with dropped buckles and webbing hugged his hips over a T-shirt with a neck so wide it slid down one shoulder, a proud gray that matched the black of his pants. A matching pair of chunky sneakers covered his feet and Abaddon found he didn’t hate the outfit. It was certainly something he’d never choose, but Abaddon found his heart skipping a beat as blood rushed south. “Hello.” His voice came out huskier than he’d intended.

“Hi. I had fun today. Did you?” Arwyn glanced over his clothing, eyes lingering south. “You’re filthy.”

“Yeah. I wanted to talk to you. I translated the writing on the outside of your box.” Abaddon cleared his throat and the amusement faded from Arwyn’s face.

“You find all that you needed?” Abaddon released Rachael’s hand as she darted off, leaving her to take Arwyn into his arms.

“Some. Your father put you in there.” Abaddon stroked his shoulders.

“Turtan was not a good man. He’d been a vagabond before he joined our village, a wanderer from the northern continents, from the land of ice. From Barri.”

“Ah. That explains that name. I’d really like more info though.” Abaddon ran fingers through Arwyn’s hair. “I like it.”

“I do, too! It’s comfortable. And they got me very neat clothing, and they had me get piercings for you.” Arwyn beamed, and Abaddon glanced over his bare ears.

“Where?” Abaddon swallowed dryly.

“I have both of my nipples pierced, and they did this interesting thing called a *frenulum* ladder.” Arwyn blinked up and smiled. “They said you would enjoy, and it healed almost immediately.”

Abaddon very much wanted to see that piercing as soon as possible. But things had to come first. It was a shame he wasn’t there to administer the needle.

“Arwyn! You ruined the surprise for him!” Robin swept in and grabbed Arwyn’s arm, tugging him away, leading everyone back to the sitting room. “Okay, so he was a doll today, absolutely a doll.”

Abaddon nodded in thanks. “I’m glad. I did more analysis of the box and it appears he’s what he says, but it seems like his father was the one who locked him up there. Left a message like he was saving him for me.”

“Oh yikes. My dad knocked Simon’s mom up, left her with a Nephilim kid, and got my mom pregnant and sold me to a demon. Sounds like your dad can go on the *fuck you* list.” Robin clapped Arwyn on the shoulder and urged Abaddon to sit before situating the male comfortably in his lap.

“There. Cozy.” Robin crossed his legs and glanced over when Rachael handed him her tablet. She’d taken pictures of the box and the messages, from what Abaddon could see.

Simon leaned over Robin’s arm, brows furrowed like he could actually do something. They complemented one another well.

“Well, you can always have me take a look. I think it’s more recent to me than you.” Arwyn leaned over to take the iPad and pursed his lips. “Yes, this is my father’s cuneiform, for sure. It doesn’t look like the stuff on the sides, so maybe he wrote it after?”

“Well, according to a manifest log, this box came over in the nineties and was put in there. One of the half-breeds told me they’d been charging people to go down and give a note to the *oracle of the box*.” Simon made big air quotes.

“I’ve been feeding them half bullshit for years.” Arwyn snorted, and Abaddon gave Robin a terse look.

“Robin. Can you not?” Abaddon gestured to Arwyn.

“I rub off on people. What can I say?” Robin cackled and Gemory grinned widely. Poorly hiding his amusement, Simon rolled his eyes.

“Uncle Robin lets me say the F-Word.” Rachael grinned.

Simon glanced over, nonplussed. “To be fair, you’re going to whip it out whether or not I let you, so it’s all posturing at this point.”

Rachael giggled and yelped when Gemory snagged her and started tugging at her hair.

“Lemme fix your braid. Abe, get me a brush please?” Gemory glanced over and Arwyn popped up.

“I’ll go get it.” Arwyn scampered off and Abaddon caught himself reaching out to draw Arwyn back in, the absence of his warmth almost painful.

“Aww, Creepy is losing the angel edge.” Robin’s saccharine voice made Abaddon glare.

“Were you not my brother’s favorite possession, I’d be putting you over my knee for that one.” Abaddon offered Robin his best sneer.

Rachael sighed heavily and stuck her fingers in her ears.

“Ooooh, spanking! Kinky!” Robin gushed. Gemory nodded in appreciation, and Simon groaned.

“When I get home, I’m going to see if Malacoda will put me over his knee.” Robin chuckled and stood, stretching out.

Checking his phone, he frowned. “We got thirty minutes before we have to nab the runts.”

“Speaking of runts, have you spoken to Vize recently? I think he needs a little time for himself. He and Malkiel were worn out this morning.” Simon shifted in his seat and stretched. Rachael pulled her fingers from her ears and squinted at Robin. The guy had no filter.

“How’s Jericho holding up?” Gemory glanced over.

“Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed! He was practically dancing about with Raphael this morning.” Gemory chuckled. “Angel babes are so much harder than demon, but they love so differently.”

“Should we really have dropped the kids off this morning like usual?” Simon frowned.

“Uncle Vize woulda been angry if the kids didn’t come over and they’re all so excited to see the baby.” Rachael patted Simon’s leg and Gemory worked on unbraiding her hair, finger combing it until Arwyn returned, handing the brush to Gemory.

Seizing his opportunity, Abaddon grabbed for Arwyn and pulled him back into his lap, arms wrapped around his waist.

“I would love to spend some time with this Vize. He sounds absolutely delightful.” Arwyn leaned over and smiled.

“In time. Once we’re better acquainted, I don’t see a problem with it,” Abaddon said.

“I think he’s safe to trust, Abe.” Robin stared at his nails.

Tracing a hand along Arwyn's chest, loving the feel of the soft fabric of the shirt, Abaddon chuckled. "Trust may be earned and I may be wary, but I truly want us to be better acquainted. Wear the new off."

"Ew." Rachael leaned into Gemory's brushing and sighed contentedly.

Arwyn's gaze drifted toward the iPad as the screen lit up from some notification, bringing the photo of his box back. In response, he stiffened and glanced away from it. It must have been a painful reminder. Abaddon reached over to turn the screen off before drawing Arwyn's attention to him once more. "You don't have to look at it if you don't want to."

"I think I should though. He said from this immortal to the same."

"From one immortal to another, yes." Abaddon continued his gentle touches, appreciating the unrestricted contact he could have with someone.

"That's the thing. My father was a summoner mage. He dealt with imps and things. I think some folklore called him the Wandering Saxon or the Viking of Persia." Arwyn frowned as Gemory leaned over, poking at Rachael's iPad, sending the photos off somewhere.

"There. Zirriel knows more about this stuff than I do, and Sadriel has a mind for tongues. She may garner—"

Robin and Simon groaned at the same time. "Oh, come on!"

"Not Mom, please." Simon sighed raggedly.

“If Aunt Sadie shows up, she’s gonna bring my mom.”
Robin crossed his arms.

Rachael took her iPad and stared down at it. “Grandma wants to know where we are.”

“Stop calling her grandma.” Simon sighed raggedly. “Just tell her we’re at Abe’s on the surface.”

Rachael typed away as Gemory finished his intricate braid before working her hair tie back in.

Chapter Eight

Arwyn

Two females arrived in a shimmer, souring the mood in the room, two of his new friends balking.

“What the *fuck* were those photos?” A light-haired angel with sharp eyes and silver in her soul appeared and power practically sparked off her skin, the silver in her eyes on fire. The human next to her, aging as a normal human would, in her fifties or so, quite obviously her lover.

“Arwyn here was found in that box, Sadriel. He’s been locked in for over two-thousand years...aware.” Abaddon tightened his arms and Sadriel studied Arwyn for a lingering moment before pulling out her phone.

“Turtan Isbarri?” She stared at it. “The warrior from Barri.” She turned her phone and flashed an image of a sun-weathered male with a wicked grin and short cropped dark hair. He had mischief in his dusty-blue eyes. *Father...*

Arwyn stiffened, nodding.

“Oh my—” Sadriel spat a blessing at the floor in trembling rage. “This is your father?” She pointed again.

Arwyn pinched his shoulders and nodded once more. His father didn’t look any older than he had back then, perhaps better shaven but still unkempt and wild.

“Well, boys! Say it with me!” Sadriel flashed her phone to Simon and Robin, who both sat bolt upright, eyes wide.

“*Fuck you, Walter!*” They said, like the *amen* at the end of a prayer.

“Turtan Isbarri... Walter Barnes. Little shit. He was an immortal?” Sadriel glared about, breath sharp.

“Or as close to it as a human can get. He is a pretty strong mage.” Arwyn, for all he knew of prediction, was missing a key piece, his powers reaching for obscured truth.

“Holy fuck...” Robin stared at the floor. “He’s our fucking brother. Simon!”

“That’s not... Is it? Surely I’d have felt something.” Arwyn rose from Abaddon’s lap and walked past Sadriel, hands extended as Simon and Robin stood in turn, taking one another’s hands by some strange instinct.

Fire passed between them, a vibration and a sound that was also magic, his mind unable to process it all.

“Zirriel. Now.” Gemory glared over at Abaddon, and Rachael was already on it.

“And Uncle Malkiel, too. He’s gonna be grumpy.” Rachael typed out rapid messages on her phone and glanced up.

Arwyn tuned out the surroundings, focused on the hum of power between the three, as something huge and complex left him. A mass of his power that made the world around him so confusing faded away.

It took to Simon first as he raised his head, the silver in them nearly white with glow. “That little rat fink son of a bitch has enough balls to summon a behemoth.”

Robin's head jerked up, blue eyes on fire, the bright light of them mesmerizing. "Firstlight Academy will fall to a behemoth. So many dead. Children..."

"The one that calls himself the king of imps plots demise." Arwyn breathed those words, lips trembling, and their hands left one another. In a flicker of a heartbeat, they embraced as three, holding one another tightly.

"Well, fuck." Zirriel's soft tones broke the silence.

Malkiel blinked hazy eyes and glanced about. "Fuuuuuck...I'm too tired for this. Someone call Elliat and Tohu. Let them have a murder spree."

"The behemoth has only just begun to regenerate now that Jericho has united with his mate. It won't be at full strength for at least a few months." Abaddon stood cautiously, wanting to reach out and take his mate's hand.

"Does it need to be at full strength to take out a school full of kids?" Gemory glared.

"First thing's first. We need to close the school." Simon paced the floor, texting away.

"I got it, Pappa." Rachael sat her iPad down and moved between her phone and that screen as her eyes flicked between the two. "We're closing at face value. I want no traffic to change, but I do want the windows covered and kids shimmered or teleported offsite for their lessons. We can't change things, or they'll know and pick another target."

"Good plan, squirt." Robin pulled out his phone and hummed. "Alright. Luce says that he's coming on board for a few days. He has business."

Abaddon jumped when Lucifer shimmered in on command, a squirming babe in his arms. Ella protested grumpily until Lucifer tilted her into Robin's arms. Looking up at him, she smiled and cooed. "Awww, who's a little stinkbug? Yes, we are. Come on. Brother Robin has a nappy with your name on it."

Watching Robin retreat, Arwyn felt a part of him that had been buzzing with power slip away. It left him weak-kneed and tired.

"Someone update me. What's this about oracles and stuff?" Lucifer raised a brow and glanced around.

Abaddon pointed to Arwyn then Simon and the direction Robin went. "We figured out who Arwyn's daddy dearest is."

Lucifer glanced around, noting Sadriel. The other woman, Delia, had wandered off, probably after Robin. They favored one another, and Arwyn had a vague notion that she was his mother.

"No." Lucifer's face fell flat.

"Yep."

"Fuck. You. Walter. Seriously?" Lucifer waltzed over to a winged chair and flopped dramatically. Malkiel, who hadn't spoken in a while, lay half flopped over an ottoman, snoozing gently. Luce pulled his foot back as if he were going to kick the footstool but stopped as if he thought better of it.

"Well, we can all be grateful he's dead." Simon reached over to pat Rachael's freshly braided hair.

"How certain are you that our father is dead?" Arwyn frowned uneasily.

“Very. Robin keeps his ashes in a poop emoji-shaped cookie jar in his guest bathroom on the back of the toilet.” Simon’s upper lip curled. Arwyn didn’t seem convinced.

“Arwyn, come here.” Lucifer gestured to the male and kept his face cold as he approached.

“Yes, sir?” Arwyn blinked down at him innocently.

“I got word earlier you’ve cleared our suspicions. I give my full consent for you to go ahead and be marked by Abaddon.”

Arwyn tilted his head. “Abaddon claimed me last night, shortly after our meeting.”

Lucifer’s brows furrowed, and he gazed over at a shrugging Abaddon. “Why? Pray tell?”

“None have ever accused me of being an unenthusiastic lover, Father. Apologies, Rachael, for your poor ears.”

Rachael glanced up, blinking from her tablet screen. “Eh. Scientia gift doesn’t leave much to the imagination when it comes to stuff like that. Trust me. S-E-X is boring at this point.”

Simon swore under his breath and sighed.

“Anyway... Where did my child wander off to?” Lucifer glanced about.

“Right here, Father.” Abaddon snorted and earned a scathing look before Robin wandered back in, Delia in tow, Ella fast asleep in his arms. Lucifer took her gingerly.

“Simon, is it okay if Rachael comes with me tonight? I want her to speak to my oracles and compare things. Also, my

mates miss her and would like a visit.” Lucifer gave Simon a lingering stare that was answered in kind by a polite nod.

“If she wants to go, I won’t stop her.”

“I’ll go. I need to get used to going back and forth so I can build a tolerance like you.” Rachael grimaced and Abaddon’s upper lip curled.

“Trust me. Some people can’t adapt. That’s why I don’t go back every night like Father. If you can’t, that’s okay.” Abaddon leaned back in his seat and crossed his arms, the pure yearning in his eyes practically begged Lucifer to return to manage Firstlight.

“I think you’ll find it easier now that you don’t have as much of a burden on your power.” Arwyn drew closer to Abaddon and slid into his lap in an almost chaste position.

“Have you ever been to the pit?” Abaddon snorted.

“No, but I will have been there. So I have been but not yet.” Arwyn blinked. “Actually, no. Robin!”

Robin perked up, glancing over.

“You are an oracle... So you are the future and Simon the present, and you are pride and avarice. I am gluttony and lust. Simon is—” Arwyn bounced a little, his warm weight stirring Abaddon’s groin.

“Wrath and envy.” Simon glanced about. “So who is sloth?”

“We’re the oracles of sloth. We’re all sloth.” Arwyn beamed.

“Are we going to be stirred up batty like the other oracles?” Robin’s eye twitched.

“We shouldn’t be. The power only works now when we’re together, I think. That’s how I was told anyway. As long as we don’t sit there holding hands for hours a day every day trying to unlock all the secrets of the universe... Fuck that, with all due respect.”

“Yeah, he’s one of us.” Simon snorted.

Abaddon wrapped his arms around Arwyn’s waist, clutching tightly until his face and hot breath burrowed into his back.

“Like father, like son. Come on. Let’s go get our children, go home, and work on this tomorrow. Luce and Rachael have it all under control for now. Nothing else to be done.” Robin stretched out and glanced around. “We all need to talk to our mates and start planning things. I’ll take Malkiel back with me.” Simon glanced over at the sleeping angel.

“Call us for the meeting tomorrow.” Zirriel nodded sharply and shimmered, Sadriel, too, shimmering with Delia.

The smoke of teleporting and the light of shimmer spread around, but Lucifer didn’t move quite yet as Rachael approached, standing up straight.

“Does it bother Ella coming up and down so much?” Abaddon glanced over.

“No. She travels like Malacoda, very well.” Lucifer stroked his fingers through her dark and wispy, fine hair. He lifted his silvery eyes up and stared at the two before the girl made a noise of frustration. “Rachael?”

She glanced over, blinking slowly, citrine light in her eyes. “Would they have a heat or a rush?”

Lucifer shrugged. “I’m uncertain. Abaddon is a truly unique thing, much like Arwyn.”

“Well, whatever you want to call it, we’ll see you two in a few days, I guess.” Rachael shrugged.

“Excuse me?” Abaddon frowned.

“Don’t shoot the messenger. I have to be the bad guy all the time.” Rachael shrugged.

Lucifer grabbed Rachael’s shoulder and stood abruptly. “Enough of that. Let’s leave them to it. I’ll be handling Firstlight until you two are settled.” With a shimmer, the two were gone.

Arwyn swung his leg over and turned to face Abaddon, leaning down until their eyes met. “I take it my new clothing pleases you?”

“Very much so.” Abaddon ran his hands up Arwyn’s waist, fingers traveling his sturdy hips and solid back. The firm muscles tensed and relaxed under his touch, and the moment their lips met, a soft glow took them both by storm.

“A heat? Rush?” Abaddon muttered between kisses.

“Does it matter? Our blood calls and we will answer.” Arwyn wrapped his legs around Abaddon’s waist as he stood and gripped his mate tightly.

“I suppose not.”

Chapter Nine

Abaddon

Abaddon knew there were things he should worry about, things he should fret over or question. Arwyn's body heat drove him insane, and the telltale flood of power that stirred in Abaddon like a storm found home in Arwyn. Every inch of their contact was a transfer point that stirred Arwyn into drunken whimpers.

Abaddon couldn't help the fire that burned in his veins any more than Arwyn could help that they'd met the way they did. Many people had dreams of fanciful meetings and romantic setups. Even Malacoda, as terrible as he was and void of emotion, had so much romanticism in him and love for his mate.

Can I love him? Abaddon questioned it, but the second he had Arwyn pinned to the mattress, his fangs dropped. Breathlessly, sharp teeth dug into Arwyn's taut neck, relishing his quickened breath and fluttering pulse.

A soft grunt of pleasure punctuated Arwyn's soft whimper, his chest curling in.

"I want to see these piercings." Abaddon's voice came out rougher than he'd anticipated, filled with the change of his greater form. The power in him saw release and rose to the surface to play with Abaddon's new toy.

He groped his hand up Arwyn's belly, rucking the fabric up his bronzed chest, the contrast of warm flesh against his

own, a delight. He was still too pale for his complexion. He needed sun. And he'd be so beautiful sprawled out in the twin suns of the pit, bathing in the dry warmth.

“Where did you get it done?” Abaddon let his eyes wander Arwyn's chest and focused on two petite barbells.

“S-Simon... I-imp friend. Sh-she was nice.” Arwyn's breath fluttered as Abaddon descended, long tongue curling and flicking at the new metal. He relished the taste, old blood and surgical steel.

“You let a woman touch your cock?” Abaddon mouthed against the piercing, trailing a finger lower. It didn't bother him. If Arwyn was his mate, he'd only want for Abaddon.

“Only because I knew you'd en-enjoy it.” Arwyn arched his back and Abaddon flicked his button then drew his zipper down. The buckles of the crossed-belt webbing fell away with Arwyn's frantic movements, letting his slender cock bounce free of delightfully silky black boxers. The sight was so gorgeous against his flesh.

Despite being healed, it must have still stung from the novel sensation alone, but that was oddly part of the thrill. Abaddon reached out to run a pointed nail over the slit of Arwyn's cock and down to toy with the new barbell, an ornament, to draw his attention. Abaddon toyed the tip of a nail against his opening, barely touching, featherlight and teasing. “I want to taste it.” Abaddon swapped to the other nipple, teasing the new barbell there. With trembling hands, he pushed the soft material of his shirt up higher and away until Arwyn helped him to remove the inconvenient fabric.

Newly distracted, Abaddon kissed his way down Arwyn's chest and belly, tongue snaking free to wrap around his leaking cock. The salty bitterness of precum made his mind hum. Horns he didn't know he'd unglamoured bore weight of shaking hands as Arwyn grabbed and pushed, urging Abaddon to take him.

"Patience." Abaddon trailed the tip of his tongue to Arwyn's opening, wriggling against it insistently, precum leaking with an ample drizzle. Every motion drew a soft whimper from Arwyn's mouth.

Abaddon drew his hand down to cup Arwyn's sac, rolling his plump balls in his palm for a lingering moment before squeezing ever so gently. Arwyn tensed in anticipation of pain that didn't come and made a soft noise of frustration. "St-stop teasing."

"Do you enjoy teasing?"

"N-no!" Arwyn groaned and jerked his hips, trying and failing to gain more contact.

Abaddon slipped his fingers down between Arwyn's cheeks and circled his twitching bud, delighting in the wetness he found there. "Are you really in heat?"

"I d-don't know. How do you tell? I felt this way yesterday for you." Arwyn whimpered as Abaddon circled the pad of his finger around Arwyn's pucker, scraping his nail ever so gently. Each scrape promised him pain that didn't follow.

"I suppose you tell by how I react to you." Abaddon nuzzled his inner thigh and drew a lingering breath, inhaling

Arwyn's scent. "But even I cannot tell if it's my desire for you or the urgency of heat or rush."

Abaddon's aching cock twitched in his pants, leaking in sympathy as his tail traveled down a leg, in want of escape. Pulling away, Abaddon hastily undid his shirt and pants.

Arwyn took a deep breath and groaned. "Smell so good."

"I'm filthy. I spent the afternoon shoveling and breaking plaster and concrete." Abaddon shoved his underwear down and winced as the elastic flicked the weeping head of his sensitive cock.

"I smell the sweat. Come. I like it." Arwyn reached a hand out to draw Abaddon in and hummed under his weight. Abaddon spread Arwyn's legs with a knee and braced over his body.

"How can you like that?" Abaddon guided his cock to Arwyn's and gently rubbed them together, creating a delicious friction that made Arwyn squirm every time the head of his cock glanced off the barbell.

"It's you, but stronger. Sharper." Arwyn grabbed for Abaddon's horns once more and drew him in for a demanding kiss. "All over you."

Pointed tongues squirmed back and forth, thrusting into their mouths. A threat and promise of the fucking to come.

Letting Arwyn have his way, Abaddon kept his mouth there, nipping at lip and tongue when he could. Sharp nails trailed Arwyn's side, scratching a trail down his waist and over to the sensitive dip of his hip where his nerves danced.

Without warning, Abaddon drew Arwyn's knee up his thigh,

claws trailing, raking lines up his legs just this side of drawing blood.

Arwyn broke their kiss with a satisfied hiss of pleasure that ended in a yelp when Abaddon drew his hand back and brought it down on his thigh, open palmed with a loud crack. Like lightning running beneath his skin, Arwyn's back arched and cock bucked, the tip flushed and needy. His balls drew up threateningly, ready to release even so soon. But Abaddon couldn't allow that to happen, not yet, at least. He reached for their cocks and squeezed them together, drawing a gush of precum from the both of them to pool in Arwyn's navel. Abaddon's thumb flicked the barbell, catching his nail on it to tug the line.

Instead of the protest Abaddon expected, only a whimper of need escaped his lips. Cock jerking, Arwyn gasped into the kiss and barked out a cry of pleasure when Abaddon brought his open palm back down sharply.

"Abaddon. Abaddon!" Arwyn tossed his head back, his newly groomed hair spreading about in a feathery fine spill.

Abaddon grabbed Arwyn's cock, squeezing it tight as he abandoned his own. A soft gasp drew forth from Arwyn's trembling lips. "Not yet." Watching him trembling on edge, nearly sobbing with want for release, was a delicious reward. "Do you want me inside?"

"Yes!" Arwyn gasped, and Abaddon rewarded him with another sharp slap to his thigh. Drawing up the other, Abaddon slapped it, too, digging his claws in.

Each percussive strike made Arwyn's back arch, body trembling in a beautiful display. Abaddon's monster demanded

to see more, driven by the delight in pain. Grappling onto Arwyn's hips, Abaddon guided his leaking cock home, pushing the blunt head against his wet hole. White lightning flashed behind Abaddon's eyes, pure pleasure as his power surged. Instinctively, he knew Arwyn could handle him. And despite being unprepared, Arwyn's body swallowed him in its tight embrace.

Sinking into Arwyn was like finding home and all the comfort that word entailed. Arwyn was the flames in the pit, the red skies above, and sin incarnate. And despite it all? Abaddon wanted to *indulge*. He wanted to claim. He wanted to be whole once more like nobody else could make him.

Arwyn offered himself up as a plaything, lean muscles and taut skin trembling as he opened up, softening around Abaddon's cock to welcome him in to his warmest, wettest depths. Throwing his weight into the motion, he curled Arwyn's hips up, knees bunching over. A strangled sound escaped his mouth, body tensing with every thrust.

“Relax, Arwyn. I'm not through with you.”

Arwyn cried out, eyes flaring open before cinching shut, cringing through a hard orgasm that sent ropes of cum across his chest. For a moment, his eyes fluttered as if he were ready to pass out, but the refractory period for their kind was notoriously short. In any case, Abaddon didn't stop, rather continued snapping his hips, flesh colliding with flesh with hard ripples and tightened cores. Arwyn's velvety channel was meant for Abaddon, molded for him.

It didn't make sense on the surface. A mate for him. He'd spent the better part of the past millennia avoiding having a

partner in his bed. Male, female, or other.

He hadn't intended to resort to celibacy. It had started simply enough, wooing mortal women and men until his power made even the strongest of them squirm and whimper. Ruling out humans as lovers hadn't affected him much, not in the beginning. He moved on to demons, fallen, and the occasional not-so-fallen angel wanting a taste of a lover far more powerful than the norm. Until even they weren't strong enough to handle the power that coursed through him at the height of ecstasy.

Arwyn had been on the receiving end of his lust a few times already the day before, and every time he opened himself to it. As if sensing his oncoming orgasm, a freight train of pleasure coursed through Abaddon's body and hellfire energy boiled in his blood. Tingles like sparks shot through his balls, rising into the center of his being until, at last, Arwyn's legs locked around his hips, holding him down.

"Don't you dare pull away." Arwyn's choked whimper drew Abaddon's mind back to the moment, away from the feral storm of his mind, and into a moment where he could appreciate the intimacy.

Abaddon had heard it described as liquid fire, as lightning, and like venom. But the look of joy on Arwyn's face said it was anything but. Beautiful silvery eyes rolled back, face screwed up in absolute bliss as the glow took over his flesh. As if triggered, Abaddon's own glow took over, racing across his flesh to set his skin alight. And in that precious glow, Abaddon couldn't mistake Arwyn's lust for madness or lies. To him, Abaddon's fire was pleasure. The magic that

spilled from him when he lost composure swarmed into the male and made him clench tighter and tighter until Abaddon's knot locked into place and the stream of cum flowed.

Pure bliss flowed over Arwyn's face as his legs loosened and lips fell open in a silent whimper. Cum, fresh and new, surged upward and decorated his chest and neck, ebbing until Abaddon groaned and nuzzled down, licking errant drops of seed from his flesh. Salty sweat and the sweet bitterness of a bearer's cum invaded his senses.

Abaddon dreaded finding out his status one day, dreaded having males in his bed that had the potential to unlock a hidden nature within himself. "Tell me your thoughts." Abaddon nuzzled and rubbed his way around Arwyn's jawline, relishing the ebbing glow, fingering his twitching cock to toy with the silver barbell.

"That I've waited so long for this. That your glow is beautiful, unlike any I've seen before. There's true *fire* in it. It makes me long to see the pit." Arwyn coaxed Abaddon down for a tender kiss that finished with a sharp nip to his lower lip, startling Abaddon. He pulled free of Arwyn's body and relished the dribbling, slick sensation pooling. Bringing his hand in, Abaddon stroked his fingers over his slick entrance. A territorial shiver ran through him, demanding he keep his cum inside Arwyn, to keep his mark there. His scent. His claim.

"I have no silver for you." Abaddon said it before he thought, his body trembling. He couldn't help but wonder how Arwyn broke him down so easily.

"Robin said you paid for our excursion today. If so, the silver has already been given." Arwyn flicked his nipples,

making his softening buds go hard once more. His glow flared for a blink.

“Does it truly not matter to you that I was not prepared for you?” Abaddon lowered his head to Arwyn’s chest, cock softening as it hung between his legs, full and dripping.

“Do you know what I appreciate more than anything? More than stars and warm fires? More than hot flesh pressed against my own while I sleep?”

Abaddon shook his head, his throat catching as his eyes stung. *Crying again! Why?*

“Surprises. In my life, since I came into my gift, I’ve not known a surprise. And then yesterday, I saw the flush in your cheeks, blood! Warm blood rising. Shame. Do you not know how rare that is for someone with this much angel blood to blush?” Arwyn traced his thumb along Abaddon’s jawline, catching a stray tear on his finger, letting it gleam in the light.

“Jericho, Malkiel, Vize. I’ve seen them red-faced frequently.” Abaddon huffed.

“But your blush was for me. Mine. All for me, and it was beautiful. Maybe a little something else...” Arwyn caught a mischievous glimmer in his eye and bit his lower lip.

“Dare I ask?” Abaddon raised a brow, waiting for Arwyn to answer. When no answer came, Abaddon sighed. “What else?”

He leaned up, hot breath and sharp nose trailing Abaddon’s neck then jawline, tongue darting out to flick a salty tear away. “Maybe just a little *creepy*.”

Abaddon froze, body trembling for a moment before he jerked away. “No!”

The exquisite laughter that tittered from Arwyn’s lips made Abaddon’s heart flutter. He flowed between wanting to make the male sleep on the couch and wanting to kiss him silly. Abaddon found a happy medium when he placed a single finger over Arwyn’s lips to silence him. As those silvery eyes stared up, his pupils dilated, catching something in Abaddon’s face that made his world stop. Arwyn opened his mouth and engulfed Abaddon’s finger, trailing his tongue and suckling. “My wildfire.”

At those two words, Abaddon was hard again. His mind raced as it decided how he wanted to tear the male apart again, to fill him, suck him, tug his piercings, and... Arwyn’s tail trailed Abaddon’s hip. Abaddon grabbed for it, jerking it taut and squeezing. Arwyn whimpered in pure pleasure. Abaddon groaned with want. “I want to fuck you senseless, but I need to see your face.”

“Why does my face matter?”

Abaddon raised his other hand to cup Abaddon’s cheek then neck, and drew him up. Straddling Abaddon’s lap, Arwyn settled and hissed at Abaddon’s tug.

“Because the way you look when you take my fire is the most stunning thing I’ve ever witnessed. You draw my fire into your skin... I don’t think it really hurts you, does it?”

Arwyn chuckled. “It does, but I feel pain differently. Sure, cut me and I may not like that, but some hellfire and rough sex, spanking and clawing my back... And what you’re doing to my tail...” Arwyn’s hips jerked and his eyes unfocused. His

cock sprung to the ready once more, and Abaddon found his hand toying with it with languid strokes. “And for the pit’s sake. Pull my feathers and hair.”

“Is that what it is? Truly?” Abaddon’s eyes stung, tears still streaming, and he wasn’t sure if he was truly crying or going through the motions.

“Truly.” Arwyn licked along Abaddon’s face, as if relishing the tears.

“Are these the ones of happiness I will give you?” Abaddon caught himself giving a dry chuckle.

“Not yet, my wildfire. These are for me. They’re a sign.” Arwyn traced long fingers over Abaddon’s temple and through his dark hair.

“A sign of what?” Tears still dripped steadily down his face and neck, trailing his chest. It was the first time he felt warm enough since coming to the surface.

“That you aren’t holding back. That you’re letting go for me as you should. Your own hellfire burns you, and you hold it back so well. But no more. Give it to me. My soul is like water, I’ve been told. I’ll put this fire to rest.” He pressed another gentle kiss to Abaddon’s cheek, and it did nothing to ebb the tears.

“Shh. Too much too soon. This only serves to draw you into me sooner and deeper. It’s bait to make you love me far sooner than you would.” Arwyn shuddered under a soft pleading kiss.

“I don’t know if I want to fight it. I like this. I adore this. My heart, it—” Abaddon placed a hand on his chest, his skin

sticky with sweat and cum. His heart fluttered, and the absence of pain did wonderful things to him. “You’re amazing. You truly are a prize at the bottom of a box. Crackerjack.”

“I like that name a little less. Though, I am sweet, sticky, and full of nut.” Arwyn offered him a half grin.

Abaddon threw his head back and laughed, his chest bucking with mirth, each hacking breath unloading something more. “Truly, my prize. But I wouldn’t mind a snack.”

“Oooh. A snack does sound good. Do we have any more of that green stuff... Tabouleh?” Arwyn wriggled his hips in Abaddon’s lap.

“I suspect so. Robin does order extras. And he’s a Felix, so—” Abaddon shrugged.

“He’ll know just what I want.” Arwyn hummed, eyes closed, tongue trailing his lips as if living through the memory of food. “And he took me to this place that had something they called bubble tea... It had neither bubbles nor tea... It had chewy balls and so much ice. I enjoyed that.”

“Say the word and we’ll go get bubble tea. Want to take a break? Firstlight’s café has bubble tea on the menu.” Demons hardly ever ordered the stuff, but the Fallen loved it. Abaddon indulged on the rare occasion. “But I had something different on my mind for a snack.”

“Oh?”

“Ass.” Abaddon pushed Arwyn back onto the bed and flipped him with a playful tousle. Arwyn laughed, clawing at the sheets until Abaddon kissed down his back, to where his tail met the base of his spine, nibbling the spot to see where he

found his pleasure. Tongue wandering, Abaddon nosed his way over Arwyn's bronzed globes and tasted the combined fluids of their pleasure. Cum, slick, and sweat. How Abaddon missed sweating. The heat between them was incredible. And Abaddon's dinner?

Sublime.

Chapter Ten

Arwyn

As Abaddon had suggested and Arwyn predicted, Robin indeed had tabouleh and even some falafel left! Enough for them both to share.

Eating cold food was a new novelty, one he wanted to explore to its fullest. Cold storage hadn't existed back in the day, and the flavors changed dramatically between hot and cold. He preferred hot food, but eating in the dark kitchen in their underwear, giggling and feeding one another with their fingers, like was common so long ago, couldn't be beaten. Abaddon licked the sour juice of it off Arwyn's fingers, tongue curling.

"Tastes so much better with your skin." Abaddon hummed with pleasure and took Arwyn's fingers, continuing his licks into kisses that found their way to his mouth. The temptation for food and lust was too much, and sensing this, Abaddon grabbed the plastic tub of hummus and narrowed his eyes, pulling away.

"What are you doing?" Arwyn flicked his gaze from the hummus to his face.

Abaddon swiped a finger full and smeared it down his chest, his gray eyes whitening once more. The amalgam of blood in him that brought out the creature he was. Its nature boiled hot at the surface in his lust. "They say hummus tastes good on everything. Gluttony and lust?" He quirked a sharp brow, and that fire danced in his eyes, a flicker in the white.

“I’d imagine anything tastes good on you, too.” Heat flooded Arwyn’s face, his chest and groin. That summer warmth like the sun beating down on him.

“Win-win.” That rakish grin drew Arwyn to lean in. He licked his lips. The salt of sweat and their flavors of sex still lingered in the most basic of ways. The scent of sesame and lemon juice, warm olive oil, a raw flavor, he still recalled. It’d changed much in so many years, mashed chickpeas and pickled citron, lain in earthen jars and salt. This new concoction had evolved and devolved in ways, as the spices had been taken out, but Arwyn didn’t mind. It made it easier to taste Abaddon beneath the first lick. The second lick drew the remainder away, and lower when Abaddon swiped again, drawing Arwyn to his knees, hands resting on Abaddon’s firm thighs. Arwyn nipped and licked Abaddon’s navel then hip, slowly pushing his underwear away.

Abaddon wasted no time in smearing a generous stripe down the length of his cock. Equally incensed, Arwyn darted forward and dragged his tongue down the length of Abaddon’s cock. That familiar sour and savory flavor made drool pool under his tongue. Dipping his tongue, he wet his lips. He suckled the flow back, swallowing to take in the flavor. The motion drew a bead of precum forth, a secondary reward for his culinary daring.

“Pull back.” Abaddon ran a finger under Arwyn’s jaw and coaxed him off before giving another swipe of hummus, this time over his spit-slick cock and then another over his balls.

Arwyn tilted forward and slicked Abaddon’s cock. Drool pooled over his lips and trailed his chin and for cock, seed, or

the hummus... Arwyn knew which. He couldn't pretend he didn't. Abaddon tensed, his cock bucking, twitching in his mouth. Sucking his way off, Arwyn slurped and let his lips pop. He wasted no time in going after Abaddon's cool orbs, nuzzling and licking at them with tender flicks of his tongue. An ashen hand darted out, fingers twisting in Arwyn's hair, tugging until he hissed, a delighted pulse of drool hitting his throat. He swallowed hard, but there was nothing that could be done about the wetness pooling at his backside. Abaddon tossed the container back onto the counter, nearing empty. Arwyn chased the container with his eyes, but it didn't bother him, the waste. Cock and pleasure were more important. Abaddon was more important.

His mate leaned against a kitchen counter, clawed hand full of hair. He wanted nothing more than to relish his soft snarls and breathless noises, and he lost himself in the tight grip and jerking pace, letting his jaw slacken. Joy. Bliss. Pleasure. He needed nothing more. Over a thousand years in a box had deprived him of so much, so much lost time. Cum pulsed over Arwyn's tongue, ears failing to recognize the shout of Abaddon's release. If he'd warned Arwyn, he couldn't remember.

A sharp tug ended the haze of lust. Arwyn's eyes watered up at Abaddon's stormy face with adoration. Abaddon's fingers tightened in Arwyn's hair. Increased pressure pulled Arwyn, and he moved until cold marble pressed into his chest, his body folded over, cock biting into the molding of a cabinet. Stray hands propped his hips, digging in as the pointed tip of Abaddon's tail curled upward and toyed with Arwyn's opening.

“Wings. Want.” Abaddon’s rough breath shuddered free and Arwyn couldn’t make his body respond. Lost in pleasure. A sharp slap collided with his flank and brought bright clarity into Arwyn’s mind. “Wings!”

Obediently, Arwyn shifted his form, dropping his glamour as his soft wings shot free, a few errant feathers raining about. The tail working at Arwyn’s hole drew itself deeper with every gentle nudge, sliding in an inch or so, tugging at his ring, plying him open. Clawed fingers razed his hackles, sharp nails trailing down before the soft feathers bunched in Abaddon’s fists.

Arwyn swore breathily, unable to make more than fractioned words in his old tongue, thanking gods that no human remembered the name of.

“No! Do not thank them. Thank me! I only want to hear my name on your lips.” Abaddon jerked handfuls of feathers, sending Arwyn into a violent shudder. He cringed as Abaddon leaned forward and bit his shoulder, replacing his tail with something thicker and blunted. His cock slid home, slamming into Arwyn.

“Abaddon. Abaddon!” Arwyn whimpered, clenching tight around his cock. Abaddon picked up the pace quickly, thrusting with careless abandon.

“Good. My name. You are mine and I won’t have you calling out to any other.” Abaddon jerked his fist, sending sharp pain like a lightning bolt through Arwyn’s body. His hips slapped, the crack of damp flesh to flesh matching his harsh and trembling breath. A thick snarl punctuated

Abaddon's thrill as that fire that Arwyn adored seared through every point of connection they shared.

As if nothing else mattered, the world whited out and Arwyn was distantly aware of his release, a twinge and pulse that bucked and rocked his groin, balls ascended, high and tight. "Own me like no other—" Arwyn choked, chest shuddering. "Your every touch takes away years of my solitude."

"Yes," Abaddon growled, his shadow dancing over the counter, his horns stretched along the wall, towering to the ceiling. No memory of any past lover compared. Nothing could match. The heated, deep breath that Arwyn released took with it so much genuine pain, so much misery. "Let it go. Let it all goooo." The way Abaddon growled that last word left a rumble in his chest that trembled through Arwyn's blood.

Arwyn obeyed, letting all of it lift from him. Abaddon gave Arwyn his hellfire, all that he couldn't handle, all that burdened him. In return, Arwyn abandoned his past, perhaps memories too painful, hate, and anger. Abaddon could consume them, burn them, feed from them.

Along with Arwyn's suffering, Abaddon took something else, too, a piece of the very fabric from which he was woven. Like a stray thread, a flaw, or even a smudge on glass, Abaddon took it away. He replaced it with something deeper, hips snapping, knot filling. "All mine now. All mine." Abaddon jerked his hips at a slowing pace, releasing Arwyn's wings in favor of stroking his tail. Sharp nails scraped along the sensitive skin there, from base to tip, toying with the sensitive flesh beneath his tail feathers.

Arwyn trembled as the adrenaline wore down, muscles protesting and shaking. Abaddon's touch went from feral to pleasant. Tender strokes trailed down Arwyn's sides, soft lips at his back.

"Please, look at me," Arwyn whimpered as Abaddon loosened his cock. The telltale deluge of seed that heralded a demon's release never followed. Perhaps Abaddon wasn't enough of a demon. Or a demon at all? It didn't matter. Abaddon was an eternal, born of two immortals. An angel made and a human figment of mass imagination. Was there a Lilith even? Or did Lilith only exist because humans said she did? It didn't matter. All that mattered was Abaddon, who pulled free and turned him gingerly to kiss his lips with an apologetic stare.

"Why do I have to shift? Why do you drop every layer of control I have?" Abaddon stared down and traced his fingers through Arwyn's hair. The tenderness made Arwyn melt. Sure, the absence of pain right after the height of it was amazing, but so was this apologetic care.

"Because you need to." Arwyn tugged on a tall horn to draw him in for soft kisses that lingered. All apologies accepted, unneeded.

"I don't need to. I've held it back fine all these years."

"Need doesn't mean you'll die without. Need means you desire something that will change the quality of your life for the better. Just because you can survive without it doesn't mean you should have to." Arwyn stared at Abaddon's features, so demonic and strange. He lacked certain features of

demons, despite his face morphing into a craggy snarl, not the humanesque and tempting features, horns jagged and goatlike.

“But it shouldn’t be your burden. Not anyone’s burden.” Abaddon traced clawed fingertips over Arwyn’s cheek and neck, down his bronzed chest, pointed tips circling his pert nipple.

“If, for some reason, you feel the need to make up for it, by all means, keep looking at me like that.” Arwyn treasured that lost expression of wonder caught in the white of his eyes.

“I’m looking at you like I don’t deserve you.”

“Oh, you have an eternity to grow irritated with me. Trust me, I’m getting the better deal here.” The tug of a grin that stretched Arwyn’s cheeks mirrored in the most basic of ways over Abaddon’s softening features.

“How irritated could I get with you? You are so... I don’t know you well enough to know. I see passion, love, and mischief in your eyes.”

“Hmm. Do you not grow weary of Robin? We *are* from the same stock, you know.”

A chuckle shook Abaddon’s chest. “It’s for the best. I feel like Robin’s mischief keeps Malacoda on his toes. Perhaps I’ve grown too stagnant or complacent. Maybe I need to rediscover the world again, with you at my side.”

“Perhaps. I’d love to see all the parts of this new world. But I think that there are other things in store for us as time comes to a head. We need to learn to love one another in the short time...” Arwyn smiled, leaning up to nuzzle Abaddon’s nose.

With a swift gesture, Abaddon scooped Arwyn off his feet and stared at him with uncertainty. “You’re saying you intend to give me a child?”

“I do. I feel it in my gift that we’re resonating. And part of me shares blood with a Felix, so if it’s what you desire...” Arwyn stared at Abaddon as his softening features went pale and mortal once more. A storm settled in his gaze.

“Tell me your thoughts.” Arwyn hummed with delight as Abaddon carried him back to his bedroom.

“It’s as if part of me has known you for far too long. Another part of me doesn’t know you at all and those parts war with one another. Though, perhaps it is a good thing if we unite and find ourselves with a child as quickly as possible. I don’t know if you could sense anything already. Can you?” Doubt crossed Abaddon’s face.

“Not at all. We’ll see in time, but I am sure that you’ll give me something that he never could. You’ll give me a child, and you’ll love him, or perhaps her, as much as you’re capable of loving anything.”

Abaddon’s schooled features wilted. “I’m not capable of loving enough to love a child.”

“Nonsense. You don’t know how to show how much you can love. But it’s okay. I’ll be there. And you know the love will come in time, right?” Arwyn gasped and chuckled when Abaddon dropped him into the soft embrace of his bed.

“Show me how to love you. I see that adoration in your eyes. You don’t see how hideous I am. You don’t see my pain or my fear. You draw yourself into me fully every time you

look.” Abaddon brushed his lips over Arwyn’s before crawling beneath the covers and wrapping them in the many layers together.

“Like this. There doesn’t need to be grand gestures. How did Robin say it?” Arwyn twisted his lips and thought about it. “Yes! ‘You need only dick me down to my little black heart’s content and worry about the kissy stuff in the afterglow. Everything else is french fries.’”

“French fries?” Abaddon pulled back, brow furrowing in confusion.

“Side dish. And it’s not like you lose anything significant if they’re gone, but they sure make the meal a little better. And see? Here in bed with me like this, you’re vulnerable, and maybe that’s what love is for you.” Arwyn pulled Abaddon back in and drew his wings and tail back inside, finding it far more comfortable to sleep with bare skin to skin, a slight haze of sweat between them making their contact that much better.

“Maybe you shouldn’t spend so much time with Robin...” Abaddon laughed, a true sound that shook his chest with amusement.

“Trust me. Mischief runs in the family. I know Robin is a handful. I can sense it on Simon and our father was...” Arwyn gestured his hand.

“I believe Sadriel referred to him as a goat.”

“Very apt. Would drink himself stupid and piss himself far too often.” Arwyn nodded and chuckled when Abaddon drew him in, tangling their legs together. Breaths evened and sleep came easily.

Arwyn pried his eyes open that morning, well-rested and sore in the most delightful of ways. Abaddon's face snuggled into the back of his neck, hot breath tickling up through his hair.

"Morning." Arwyn squirmed and relished all the points of naked contact between them.

A chirping and buzzing sound interrupted Arwyn's lascivious intentions and drew Abaddon's arm to the nightstand, fingers wrapping deftly around his phone. "Shit."

Abaddon sighed heavily and answered the phone before rolling over. "Yes, Father?" Abaddon paused for a moment and muttered under his breath.

"We'll be downstairs in a moment. Need a quick shower. Thank you for letting me sleep in until—" Abaddon checked his phone and sighed. "Six in the damn morning."

Arwyn caught the tail end of a haughty "You're welcome," before the call ended with a beep.

Arwyn and Abaddon slid from bed and washed, readying themselves for the day as fast as possible, few words passing between them.

As they finished dressing, Abaddon's heated gaze lingered over the new pair of cargo pants and the tank top he wore with it. Arwyn had to agree that Robin and Gemory knew what they were doing. Simon had scoffed and called their clothing demon lingerie and practically sex bait. Though, it hadn't

stopped him from politely slipping off to buy a fishnet shirt and a spiky collar when he thought nobody was paying attention.

“Hey. Don’t let my father intimidate you. He’s...he’s a product of his times and his reputation is for something he used to be.” Abaddon leaned in and placed a lingering kiss to Arwyn’s temple, reassuring him that he was wanted.

“I think I had him pegged from the moment we met. He has far too much love in him to be the angel people fear. Also, I heard stories of him from his creator. Like me, he is scared, but he doesn’t have the power of foresight like I do. I think that must be why he has so many mates, and his oracles.”

Abaddon’s face brightened with a soft smile before he drew Arwyn with him and they jogged downstairs to find Lucifer in the den. He held Ella in his arms, tucked into the unbuttoned V of his shirt.

“Morning. Sorry for the delay, Father.” Abaddon bowed his head, and Lucifer shrugged.

“Good to see you two.” Lucifer glanced about and Rachael tottered in, her little prim skirt suit with pink trim neatly in place. In her hands was a drink carrier from *The Immortal Bean* in Firstlight industry’s ground floor.

“An iced mocha for Abaddon, and I got Arwyn a vanilla and caramel blended chai. And an iced green tea for you, Mister Lucy.” Her wonderful little smile made Arwyn’s heart ache. She was every bit as lovely personality-wise as his thoughts had told him so long ago.

“You are a treasure.” Lucifer waited for Rachael to bring the drink, his hand barely extended, making her walk the extra step, not wanting to interrupt Ella’s meal.

“I try my hardest to be.” Rachael smiled and glanced around, her eyes glinting with her abilities, the power telling her a thousand different practical things, leading her toward the best outcomes of all solutions, a true agent of sloth, *efficiency*.

Abaddon nodded thanks and took their drinks, handing Arwyn his icy snow with bitter coffee and far too much sugar and cow’s milk. He sniffed at it and sipped, finding it overpowering but pleasing on some level. He would rather have had boba, but the experience of it far outweighed the desire he had for the chewy, ball-laden drink.

“So, what brings you, Father?” Abaddon took a seat and gestured for Arwyn to sit as well.

“Rachael and I are going to speak to my oracles. After, we’re going to start a war plan. How is the heat going?” He narrowed his gaze, nose twitching.

“Rush. Bearable.” Abaddon shrugged, and the corner of Lucifer’s mouth ticked up in a wicked half grin.

“And you as well, Arwyn?”

“Yes. Your son had quite the healthy glow to him last night, as did I.” Arwyn beamed.

“I’ve asked house staff to sanitize the kitchen this morning.” Rachael sat beside Lucifer and took a sip of her drink. “I don’t want to know what you two did in there, but I found underpants on the floor.”

“So that’s why you teleported out for coffee. Disgusting.” Lucifer glanced over and flicked a brow in Arwyn’s direction. Most of his face portrayed his judgment of the whole situation, but that one little quirk was welcome approval.

“We’ll have to schedule around this, I suppose.” Lucifer winced and pulled Ella from his shirt and matched glares with her. Her face screwed up as if she were about to cry from spite alone. “I’m not so certain Ella here isn’t our mysterious behemoth. Bite me harder, and you’ll have a taste for angel flesh, darling.”

The cry never came, but the tense expression remained and Arwyn chuckled.

“Well, that’s one way to protest.” Lucifer sighed and Rachael offered to change her, but Lucifer waved her off. “Come, Arwyn, let’s leave Rachael and Abaddon to their talks.”

Abaddon gave Arwyn a soft glance that held an edge of hidden worry in it that he soothed with a gentle touch to his shoulder as he followed Lucifer to the nursery.

Wordlessly, Lucifer placed Ella on a changing table, battening her down before gathering odds and ends. She’d managed to not cry so far, and Arwyn was impressed.

“You alright?” Lucifer didn’t take his gaze away. “I know Abaddon can be a little...difficult. He comes by it honestly.”

“Oh, he is lovely. I assure you. He’ll learn in time to let go with me. It requires some coaxing, but he’s better for it. If you’ve not noticed.” Arwyn glanced around the room as Lucifer gathered things.

Diapering a little one had changed a lot since Arwyn was about in the real world. There were no more wool swaddlings or attentive parents that took their children outside. In present time, they had pants that were meant to catch and absorb. Sensing what he was supposed to do, Arwyn glanced in a few cabinets before Lucifer gestured at one.

Arwyn reached in and handed over one of the neatly folded amalgams of plastic and fiber that had taken over this world.

Lucifer nodded in thanks and made efficient work of his daughter's mess. "Amena—" Lucifer paused, Ella half hanging from her onesie, legs kicking idly in the air as she enjoyed a bit of fresh air. "Our creator. He hurt me. Badly. I'll never be rid of those memories."

"And that's where I differed from you. I was made to embrace that. But he was beyond...boring." Arwyn couldn't find the right word to describe it, but *boring* was the best he could define it as.

"Touching him was pain. Every time, but I was made to love him unconditionally. Do you know how far you have to take things for your mate to cease to love you?" Lucifer glared over his shoulder at Arwyn, silver eyes aflame, eerily similar to his own.

"I am aware. As I said. I was made different."

"You keep saying that, but it's hard to believe that you can take that bitterness and pain so easily." Lucifer turned his attention back to Ella and snapped her onesie back into place. She protested with a grunt and flailed her tightly fisted hands.

“Is it really pain that Abaddon gives to those closest to him, or is it fire that is mismatched to frequencies? To me, it’s ecstasy.” Arwyn folded his hands in front of him, fidgeting.

“I see. It makes more sense. I am pleased to know that he isn’t harming you. If that changes, please tell me. I love Abaddon. He is my son, but I will not allow him to become Ame—*him*.” Lucifer handed Ella to Arwyn who blinked in surprise and held her with utmost care as Lucifer went to wash his hands in the adjacent bathroom.

“I don’t see that as a possibility in the future. I think it’s more likely that he will calm down with time. With someplace for all that power to go, it’ll even out. I had a piece of him that was missing, and he gives to me that which does not belong in his soul.” Arwyn frowned, brow creasing as it pulled tight.

“You’ll get a wrinkle. Stop.” Lucifer reached over and ran the pad of his thumb over Arwyn’s brow and stared him down. It wasn’t the kind gesture it appeared to be but an excuse to feel his power. Sensing this, Arwyn held nothing back and Lucifer hesitated. “Tell me what it is that vexes you?”

“I can’t define what it is that he took from me. I know he took something... And I lost part of my abilities, which is a blessing in and of itself. It was too convoluted to use appropriately. I think the only reason I didn’t go mad is that my ability had me reeling from the beginning.”

Lucifer gently took Ella from his arms and offered him a half smile. “I suppose it’s the same thing that Lilith took from me. Regret. There should be bitterness in you, but I don’t sense it.”

“Maybe that is it? Maybe not. In any case, I feel more whole now than I have in a while.” Arwyn beamed and Lucifer nodded.

“Thank you for reassuring me, Arwyn. It was lovely seeing you, and I hope we’ll be good friends in time. Do spend some time with Vize and Jericho before Abaddon and Robin rub off on you too much. I cannot have another agent of youth and chaos running about,” Lucifer sniffed.

“I’m as old as Abaddon. Youth is not—”

“How old were you when you were locked away?”

“Twenty-two.” Arwyn blinked up, and Lucifer stared him down for a lingering moment.

“You’re twenty-two with almost two thousand years of madness stuffed in here.” Lucifer poked Arwyn’s head and led him from the room with what he could only assume was approval. It meant very little and so much at the same time that Lucifer approved of him.

As if missing him dearly, Abaddon met Arwyn in the sitting room, unease flashing in the depths of his expressionless eyes. His hand sought out Arwyn’s like a lifeline, clutching for reassurance.

“Rachael, dear, we’re heading out. Expect a meeting this afternoon. We have until sunset before you two will be out again. No?” Lucifer stared them down and Abaddon nodded gently.

“Unless something changes.” Abaddon squeezed Arwyn’s hands and something in the warm, slow gesture of his thumb circling his palm made the gesture arousing.

In that moment, Lucifer shimmered with Rachael in tow, her expression serious and posture straight, the glimmer of her gift in her eyes.

“I trust them. Don’t you?” Abaddon glanced at Arwyn.

“Yeah. I think they’ll bring me more news I need.” Arwyn pulled Abaddon closer by his hand and locked eyes with the male. “What’s on the agenda for today, Creepy?”

Abaddon shoved him with a snort of amused disapproval and stalked off. “Work.”

It didn’t outline much, but Arwyn would follow him till the ends of the earth if given half a chance.

Chapter Eleven

Rachael

Rachael had grown accustomed to the pit over the years, with its strangely pink-infused skies and reddened earth. Grasses thrived on red light from the twin suns and everything was so very warm. It was rather like an extension of earth, if someone slid the saturation way up.

Violent colors assaulted her eyes and the enveloping, dry heat took a moment for her to adjust to. Certainly, she could adapt far quicker than most, but even she struggled a moment. Lucifer, thankfully, was quite understanding and praised her with a smile and nod every time she shook it off and went about her business without issue.

“I don’t believe you’ve formally met my oracles before.” Lucifer waited for Rachael to gather her breath and stand to her full height. Warm stone pavers heated her feet from beneath, and Lucifer strode off toward the most violently shaped home architecture she’d ever seen. All sharp angles and a degree of efficiency that could only have been achieved so many hundreds of years ago, likely more. The squareness of it assaulted her senses not in offense but by the sheer difference of it as compared to her homeland. Earth, the mortal plane, whatever anyone wanted to call it. Purgatory? The imps had theories, not that Rachael believed them anymore. She traced her fingers over her throat at the horns that clung there beneath the crisp collar of her shirt. Wearing it out didn’t feel right anymore.

Her fingers migrated to two new horn tips automatically. *Isaac*. She tossed the memory of what she'd done away. She was thankful she'd sent him back to the pit, never to be seen again.

“Penny for your thoughts, my secretary?” Lucifer beckoned her to follow close, and she took a deep breath, knowing better than to lie to Lucifer.

“Revenge doesn't taste as good as I thought it would. It's not as sweet as I wanted it to be.” Rachael glanced up and Lucifer's glimmering eyes saddened, composure lost. He jerked his head to make her follow and stepped into his home. A rather attractive young woman met them at the door and took Ella, giving Lucifer a soft kiss to the temple before sweeping off with a smile. Ella's eyes danced with delight.

Before Rachael realized it, Lucifer sank to one knee in a crouch and rested a hand on her shoulder. Rachael's bottom lip quivered, eyes stinging.

“Can a secretary take a hug, just this once?” Lucifer opened his free arm to invite Rachael in and she accepted readily, letting his warmth encompass her.

“Just this once.”

“Revenge can be like a drug. It's addictive at first, consuming, and when you run out... You take your last threat down, you find out the high is gone.” Lucifer patted her upper back and didn't move even when she trembled, tears stinging her eyes.

“Luce, dea—” Lilith swept in, her tone pleasant. She halted at the scene before her and caught Rachael's eye with a

soft smile. “Luce, get off her. C’mere.”

Taking her hand, Lilith pulled her away and gave Lucifer a kiss, sweeping to her vanity room, walking in the wake of her swishing, light floor-length skirt, lace trailing the ground. Rachael could only stumble to keep up.

“On the stool, dear.” Lilith petered about, gathering things from around the room and pulled up another stool as Rachael sat. Sitting before her, hands laden with bottle and jars, Lilith leaned forward and stared. “Crying. Tsk.” She sucked her teeth and huffed.

“I’m okay. I promise.” Rachael wiped her eyes on the back of her sleeve and found a tissue placed in her hands.

“I know. And hopping worlds can do that sometimes.” Lilith sighed and brought a damp cloth to dab at her eyes and cheeks. “Do Simon and Elliat allow you to wear makeup?”

“Pappa said I can do what I want within reason. My role model is literally Satan, so giving me rules is kinda pointless.” Rachael stifled a laugh.

“I bet it’s just because you’re a very good girl to begin with. You’re always so kind to us all.” Lilith patted down her hair. “Now, what did Luce do to make you cry? Do I need to make him sleep on the couch? I suppose he can warm Cerberus’s doghouse and snooze in the straw if he’s making our secretary cry.”

“He didn’t do anything. Mr. Lucy was being nice. It’s just hard to be composed when you’ve lost so much family and then find everyone else wants to be there for you. And I got revenge finally on the next to the last person I want to go after

and it..." Rachael sighed. "Doesn't feel that great. I sent him all the way down."

"Hmm. Well, in time, you'll make the choice that's right for you. I can understand. You know, Luce and I were broken things so long ago and we found one another. He and I were set on destruction and rage. We felt the whole world had failed us and humans made us into...this." She gestured at herself then around.

"Yeah. I know. I have to keep telling myself that it'll be okay. But I miss my momma." She rubbed at her eyes. "And no matter how many people are killed, she's not coming back."

"Maybe not, but there's Cora. She's got a lot to live up to, a memory that she'll come to learn in time. I assume it's a great honor for an imp to have an eternal named after them." Lilith resumed daubing at Rachael's face before pulling out some sort of glass bottle full of a viscous clear liquid that she smeared on her hands and gently patted on Rachael's face.

"I know. It just feels like my choice was taken away about what I got to do with my life." Rachael sniffled.

"Do you not want to be the secretary anymore?" Lilith sat back and stiffened her posture.

"Of course, I still want to be the secretary! Xander needs me." Rachael found new fire in her.

"Then what choice?" Lilith tilted her head, eyes narrowing.

"I don't want to be angry and riddled with this... this *yuck!* Revenge doesn't fix it! And everyone is trying to be

there for me and I want them to help me. I want to be fixed.” Rachael sighed.

“Ahh. You feel like you were forced to feel things. Can I offer a piece of advice I wish I’d known a thousand years ago?” Lilith leaned in and patted Rachael’s cheeks a little more, spreading the clear rose-scented gel that cooled her heated cheeks.

“What?” Rachael blinked the ebbing tears away and Lilith kissed her forehead.

“Sometimes it’s not revenge you need but forgiveness. Doesn’t have to be right away, and not everyone deserves it, certainly. Absolution waits for nobody.” Lilith beamed and clattered about with a compact and a rather absurdly large pouf that she attacked Rachael’s face with.

A soft knock interrupted the moment and another slim figure swept in. *Desiderata*. “Hi, Auntie D.” Rachael offered a soft smile and a slender hand rested atop her head.

“Ooh, are we doing makeovers?” *Desiderata* didn’t bother drawing up a chair, only a floor cushion and sidled up, sitting, legs folded beneath her.

“Not tonight, I’m afraid. Rachael is... She’s learning to direct her anger and is quite a bit better at it than Luce.” Snorting, Lilith glanced over and exchanged a soft smile with *Desiderata*.

“Of course she is. So put together, our secretary.” *Desiderata* smiled. “I bet you’re going to be a handful when you’re older. I know fantastic ways to relieve stress. Do you like boys or girls yet?”

“Des! Stop it.” Lilith huffed and added a little bit of pink balm to her fingertips to tap over Rachael’s cheeks and lips. “I know I’m not your mother, dear, but you always have my ear. I’d offer you Desi’s but half your brain might melt if she spoke too long.”

Desiderata stuck her tongue out, making Rachael shake with a repressed giggle.

“Look, Rachael. We don’t have many daughters. We don’t mind stepping in, and I think your mother would be very proud of you. And she’d want you to have help. You think?” Lilith rested a hand on Rachael’s shoulder and squeezed gently.

Rachael sighed heavily and let her gaze wander off. The last images of Isaac flashed in her mind, his broken body... The tears rose again, and Rachael tensed. “I couldn’t do it!”

“Couldn’t do what, dear?” Desiderata reached up and rested a hand on Rachael’s knee, genuine concern on her sharp features.

“I couldn’t kill him! I—Pappa put him right there in front of me. I had every opportunity, and he just... I couldn’t! I—I never told anyone I did. I said I sent him to the pit and I—” Rachael sniffed and pinched her shoulders.

“Sent him to the valley of the damned?” Lilith blinked up sweetly.

Rachael tensed and glanced at Lilith with a short nod.

“Did you think we wouldn’t know, dear? I’m a little surprised. We know *everything* that happens here.” Desiderata chuckled.

“Even Mister Lucy?” Rachael trembled.

“Even Lu, yes. You’ve not lied to anyone. Intended to deceive, yes, but you did send him to the pit, as you said.” Lilith traced her finger over the rim of a cosmetics tin, a smile stretching her beautiful face. “Honestly, we figured you were too ashamed to admit you couldn’t kill him. Proud of you.”

“I failed though! I-I had every opportunity to kill him and —” Rachael stopped when Desiderata waved her hand dismissively.

“Oh, please. I think we were rather relieved. Why’d you spare him?” Lilith snapped the tin closed.

“Because... Because his dad is a jerk! He made Isaac pretend to be half-breed! Who wants to voluntarily admit to being half-breed? He took that label on because he was weak and different. He can’t glamour his eyes! And he did what he was told... Even if it was bad.” Rachael sniffled, staring at the floor. “And my powers were going haywire, so I didn’t know if killing him would have been the right move or not.”

“Ahh. You’ve become reliant on your powers. That’s a blessing and a curse. Scientia are not oracles. They can be confused.” Desiderata chuckled. “Your gift is to sense the world around you. You tally up numbers and potentials to lead you on the path with the highest likelihood of success. Most of the time, that’s the right move. That’s why a scientia needs to be backed by oracles.”

“I do?” Rachael sniffed.

“Oracles can tell you the past, the present, and the future. They don’t tell you a whole story, just enough pieces. A

scientia can take that information and extrapolate meaning and action to change the future, to veer the present. Gemory has his skills at seduction to push that change, but you...”

Desiderata prodded Rachael’s knee. “Are a practicalis. Your knowledge is categorically designed to benefit your wielder with the most practical solution. Efficiency.”

“But I can do so much on my own. I just have to push it!” Rachael wilted.

“Honey. You’re always pushing it. But you can do so much more when you have more information. Think of this as a way to act on new information.” Lilith daubed a powder puff on her nose a few times and smiled, distracting her.

“Now, deep breaths. We’ve already seen to the imp and given him some medical care. He’s a mess, but he deserves his stay. If you decide to finish him at a later date, we will support your decision.” Lilith patted her knee and a soft knock on the doorframe drew their attention.

Lucifer folded his arms and leaned in, unburdened by Ella. By the cooing and kissy noises, Forneus was somewhere with her. A strained smile upticked the corner of Lucifer’s mouth. “Are we all straightened out?”

“Come here, Lu.” Lilith beckoned him over and extended an arm as he approached, tugging him to lean against her. Rachael nodded as Desiderata stood and patted at her hair a little before slipping out, hips swaying.

“Feel better, Rachael?” Lucifer raised an eyebrow.

She nodded, averting her eyes. “I’m sorry I tried to fool you.”

“Don’t do it again. But you didn’t lie. I appreciate that more than you know. Now, let’s go visit the oracles.” Lucifer gave Lilith a kiss on the forehead and took Rachael’s hand. “Come on. The oracles want to speak with you. Maybe you should spend a little time with them before they sleep.”

“Sleep?” Rachael cleared her throat and bit back the emotions that strangled her heart so tightly. Everyone had known that she hadn’t killed Isaac. She kicked herself mentally for it, but Lucifer’s uneasy noise zeroed her in as her gift perked up like a loyal dog waiting for her mistress’s bidding.

“So. You know my oracles are—”

“Nutty as a bag of squirrel turds.” Lilith deadpan stared at Lucifer, who pursed his lips a little sheepishly.

“That was not what I was going to say, but it is... apt.” Lucifer cleared his throat. “They’ve had their minds in synch for eons without breaks. They are worn out by no fault of theirs or my own, and they could use a millennium of rest. It’s becoming increasingly obvious that’s the case. Which means, Rachael, that I won’t be an effective leader. Their knowledge feeds my reign. It has improved vastly since Gemory, and even more so since you, but you know as well as I...”

“I am Xander’s secretary in training.” Rachael nodded.

“And we’ve found his oracles.” Lucifer waited for Rachael to grasp the meaning.

“Xander is only seven!” Rachael bristled.

“Give him fifteen or twenty years. He’ll be ready.” Desiderata chuckled and waved her hand dismissively. “This

isn't a decision we're making tomorrow. Xander is the perfect candidate and he can fill in or take over. Luce has played the big guy long enough."

"Unfortunately, what Des says is true. I cannot rule forever and stay happy. I think Xander would absolutely enjoy ruling for a time. Especially surrounded by such good help so early in his life." Lucifer cracked his neck and rolled a shoulder, a nervous gesture he did before he prepared for something difficult.

"Alright. I'll get moving." Rachael dusted off her lap and stood, dutifully following Lucifer as he walked from the room and led them out into the circle drive of a rather bizarre garden.

The pit was different in many ways from the surface. Without true sunlight, only the ambient fire from the twin red dwarf stars lit the area. In response to the different light, the plants became one of the strangest things, all black and gnarled. Thousands of years ago, when Lucifer first came to the pit, there were no plants, not in the way people thought. Mostly aquatic in thermal pools. The plants around Rachael, those were from a different era, ancestors wrought with strange evolutionary features. Without steady winds and bidirectional light, etiolation changed how plants grew, from tall branching things to gnarled strange ones with too many branches and ruffled leaves. They were healthy though. And very black.

Rachael turned her attention to their walk, Lucifer leading the way through the pink-and-black hued landscape. The pit was why Rachael had lost her desire for the color, rather like

wearing pastel blue on the surface, her pink washed out and blended in.

Rachael sped up to get closer to Lucifer's side so she could speak quietly. "What is it you want me to do with the oracles?"

Lucifer cast a curt glance her way, the corner of his lips upticking. "Ask anything you wish. I want you to see what I deal with and compare them to your father, Robin, and Arwyn."

"Really?" Rachael had a thousand questions, some to do with revenge, some to do with her oncoming role at Xander's side.

"Of course."

Rachael thought as she walked, glancing around Lucifer's estate as they made their way toward another building, like his own only smaller, older, and far more secure. *The oracles*. He told her they lived there, but she'd rarely thought about it. And then she thought about what she'd ask as her gift went crazy.

No revenge came to mind, no questions for her own success. Her gift told her that much. She had no questions to seek answers to regarding herself, but she had many about her new uncle, the behemoth rising to earth, and what was to come. Her gift told her the questions to ask, and it came together quite nicely as her gift chimed in her mind, almost rewarding her for a thought process well driven.

She took a deep breath and relished her surroundings, the stress in her melting away.

A few years ago, in the dead of summer, wildfires had taken the outskirts of her human city and cast the skies in pink. The air smelled of smoke, and ashes rained like snow. The pit made her think of that, only with an underlying taint of sulfur from the deep-earthed water. The pit had no water innate to the surface, only underground. What did come up came out hot and mineral-laden. All this tickled her senses until she walked up to the oracles' home. Lucifer stared at the doorway, hesitating to knock.

“Are you okay with this?”

“I'm not sure if I'm not okay with it. I am eager to learn.” Rachael stared at the door to the home as Lucifer knocked thrice.

An elderly woman opened the door, old in the ways that their kind could be, not by features. She had a wizened characteristic. *Crone*. Rachael knew her the moment she laid eyes on her.

“Greetings, lord. A fine day it is. Or is not. It was a fine day.” Her airy voice wavered as she walked away, beckoning for Rachael and Lucifer to follow.

“It is wonderful to see you, Atropos. I have brought my young Xander's scientia to speak with you.” Lucifer paced into the barren inside of the home. The stone walls were bare, no tapestries or murals to be seen. No decor dotted the harsh scape around them. As soon as the question came to mind, Atropos snorted.

“You may tell the little abacus of yours that we prefer this place barren. Worldly things clutter our minds.” She waved her hand dismissively, drawing them down a barren craggy

hall and into a far more comfortable room, one side lined with wide, open windows that brought with it a comfortably warm breeze of the outside. In the center of the room lay many cushions to sit upon, as drably colored as the surrounding walls. Three matching chalices and a decanter of wine sat in the center of the gathering of cushions.

Lucifer cut his eyes toward Rachael and stared for a moment, gaze lingering. “She wishes I convey that to you out of respect for my wishes. Atropos, you may speak freely with Rachael.”

“Come child, then.” She beckoned and flicked slender fingers, bringing Rachael to her side with a sweet gesture.

“Sister? Our master is here?” A waif of a young woman slipped in, as ancient in her dark eyes as Atropos.

“Clotho, my dear. Come, meet the scientia.” Lucifer gestured to the woman, and she joined Atropos, fawning over Rachael with a soft coo.

“So much potential, my master. She radiates a future very rich and worthwhile.” Her childlike energy bubbled as she spoke, her tones higher pitched, her laughter a tiny tinkle. “Come, Lachesis!”

All three women had hair like bronze, skin a tanned light brown, and eyes so dark their pupils and irises bore no difference.

“Poor dear.” The third of the women swept in, and Rachael’s heart clenched. In Lachesis’s eyes reflected back maternal energy so strong that Rachael saw Coraline, her mother, buried in the image.

“Mama...” Rachael’s voice wavered, and she choked, shaking her head to draw herself out of the image.

“Close. I am mother. Clotho is maiden and Atropos is c —” Lachesis tensed when Atropos made a disapproving noise. “Matron.”

“Call me crone again, and I’ll not speak to you for a fortnight. I will! You’re blind without me!” Atropos snorted, and they gathered around Rachael, fawning over her in small ways with touches, tucking a stray hair behind her ear, straightening the collar of her outfit, and patting her back.

“So, Arwyn will be your Atropos, the cutter of the threads of fate. She knows the past and death. Clotho is our Robin, the spinner of the thread and the future of it. And Lachesis your Simon, the present, the alotter and measurer.” Lucifer folded his hands behind his back and walked to the windows imperiously, staring out at the eerily flat landscape with its jagged and complex plant life. “Speak freely with her this time. She has questions as she prepares for her role.”

“Ahh, the three in one will earn their rest.” Clotho sighed and took a seat.

“To bed with us, at Lucifer’s behest,” Lachesis said, sitting neatly aside Clotho.

Atropos snorted and lifted her skirts neatly before sitting, drawing Rachael to join them. “But today we honor The Morning Star’s guest.”

And now the rhyming starts. Rachael had the distinct impression she wouldn’t like this.

“Questions three we’ll answer for you,” Clotho said.

“And Questions three you’ll interpret true,” Lachesis spoke.

“And answers three, for you are due.” Atropos reached for her goblet and poured herself a stout portion of wine. The bitter scent of it prickled the hairs on the back of Rachael’s neck. Rather than drink, though, she handed the goblet to Rachael. Glancing to Lucifer, Rachael received a nod permission, and she took a polite sip and found the flavor not lacking and the alcohol miniscule. She’d had the beverage in the pit before, *smallwine*. Not enough alcohol, barely what she’d get from a kombucha.

“Thank you for your hospitality.” Rachael took another sip then a third, satisfying the three women, watching her expectantly. All things with purpose came in threes.

“Ask.” Lucifer waved Rachael on when it was apparent that the women would speak no further.

“My first question has to do with a behemoth that is supposedly being summoned to Earth.” Rachael fidgeted with her glass and glanced between the politely staring women.

Clotho spoke first. “The beast of many names will rise.”

In turn, Lachesis added, “To the surface before mortal eyes.”

Atropos frowned. “Because of severed demon and impish ties.”

All things Rachael knew before walking in. Her scientia gift hummed within her head, changing the course of her questions. A behemoth drew power from the land it stood

upon, and if it set foot on Earth, on mortal soil where life flourished...

“Is it possible to keep the behemoth from rising?” Rachael steeled herself.

In order, Maiden, Mother, and Crone spoke.

“The master lay in chains.”

“The smallest holds the reins.”

“A gem is all that remains.”

Rachael took a sip of the smallwine and tapped her chin.

Her mind whirred to life. There was a summoner kept prisoner, an imp that was controlling the summoner, and in order for the behemoth to not rise, he must be defeated, leaving a gem for a new mate. They’d need to find a regent that was ready to mate. So few to trust... Her head snapped up. “What is the path to success for killing the behemoth with the least amount of loss in the most efficient way possible *before* it reaches the surface?”

As before, they spoke, past, present, and future.

“The beast is young but growing stronger.”

“Steel can hurt it for not much longer.”

“Unholy pain, shadow, and Warmonger.”

Everything snapped into place, and Rachael’s spine tingled, electricity shooting through her.

“Mister Lucy!” She gasped and three sets of amused gazes flicked toward the impassive Lucifer.

“Our master’s heart has shattered.” A beautiful smile spread across Lachesis’s face.

“I told you it would,” Clotho said.

Atropos smiled the wise smile of someone who’d known the truth as old as time. Contemplating the meanings behind those gazes made her mind buzz in an unpleasant way. The elder of the three offered Rachael the goblet once more to drink.

“Drink, my secretary. It’ll help you. A little medicinal wine will ease the pain. It’s a lot for even Gemory to bear.” Lucifer strolled over and warm arms pulled her into a soft lap. Lachesis, her scent so comforting, like begonias.

Mama... Rachael closed her eyes and took a wavering breath, sleep drawing her in.

Chapter Twelve

Abaddon

The sitting room had become a gathering place in Lucifer's family estate. Abaddon, having claimed the estate in his father's stead since his sabbatical from the pit, took many liberties in when and where he fawned over his new mate. Finding no end to the hunger he had for touch and affection. Arwyn basked in all forms of closeness.

Arwyn stretched out over Abaddon's lap, the loose, black calf-length pants he wore clinking gently with metal adornments. Sliding a finger under the hem of his shirt, he traced a nail up Arwyn's spine, rucking the cotton up his back with a slow circle. The sleeveless turtleneck, with nonsensical phrases written all over it like someone had given an edgy middle-schooler free rein with a laundry marker, suited him.

He desperately wanted to take Arwyn back to his bedroom and follow through, but Rachael was their responsibility this afternoon. She'd been poorly since her trip to the pit, a mix between her gift and the travel. Something more lay beneath it. *Sorrow*. Abaddon was intimately familiar with punishing emotions.

She stirred infrequently to pass off bits of information, use the restroom, eat and drink, but it was hard for her. Still, Abaddon was proud of her.

"Knock knock." Robin's trilling voice drew Abaddon's attention. "Morning, bros." A caddy full of coffee drinks plopped unceremoniously onto the table.

Abaddon shifted a little, anticipating Robin's casual nature as he bounded over and flopped onto the couch and leaned into Arwyn. A young child with Malacoda's dark pallor sauntered boldly in.

"Good morning, Robin. And, Xander, I presume?" Arwyn wriggled to sit up and give a sitting bow of recognition to the youngster.

The little one nodded and strolled over to Rachael, his posture a perfect mimic of his grandfather's. He had Lucifer's demeanor down pat and perfected his father's impassive stare.

"Rachael?" He patted her shoulder and canted his head.

"I think she needs more sleep." Abaddon caught Xander's expression and the determination in his acid eyes bore hints of Robin's roguish mischief.

"I think she needs to do her job. I haven't had my secretary in two whole days." Xander's tone came off as somewhat chastising, but to Abaddon's surprise, she roused.

"Mff... Xander? Okay. I'm up..." Rachael sat up, blinking bloodshot eyes. "What can I help you with, sir?"

Xander stared for a lingering moment and marched over to the table. He plucked a black iced coffee up and returned to Rachael's side, holding the drink out with a rattle of ice.

"Sir?" Rachael blinked, her eyes bleary.

"Drink. Dirty bean water makes you work better." Xander crossed his arms when Rachael took the large beverage. "Uncle Simon couldn't find your unicorn cup, but I tried."

Rachael stared at the cup, brow furrowed. "Why?"

“It makes your coffee taste better, right?” Xander’s cold expression stayed stern. Curious but clueless.

“Thank you. Thank you very much, Xander. I’m a little tired. Sorry.” The golden topaz in her eyes glinted unevenly, one eye still active.

“And stop trying to use your power. It’s wearing you out and I need you in your tippy-top shape or you won’t be a good secretary.” Xander huffed and sat beside her, arms folded.

“Yes, sir.” As if she only then realized her power was still active, she blinked the light in her eyes away, putting back her soft glamour.

“Good, because I need help drafting a peace treaty. Zaya, Moon, and Cora outnumber us and I’d like to have peace, at least until Rafael is old enough to fight.”

Abaddon fought every urge to laugh, but Rachael took him so seriously.

“Absolutely. Has Peter not been instrumental to any of your plans?” Rachael sipped her coffee.

Xander frowned and stared at the floor. “Peter isn’t like Kir. He doesn’t fight. He’s like... He is—” Unable to finish the sentence, Xander made a clueless gesture. “Peter likes quiet. He cares for people better than he plots.”

Rachael nodded in understanding, every breath she took calming down a little.

“See! Luce said that Xander needed to stay back, but my little monster knows best when it comes to his secretary.” Robin’s chest swelled with pride, that beautiful twinkle in his eyes growing.

“Thank you.” Rachael shook her head a little and devoured the coffee as if her life depended on it. In a way, it must have. Her coping mechanisms were strange, but marginally healthy.

“No problem. You’re my secretary. Not my mom. I’m your boss, so I have to make sure you’re cared for and comfortable, so you do your best job.” Xander patted Rachael’s shoulder.

“Aww.” Robin fanned himself a little, his lips pouting as the fine gleam of unshed tears glimmered in his eyes.

“Pappa, if you start crying, I’m gonna have Rachael take me home.” Xander stared deadpan at Robin.

Robin scoffed and rolled his eyes. “Always so serious, little Spooky Junior, there.”

Abaddon snorted in amusement, earning a little nudge from Arwyn.

“Keep laughing, Creepy.” Arwyn smirked and exchanged a high five with Robin. The gesture was unfamiliar and stiff, but the fact that he knew the motion and made it his first reaction was not *problematic* per se. Though it was mildly irritating.

“Please quit corrupting my mate. There’s still a slight chance I can make him more...” Abaddon gestured, swaying his hand in the air dismissively. “Suitable.”

“Suitable? Brother from another mother over here has more in common with me than you realize. I may have the words, but he has the mind.” Robin snorted, and Arwyn leaned more into Abaddon.

“We do share certain personality traits, my Wildfire.”
Arwyn nuzzled over Abaddon’s shoulder.

“Indeed.” Abaddon hummed with appreciation but sat up and pawed for his phone. “Rachael, you ready to assemble the forces?”

“Yeah. May want to bring in the cavalry.” Rachael rubbed at her eyes with one condensation-slick hand, droplets gleaming as she brushed the sleep from her eyes.

“Who we calling cavalry?” Abaddon thumbed through his phone.

“We need the unholy pain, the warmonger and the shadow. We have you, so call Uncle Malacoda and Uncle Falcalor. Sadriel... She’s the only one I know that could use a gem like that. It has to go somewhere.” Rachael fidgeted. “And Uncle Tohu, and Zirriel. Leramin...”

“Malkiel and Jericho?” Abaddon glanced up.

“Jericho isn’t going anywhere. I don’t think Malkiel’s even letting him practice flying yet.” Robin snorted.

“Uncle Malkiel, yes. And Mister Lucy. None of the bearers should go. Especially not Arwyn.” Rachael waved her hand.

“Why not Arwyn?” Abaddon bristled.

“He’s a bearer. You’ve been trying to give me a new cousin twenty-four seven since he got here, so I’m not taking a chance that he’s carrying. Who knows with Uncle Gemory.” Rachael scoffed.

Arwyn averted his gaze.

“I’m on suppressants for a while until the school is up and safe. I’m in the clear. Point me at the hairy bugger and I’m all over it.” Robin snapped his fingers.

“Unless you’re going to *sass* the thing to death, no. I can’t imagine Malacoda teaching you anything offensive with your gifts, let alone giving you a weapon.” Abaddon snorted.

“Oh, you’d be surprised. Daddy Lulu has been teaching me a few tricks. So has Vize.” Robin stuck his tongue out.

Xander gave Abaddon a lingering gaze that held all of his father’s blithe emptiness. “Pappa can’t fight. He’s an oracle.”

“Excellent point,” Abaddon said, making Robin stick out his tongue.

“Pappa makes pancakes the way I like them with the black edges.” Xander sniffed imperiously and went back to patting Rachael’s shoulder as if burning pancakes was reason enough to protect Robin. The subtle contact seemed to calm her down immensely. His command for her to turn her gift off worked far better than it should have. The boy was coming into his gift flawlessly.

“Robin!” Lucifer’s voice snapped through the foyer, startling the little one in his arms. “I expressly forbade Xander bothering her!”

“Oooh, it’s my favorite father-in-law.” Robin swept up and wrapped Lucifer in a hug, stealing Ella in the process. “I know you said ‘no,’ but Xander knew just how to wake her up. He even got her gift to quiet down for a while.”

Xander hopped off the couch and strolled up to Lucifer, blinking innocently. “Grandfather?”

“Hmm?” Lucifer narrowed his eyes.

“I had to take care of her. She’s my secretary, and how would people look at me if they think I let my secretary hurt?” Xander twisted his lips, and something in his expression faltered. “I don’t want to lose Rachael.” He said the last part very flatly and quietly before tugging on Lucifer’s sleeve, head lowered apologetically.

Lucifer knelt before him, pulling Xander’s face up to look him in the eyes. “Listen. I know you’re capable of manipulating me and everyone here. You’re wickedly smart, but I don’t think that’s what you’re doing now. This is very genuine. I’m proud of you.” Lucifer pulled Xander in for a tight hug. “Keep care of her. She’s the best you’ll ever have. I’m making sure I train her up right, too.”

Xander didn’t say anything, but he returned the hug.

“Keep being this genuine, Xander. Open your heart. It’s not weakness. Feel things. Good and bad things.” Lucifer kissed Xander’s forehead and patted his back before letting him go.

“Thank you, Grandfather.” Xander stayed quiet, face bowed in what should have been respect, but Abaddon got the distinct impression he was embarrassed. A quick glance over to Robin saw a steely expression settled over his face. Protective? Robin didn’t baby Xander at all, but he was fierce when it came to the boy.

“It’s okay, Pappa. Sorry I made Grandfather mad at you. I was scared Rachael was hurt and I’m sorry I threw a fit to come here.” Xander scooted over to Robin for a quick hug,

and the boy scooted off somewhere out of sight, clearly ashamed.

Robin smiled and called over his shoulder. “You always do me proud. Tell the truth and always do what’s right, darn whatever everyone else says.”

Abaddon could only hope that if, by some luck, he and Arwyn fruited, their children would be just as headstrong and mulish.

“Looks like we’re having a mate hangout!” Simon and Elliat swung in, Peter in tow, with Moon riding on her father’s hip. Simon went straight to Rachael and gave her a hug. “Feeling better? Lucifer said you were feeling bad.”

“I’m better now. Xander helped.” Rachael held up a coffee and Simon rolled his eyes, half smiling. “Good to hear.”

Peter wandered off to go find the den to play his handheld game, and Xander snuck out of hiding to trail after him.

“Rachael, you’ve done all you can do at this point. I appreciate it very much—” Lucifer started.

“But I need to go be with the kids?” Rachael blinked up expectantly.

“Hold on just one minute! If Rachael was such an important part, I don’t think it appropriate she be relegated to the children’s room the second the real planning starts.” Elliat bristled, posture stiffening. The viscount had gotten quite comfortable defending his children.

“And I would gladly permit her space to talk and contribute, save for the fact that she’s already exerted herself. Now you forget yourself, Viscount. I reign this world above

and below. I've been lenient and forgiving, but I will not have my judgment called into question when it regards the health and safety of those important to me. Are we clear?" Lucifer's cruel tones went quiet, his voice sharp and succinct.

"Crystal, my lord." Simon bowed his head. "Thank you for caring for my daughter."

"She's everyone's daughter at this point. Simon. We all have stake in making sure she and Peter are well kept. Now on with you, Rachael. We've more people coming and business to discuss. And tell Xander to give you the day off. That's what good bosses do." Lucifer gave Rachael the barest hint of a smile, and she nodded happily before running to give Simon and Elliat a hug. Obediently, she ran off.

Lucifer watched as she ran out and texted on his phone, glancing around as a few others slipped in. Abaddon forced himself to sit up straight, prompting Arwyn to as well.

"If we act, we act now." Lucifer glanced around, finding Malacoda as they stared at one another for a lingering moment. Malacoda had slain a Leviathan, paid an insane amount of money for a team to assist him. And from what Abaddon had witnessed in their years together, Robin was worth every penny. Having acquired one of Robin's siblings... Abaddon counted himself fortunate.

"Anyone in here ever fought a behemoth?" Falcalor crossed his arms and glanced around.

"You've slain a Hydra. I've slain a Leviathan. Father?" Malacoda glanced at Lucifer, who shrugged.

"I've assisted, once." Lucifer's expression turned grim.

Elliat raised his hand. "I've taken one down as part of a team before."

Lucifer glanced at him and sneered. "Kalamax?"

Elliat stiffened. "He asked I take up my weapon. I knew nothing beyond that I was being paid handsomely."

"Indeed... Next time a demon asks you to go help them slay a netherworld creature for their gems, clear it with me." Lucifer sighed heavily. "What are we looking at?"

"A day or two of straight battle. They're one of the easiest to nab, if you know what you're doing. They're slower and deal less damage, but they have stamina and defense on their sides." Elliat cleared his throat.

"Yes. This one is, fortunately, young. He's only been risen since Jericho came into his nature." Sitting back, Lucifer folded his hands and sighed.

"Summon your holy and unholy regalia. Those of you who will fight." Lucifer stood and extended his hand from his side, fingers splayed as a flicker of angelic flame, like a shimmer, obscured his hand and revealed a great sword with a mother-of-pearl inlaid handle and silver filagree.

As if a wave passed over the room, shimmers and shadowed mists glowed about. Zirriel and Sadriel summoned bows, while Leramin, sulking in a corner with a twisted sneer, brought forth a shield and club.

"Why is Leramin here?" Abaddon glared over at the male.

"Because some of those kids in that school are angels. Fallen, Nephilim, or Nephalem, children are children. Also, I enjoy beating things up." Leramin's shoulders pinched when

Zirriel cleared her throat. “And Nashriel wanted t-to spend time with Cora.”

Malkiel, wearing matching knuckle-dusters with some sort of holy glow to them, grinned. “My mate and Vize will keep them safe.”

“Where’s Tohu?” Abaddon glanced over at Malkiel. “We could use him.”

“We can’t leave the mates alone to protect the kids. Tohu will stay here with the mates to keep everyone safe. He’d lay down his life for any of them.” Malkiel’s cool gaze brightened. “I pity whatever poor miscreant thinks they can attack ours when he goes fun-sized.”

A few snickers passed about and Arwyn perked up with delight.

Falcalor slung a Warhammer over his shoulder. “Well, Abe?”

“If I must.” Abaddon stood and held his arm out, fingers curling. From the ether came his weapon, the wood dark and sleek, elegant in his hand, leading up to a viciously sharp tip. A spear. It fit just as well in his hand then as it ever had, and wielding it to protect his family made it even better.

“Beautiful.” Arwyn’s eyes danced as they stared one another down.

“I’m here!” Tohu jogged in, already in his greater form, with a blushing Vize scampering by, head tucked. He had a healthy glow about his cheeks and reeked of lust. Freshly showered lust, but lust all the same.

“Jericho with you?” Malkiel narrowed his gaze at Tohu.

“Yeah. Robin ran off with him, probably putting eyeliner on him or something.” Tohu grinned, and Robin, perhaps hearing his name, poked his head back in with a frown.

“No, I wanted to put a new onesie on Rafael.” Robin bounced Ella in his arms. She laughed with delight, wearing a new little black onesie declaring her *daddy’s little baby bat*. Jericho popped his head back in and grinned, his newborn, just a week old, squirmed in the most precious little bright-red romper with a little black rubber duck on the front.

Falcalor snorted as Robin and Jericho scampered off. For the longest moment, there was silence until Gemory shouted, swearing. “What the fuck, Robin!”

“Ahh, music to my ears.” Falcalor beamed and the barest smirk tilted the corner of Malacoda’s mouth.

“Text anyone you have to. We’ll be gone for a day or two. I’ve done this before and it’s grueling.” Elliat slicked his hair back, the spare hand at his side holding his wicked flail, the tips serrated blades with hooks that would grab and rend.

“On it.” Abaddon pulled his phone out as Falcalor and Malacoda did the same. Others dipped out to make phone calls. He had a few people to text, telling the office that he’d be out of town and to shift his schedule. “How big of an ass would I be if I let Rachael handle the fiscal report meeting with the sub-regency?”

“On a scale of one to ten?” Lucifer huffed. “Eleven.”

“Dang. I’ll move it.”

“No, no. She can handle it. Make sure Gemory goes with her. I like the way he fights.” Lucifer thumbed the edge of his

blade with an imperious gesture and Abaddon snickered. Elliat gave him a thumbs-up.

“Vize won’t complain about extra time with Shala.”

Falcalor grinned and Malkiel nodded.

“Okay. Who is ranged?” Lucifer glanced around. Zirriel and Sadriel both were archers. They raised their bows.

“Okay, and who can run front line?” Lucifer glanced about. Falcalor raised his hammer and Malkiel waved his fist about. Lucifer had thought the weapon stupid so many eons ago, but Malkiel had made them his own. Elliat grinned, the chain on his flail rattling.

“Okay, and volley are the swords. So, Malacoda and I run in with swords for a strike. We call in Malkiel, Elliat, and Falcalor for the hard hits, and Abaddon you spear the open wounds.” Lucifer stared at the sword in his hand.

“There’s a chance some of us don’t come back alive.”

Elliat steeled himself and locked eyes with Abaddon. “That’s a risk we’re going to take. Make sure your mates know.”

Arwyn frowned. “Rachael would be of great help. I know that you possess the necessary power to defeat a behemoth. Actually... Robin!” Arwyn darted up and Malacoda startled, as if he wished to stop Arwyn but deflated when Arwyn moved from sight.

Abaddon’s heart ached at the thought of leaving his mate so soon. Their nights together had been as fierce from the first day as the last, and the possibility of not coming back made Abaddon sick.

Robin and Arwyn returned in a moment, Simon sweeping in to join them.

“So?” Falcalor stared the three down as they tentatively held hands.

“The behemoth is young and weak since he only recently reformed,” Arwyn said, stating the past.

“He lies in wait at the planes of the pit’s Megiddo.” Simon tensed his brow in concentration and opened his silvery eyes.

“I cannot tell who will live or die, only that the behemoth will die, and he will be summoned soon.” Robin’s face went sharp and steely before he drew his hands back and pointed around the room. “And if one of you assholes doesn’t come back, I’m corrupting your kids, got it? We aren’t leaving anyone without parents, not again.”

Malacoda lifted his chin imperceptibly, his chest tensing, the glimmer in his eyes suggesting he was pleased.

“I’ll do my best to return to you.” Malacoda strode forward, his gait even and graceful as he swept Robin up for a gentle kiss, far more affectionate than Abaddon had ever thought he could be. “Be prepared to celebrate our victory on my return.”

“You better. Bring me a hoof or something to turn into an ashtray. Souvenir?” Robin beamed and Simon found his way to Elliat, the two whispering to one another words of assurance. Arwyn stared Abaddon down.

“Yes?” Abaddon locked gazes with Arwyn and beckoned him close. The male slipped over and sidled into Abaddon’s lap with a stern gaze.

“I will have you before you leave,” Arwyn whispered into Abaddon’s ear. “Failure is not an option. My mate is strong. Vicious. I have waited so long for you. I won’t be alone again.”

“Alright, everyone, gather your things. We’ll meet here in an hour. Settle your affairs. Time is of the essence.” Lucifer waved a hand dismissively.

Chapter Thirteen

Arwyn

Abaddon scooped Arwyn into his tense arms, turning to carry the male upstairs for all the fun that an hour could spare them. He halted, though, body stiff as Xander stood in the doorway, his face carefully blank but his eyes red and clearly tear-strewn.

“What’s wrong, little monster?” Abaddon sat Arwyn on the ground before adjusting his spear to lean against the wall.

“You can’t go!” His voice cracked and the stern and impassive expression melted into twisted misery.

“Xan, come here.” Robin swept in and picked Xander up with ease, coddling him in a manner that made Lucifer sneer. “They have to go, baby. The behemoth needs to be slain so we can save you kids.”

Xander hiccupped and made a noise of protest.

“Mal?” Robin turned and Malacoda took Xander as if he weighed nothing, hugging him with one arm.

“What tears you apart so? I will come back. I promised your pappa.” Malacoda closed his eyes, listening as Xander whimpered something indecipherable.

“That’s what leaders have to do. We are protectors. I am strong. So are your grandpa and Malkiel and Falcalor.” Malacoda stroked Xander’s head and shushed him.

“What about Uncle Abe and Uncle Rat?” Xander pointed at Abaddon and Elliat.

“Eh.” Malacoda shrugged. “They’re okay, I guess.”

Robin slapped Malacoda’s arm.

“Please don’t go. I’ll be good. We can just stop going to school! We can move the school.” Xander sniffled.

“And then it’ll happen all over again, sweetheart.” Robin crowded in as the others left their weapons to get ready and kissed Xander’s head.

Vize swept in, his face full of panic that settled when he saw Xander. “Sorry, he slipped by me.”

“He’s a wily one. No problem, V.” Robin shot Vize an apologetic grin.

“Why’s he so ups—Oh? He doesn’t want the sires to leave, does he?” Vize’s lips twisted as Xander shook his head, whining.

“May I?” Vize slipped between them all and offered his arms, but Xander didn’t move. “There’s nothing to be done. Unless you want to help them, that is?”

Xander glanced over, his little spiteful green eyes sparkling with interest.

“How about we inspect all the weapons and make sure they’re nice and smashy? Gotta make sure your soldiers have the best, right?” Vize’s patronizing coo made Xander wriggle to be let down. Vize held his hand and walked him around the room. His little chest puffed with pride and Robin fought back a soft *aww*.

Abaddon held his weapon out, the spear, and Xander patted the stave before peering up the length. "Is it sharp?"

"Very." Abaddon plucked a hair from his head and maneuvered the spear, splitting it for him. Xander nodded with approval and patted the handle again, lips twisted in concentration. A spark of magic in him flicked to life.

"It's acceptable." Xander nodded, and Abaddon put his spear against the wall.

Arwyn found himself being scooped up and ferried away once more as Xander moved to his father's sword, patting it down with that same magic.

"Forty-five minutes," Abaddon growled into Arwyn's ear as they crossed the threshold. He kicked the door shut and had Arwyn on his back in a blink, clawed fingertips trailing his skin.

"Make it count, my Wildfire." Arwyn gasped as his pants jerked free at Abaddon's grasp. His half-hard cock twitched against his thigh, rolling as it ticked upward, each heartbeat plumping it a little more.

"I love how easily you make yourself ready for me." Abaddon shivered as his horns pressed free, clothes hitting the floor faster than Arwyn could register. A single pointed-tongue lick to Arwyn's cock made him almost shoot off the bed, hips jerking as it fondled his piercing. Robin's idea to get the bar of pure deep-penetrating pleasure inserted there was fantastic. Those twin tines drew his hands in, making Arwyn brace his fingers there. Truth told, he wasn't sure who was stronger, Arwyn or Abaddon physically, but Abaddon yielded so deliciously to his tight grip.

Bringing his hand back around, Abaddon fisted Arwyn's cock, his grip a little too tight, just enough to keep Arwyn from shooting. A soft moan trembled forth from Arwyn's lips, and Abaddon locked eyes with him before lapping ever so slowly over his balls. The smooth surface tightened under Abaddon's prodding tongue as it slipped farther back, massaging the tender skin between his sac and hole. With a soft prod to Arwyn's skin, he hissed and squirmed. "More."

"Patience," Abaddon said, his lips brushing adoringly over that tender skin until Abaddon hooked his grasp beneath Arwyn's knees, contorting him to spread his legs wide and curl in such a way to expose his hole. Cold air met the sensitive ring, the coolness radiating as a thick coat of slick trailed his crease.

Despite wanting him to continue, Arwyn glanced at the nightstand to eye the ticking brass clock. "D-done waiting. N-need. F-forty minutes."

"Ahh, my sweet Crackerjack. My prize." Abaddon thrust his tongue, working it just beyond the cinched tightness of Arwyn's hole. A rough sigh of pleasure released a warm breath over Arwyn's exposed shame. With the light above still on, Abaddon's harsh gray features and white eyes seemed less demonic and more statuesque, carved from the very stone of the earth itself.

With every fiber of his being, Arwyn resisted, jerking Abaddon's horns down to insist upon more. His lover would give him what he deserved and no more. Arwyn was not to take.

Abaddon's lips twitched, tongue thrusting deeper, working the length of it to his spot with ease, rubbing at the place. All Arwyn's control went away the second that pointed tip teased his prostate, making him cry out with pleasure. Arwyn jerked Abaddon's horns and contorted his face, jaw tightening, eyes closed as the pleasure became too much. Wings, black with green shimmer, shot out from beneath him, feathers scattering about. Arwyn's tail traced Abaddon's thigh and followed the lean lines of him to gently curl and caress the demon's sac.

Abaddon jerked his face back with a grunt of pleasure, glancing down at Arwyn's tail.

"S-sorry." Arwyn's breath wavered as he released Abaddon's horns, shaking with need.

"Never be." Abaddon kissed his way up and nipped at each of his piercings, cock then nipples, making Arwyn squirm. "I adore seeing you lose control."

"Same." Arwyn whimpered as Abaddon met his mouth with a possessive kiss, tongue thrusting forward to share the taste of slick. When Abaddon's hand braced against the headboard, the other hooking a knee, Arwyn's cock jerked hard. He needed more and quickly.

Writhing his tail once more, he cupped and cradled Abaddon's sac, using the feathers to tease at the weight of them. Unable to withstand more, Abaddon hissed and jerked away, his cock leaking profusely, kicking up against his belly. "You'll be the death of me." Before Arwyn could answer, Abaddon thrust his hips forward and sank to the hilt in his depths.

Stars swam in Arwyn's vision, his motions rough and possessive. Abaddon chuckled, lips brushing his ear. "I'll kill the beast. I'll rip its throat out. Spear it until I bathe in its blood. Then, I'll find that fucking imp and turn him into a kebab, feed him to the Leviathan and we'll go hunt down your father's urn to take a lengthy piss."

Utter pleasure coursed through Arwyn's veins, brought to a screeching halt when Abaddon pulled his mouth lower with the sharp points of his teeth tracing his neck. Abaddon promised him such wonderful things, but one last utterance made Arwyn nearly tumble forward and lose his grasp. "With all that I am. I was made to love you." Abaddon snarled and jerked his hips, his grip tightening, light rising over his skin.

No words were good enough for Arwyn's confession. "I've loved you long before I knew you. I'll give you my all."

"Take me." Abaddon stretched his mouth open with a soft, raspy breath and bit down on Arwyn's neck. The soft glow over his skin spread from one to the other, their dual glows something that he'd never perceived in his stupor of the ages. Arwyn wanted to treasure the moment forever.

Arwyn threw his head back as Abaddon shifted position and jerked, rubbing his cock over the slick skin between his cheeks. Abaddon's drooling cockhead prodding Arwyn's softened and well-licked hole.

"Oh. Fuck," Arwyn choked in a trembling whisper. Before he could take another breath, Abaddon speared him, thrusting inside with a sharp snap of his hips that sent Arwyn into a keen of pleasure. A burst of precum shot free the moment Abaddon's cockhead tagged Arwyn's prostate.

From there, Abaddon's magic flowed, the fire that none else could contain, and only Arwyn adored. He welcomed it as an old friend, the searing surge of it not unlike the first warmth at a fire in the dead of winter, too hot in a superficial way.

Arwyn growled, his breath twisting in his chest, celebrating the absolute overload of pleasure to come. Driven by his noise, it seemed, Abaddon's magic surged, pulsing and firing into Arwyn like a different kind of orgasm. As it took Arwyn by storm, a sharp tingling sensation wrenched him from delirium as harsh streaks of cum shot up his belly, over his chest, onto the covers.

Abaddon chuckled, hips slapping, as he bucked and rode Arwyn toward his own careening pleasure. His dark laughter halted when Arwyn shifted, changing the angle of his thrusts a moment before his hands hooked into Abaddon's wing bases. "Arwyn?" The waver in Abaddon's voice betrayed his menace, but Arwyn had one thing on his mind as he shared his own power with Abaddon, pushing love and power, adoration and more into the core of his lover.

"Mine. My Wildfire." Arwyn groaned as Abaddon's eyes fluttered, his expression slackening. Hips stuttering, Abaddon jerked and trembled until his entire body stiffened and his knot engaged, surging forth pulse after pulse of seed so hot that it warmed Arwyn to his core.

"Yours." Abaddon shuddered as he nuzzled down Arwyn's neck then lower, kissing along his collarbone. "I'll miss you, my mate. Do not think I leave you lightly."

"I am patient. I'll wait." Arwyn hummed and wriggled his hips, head still swimming from all the delightful sensations.

Incensed, Abaddon jerked his hips and glanced at the bedside clock with a grin. “Twenty minutes.”

“Ten. We’ll need a shower.” Arwyn grinned until Abaddon clutched him tight, slamming his hips home.

“Then I’ll have to make it count.”

The sires, with Zirriel and Sadriel, gathered in the foyer, weapons in hand. Softly blushing mates gave parting kisses and worried hugs, but Abaddon and Arwyn had their fill already. Arwyn only needed his mate’s return. Nothing was left to be said between the two that they hadn’t said in their rushed lovemaking.

So, when it came time and mists flickered and lights shimmered, Arwyn stood tall for long moments as silent bearers made their way back to the children’s playroom.

The room was quiet when Arwyn sidled in, his mind preoccupied with the wonderful moments he’d had with his mate. Such delicious atrocities he was capable of, and Arwyn looked forward to living in the pit with him, away from the yellow sun and the shivering weather.

A warm hand rested on Arwyn’s shoulder, breaking his train of thought. *Vize?* Arwyn had met him in passing over the past few days, and found him to be a rather eccentric sort, loving to a fault but terrified in ways that Arwyn never hoped to be. *So much fear.* In the presence of his little girl, though, he

had a glimmer in his eyes like he could tear down mountains. The way a good bearer should have been.

Jericho, all auburn-red hair and brightly colored eyes like that of a mate, but clearly an angel in all ways, approached, bouncing a little babe in his arms. He'd known that aura long ago, *Rafael*. He was different than before, not the same soul but the same legend, only so much more powerful. The child would be formidable in time. Jericho smiled up at Arwyn. "Nice to get a moment to meet you. Abaddon's been keeping you all to himself."

"I fear it's a little of both of us keeping one another occupied. I have been too long without companionship, and —" Arwyn waved his hand about, trying to come up with the words and Jericho chuckled.

"Oh, I get it. Trust me. I've only been with Malkiel six months, but I couldn't stay off him until little Raf here. I've got more healing to do, so maybe the distance will help?" Jericho patted Arwyn's shoulder and frowned.

"Are you angel or demon, Arwyn?" Jericho canted his head and glanced about, gesturing for Vize to sweep over and take Rafael.

"What's going on?" Vize smiled at Arwyn before cooing gently and tickling Rafael's chin.

"Arwyn's magic is fuuu—fudged." Jericho frowned. "Nothing angelic. Usually when I touch them, I get some feedback on the magic. That's the little buzzing, right?" Jericho glanced over at Vize, who nodded.

“Well. I have the silver eyes. I shimmer and I glow. I have wings...” Arwyn trailed off but shrugged politely. “Not quite certain though. I was *incomplete* according to my creator, a poorly made amalgam to serve a purpose.”

“So weird. I wanna try the zappy thing on him.” Jericho grinned and rubbed his hands together.

Vize winced and shook his head. “Come on, Jericho, he’s too new to mess around with.”

“No, I wanna figure out what his magic is. Demon? Angel?” Jericho bounced, and Arwyn swallowed nervously.

“What is it that you intend to do?”

“I have this thing I can do that turns off an angel’s magic for a while, makes them all noodly.” Jericho snickered.

“It won’t cause any lasting damage, will it?” Arwyn tilted his head curiously as Vize made some sort of polite gesture, urging him to refuse.

“Not at all. Gimme your hands!” Jericho bounced a little and took Arwyn’s hands as Robin and Simon wandered over.

“Demon, has to be.” Robin smirked as a strange sensation flowed between his and Jericho’s hands.

“Oh.” Jericho furrowed his brow and squirmed. “I-I don’t know.”

Arwyn reciprocated the squirm. It felt strange, like his blood trembled in his veins. His stomach rolled and lurched, as if falling from a great distance.

“Alright, that’s enough.” Vize’s tone grew chastising and stern. Jericho obeyed and pulled back, shaking his hands as if

he'd touched a live wire.

"I took something, but it's like... It's demon magic attuned to an angel. Wait... I wanna see you without your glamour!" Jericho glanced about and stared at Tohu, who was swinging Xander about playfully.

"My magic feels like Tohu's?" Arwyn pulled his shirt off as Jericho snickered. "Hmm?"

"Your jamma pants are on backward." Jericho's lovely laugh made Arwyn smile.

"Intentionally, I promise." Arwyn shivered and let his wings fold free, the green-and-black things shaking out as his tail slithered through the gaps in his lounge pants' fly. "Lets my tail free."

"Tail..." Vize studied him from head to toe and blinked rapidly. "You look and feel every bit the angel, but that tail means demon or Nephalem. Always."

"I know! Abaddon is similar, you know. He doesn't have a drop of demon blood, but he's demon. Lilith is an immortal and Luce is—you know." Jericho shrugged.

"Well, whatever he is, he's looking faint." Robin gestured for Arwyn to meander over to one of the lounges and sat him down with a polite pat to his shoulder. "Food?"

Arwyn nodded. Food and rest sounded very lovely.

Chapter Fourteen

Abaddon

The plains of Megiddo stretched miles in all directions, desolate ruins among cliffs and jutting sharp rocks. Abaddon inhaled the warm sulfurous air that comforted him more than anything else. Well, save for Arwyn. Whatever his mate had done to calm his magic made their travel so much easier.

Abaddon watched his twin shadows flicker, the twin suns throwing it in two ways, morphing the horns into amorphous shapes.

A new twin shadow obscured his view, paired with angelic presence. “Denarius for your thoughts, child.”

“We’re not even a century apart in age, Father. I am no more a child than you.” Abaddon traced the butt of his spear in the rippling rust-colored sands and sighed, wishing Arwyn were there to give his kiss and touch. Every fiber of his being told him to be with his mate.

“Then penny for your thoughts,” Lucifer scoffed and sat beside Abaddon, folding his strategically scarred arms over his knees.

“I want the rest of them to get over the travel sickness so we can move. I’m restless and I want my mate.” Abaddon licked over his sharp teeth and relished the foreign sensation of it. On the surface, he spent so much time glamoured; where here, he could be his true self, the beast of the earth, stone in skin and heart, horns of obsidian.

“The loveliness of the newly mated. Is he enough for you?” Lucifer reached out to rest a hand on Abaddon’s knee and patted a few times.

“And so much more.” Abaddon smiled, and in that form, it was a strange sensation, something he didn’t do often as his lips drew taut.

“Your mother and I worried for so long. She’s coming up with us after we’re done here, you know?”

“Thanks.” Abaddon grabbed a broken pebble near his feet and tossed it into the sands, watching it skip a few times, tossing a fine spray of dust with it.

“Don’t sulk. Put that energy into destroying this thing so you can go ravish your mate.” Lucifer craned his head back as a few new shadows joined them.

Malkiel sauntered over, a little pale but otherwise fine. He traveled well between the worlds. “Leramin is puking and Zirriel has Sadriel trying to get used to the suns here so they can aim right.”

“Does that bring you joy, brother?” Lucifer snickered and a quiet *fuck you* retched from somewhere behind them on the shady side of a jutting rock.

“Immense.” Malkiel’s grin stretched his face so garishly, such a change from the angelic stoicism that he had suffered with.

“What I don’t understand is why Zirriel and Sadriel need to be here! Why are they not safe with the bearers?” Leramin growled and joined the others at Abaddon’s spot that had rapidly lost its peaceful charm.

“Because I have clairvoyance and can hide nice and safe in the distance, my love.” Sadriel stared Leramin down, her face as steely as ever, but Leramin’s was a kaleidoscope of emotions he hadn’t learned to regulate yet.

Note to self. Whatever Jericho does with his hoodoo-boodoo bullshit needs to stay a million miles from me. Abaddon shuddered.

“Elliat is tracking it, and he’ll throw up a signal when he finds where it buried itself.” Lucifer sighed.

Abaddon hated the behemoth. The thing had indecipherable features somewhere between a buffalo on two legs with a face like a scaly rhinoceros with too many fangs. Its red eyes glowed through the darkest of nights. Its tails, though, were two great lizard-like things with spaded scales that could gut a male faster than he could blink.

Abaddon stood and shook out his wings, watching out across the barren landscape, eyes focused sharply, waiting for the signal.

An unholy roar rose above the din of silence.

“Is that the signal?” Abaddon glanced over toward Lucifer as the bleat of a horn barked out its warning cry.

“Nope. That was.” Lucifer spread his golden wings and took off at a run toward the sound as Sadriel and Zirriel spanned out to find vantage points.

Leramin and Malkiel flanked Lucifer as Malacoda’s shadow swept over them, carrying Falcalor hand to hand, letting him dangle from one arm, the other gripped tight to his war hammer. Abaddon caught their tailwind and leaped,

spreading his wings in the hot air, relishing the warmth as it caressed him in familiar ways.

A rising form from the rocks and sands shook the earth about it, teeth gnashing as a dexterous clawed hand slashed out toward Elliat who whipped his flail down, smacking its paw with a meaty thud. Dark blood spread across the rusty sands.

Leramin arrived next, slipping between Elliat and its tails. He held his shield aloft and slammed the club into it with all his might as he dampened the strike that sent him and Elliat sailing back and into a sand dune.

“Nice job blocking the shot, asshole!” Elliat snarled. “Deflect! You’re defense, not offense. Know your place!” Elliat worked his way out of the sand with familiarity and jerked Leramin out by his arm, sneering. The angel jerked his arm free and huffed.

“Fuck off, both of you. Focus!” Lucifer and Malacoda approached from opposite sides, swords drawn as the creature hesitated in a momentary spasm, as if to decide who to strike first.

The sheer size of the creature was staggering, with Lucifer himself only as big as his front paw. It stood two stories tall, rearing up on its back legs with a terrifying roar, exposing its plated underbelly. Abaddon took the chance and darted forward, forcing the tip of his spear between two plates with a wet crunch. When it went to swipe, Malkiel drew forth, fists at the ready and, with two quick jabs, had it limping back, the ground shaking as it nursed a single taloned paw.

“Ler!” Elliat swung in and brought his flail down on the beast’s tail as Leramin got the message, finally. He drew the

attention of the beast and earned an errant swat with a spiked tail, unharmed as he tumbled through the sand, earning the beast's ire.

A volley of arrows rained from the sky, made of spectral angelic magic.

Malacoda took the opportunity to swing in behind the beast as its tail lifted, shadow flowing off him like smoke as he forced the sharpened tip of his too-black sword into a rather wince-worthy spot.

A weakness is a weakness... Poor guy.

The beast roared and turned, shaking off arrows that burst and rained like sparking embers.

As Malacoda retreated, Falcalor came rushing in and swung his hammer, drawing it down onto the tips of one of the tails that had gone very limp since Malacoda's deep stab.

"Good one! You hit the nerves." Lucifer careened in, sword drawn, and shouted when the creature reared onto its back legs and caught him off guard with a horn. "Fuck!"

Malkiel shimmered in, grabbing Lucifer before immediately shimmering out just in time for the beast's gnashing teeth to occupy Lucifer's spot. "We good, brother?"

"I'm rusty." Lucifer's bright grin gave Abaddon vigor for battle. Hearing the creature's pitiable cry of pain made Abaddon gain a greater desire to make its death quicker. Only through the suffering of the world itself, the land that gave life to a behemoth, was a mate made. This creature had died once, its magic given to Jericho. It would die again, and Sadriel may be able to keep Delia as her mate. Though they all had doubts

it would work, considering Delia's age, and, truth told, Sadriel seemed a little ready to end her eons of life. Such was it for some angels that could no longer stand the cycle of loss.

"Abe!" Falcalor drew the creature's attention with a slam to its tail, and Abaddon darted in as it stayed, reared up, and thrust the spear deep. Instinct told him to go for the heart, but a behemoth had no heart. It had no one point of weakness and merely needed tenacity, time, and dedication. Feeling himself able to spare the moment, Abaddon slammed his weight into the stave and felt the spear sink before shimmering back with his weapon, leaving the creature to retch and stagger.

"Retreat!" Malacoda's booming voice from above made hairs on Abaddon's arms prickle, and they obeyed. The creature snarled and swiped at the rich sands before it coughed and blew hot flames spitting as it turned, glazing the sands into sheets of raw glass before it slashed its claws at the still-soft ground beneath it.

"Volley!" Lucifer cried. Arrows rained and Abaddon added to the mix, throwing his spear in aim for the beast's face, hoping to catch him in the jaw. As fate and fortune had it, though, the creature turned its head at the most unfortunate moment and the spear imbedded itself in a single sickly yellow eye down to the midpoint of the stave.

"Sick." Malkiel snorted from behind Abaddon as the creature burrowed. Abaddon summoned his spear back, and the ground bulged as the behemoth dug its way down to escape.

"Alright, everyone. Recoup. Malkiel and Sadriel will heal. Zirriel?" Lucifer called out and turned, finding her waving an

arm from atop a nearby cliff side. “Get down here, sister, and help us figure out when it’ll emerge next!”

She fluttered her way over, so graceful in the air, and they settled down. “Let’s rest. It’ll be a few hours before it’s brave enough to come back up. And we’ll have to hide because if it knows we’re about, it’ll stay down longer.” Zirriel perked up when Leramin offered her a canteen of water, his fierce gaze all protective instinct and pride in his mate.

Chapter Fifteen

Arwyn

A fierce ache tore its way through Arwyn's groin, such that he woke in a cold sweat, thinking he'd caught his piercing on something. A quick grope discovered that the piercing was fine. He trailed his finger over the silver bars at the ends. But his cock was painfully hard, precum painting the inside of his boxers.

"Mh? Abaddon? My Wildfire, I need—" Arwyn halted as he pawed through the covers and remembered his mate had gone to the pit.

Though such things weren't necessary when he united with Abaddon, he kept a bottle of lube in the nightstand, and it seemed as opportune a time as any. Arwyn sat up, mindful of the painfulness of his erection, and made sure he was alone. The door shut, lock turned. Privacy had improved so much since he was young. Arwyn relished the slick lube as he palmed the bottle, laying back in bed. He caressed his cock, whimpering for relief. His sac wrenched up tight, so full, each beat of his heart filling his hard cock even more.

Arwyn bit his lower lip and grabbed for his shirt on the side of the bed so as not to make a mess. He tucked it beneath himself, already slick and drooling. Even with the sting of Abaddon's last lovemaking still throbbing through his body, Arwyn *needed*. He burned not for Abaddon's pain and force, but lust, pure lust, worse than he'd experienced in the days before, his supposed rush.

Arwyn lowered the waistband of his underwear, caressing the length of his cock as he lay back, closing his eyes. In Arwyn's mind, gray skin loomed over him, white eyes boring holes into his very soul. Sharp teeth bit at his neck. Arwyn, caught up in his fantasy, stroked his cock with short and desperate motions, spreading the lube down the length of him.

His core tightened, body trembled, and Arwyn whimpered. His trembling hand reached for one of his nipple piercings and he twisted, tugging it until it was as sore as it'd been fresh. Images of Abaddon tore through him, his magic, his teeth, the way his nails raked flesh and tail wrapped his own so tight that it hurt. "Abaddon!" Arwyn stifled his cry as thick ropes of cum shot up his belly, leaving not relief in its wake, but worse. Abaddon had left him there in the throes of rush with nothing to satiate him.

Arwyn whimpered and made his way to the shower, cock stiff and aching, refusing to go down. Cold water helped, though, the icy liquid punishing his libido for daring to rear its head when his love was so far away.

When daylight finally broke the sliver of a window in Abaddon's bathroom, a soft knock alerted him.

"It's Gemory." The pleasant tones of Falcalor's mate drew Arwyn out of his stupor and he shut the water off. His cock had nothing else to give, but he still wanted. He wanted badly.

"Y-yes?" Arwyn called out, his breath fluttering in his chest.

"Brought you an ice pack, dear. Come on out." Gemory knocked once more and Arwyn struggled into a robe before shuffling out, catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror on

the way out. He bore dark circles under his eyes, a bright flush to his cheeks, and his pallor seemed far brighter than it had before.

Arwyn slipped out sheepishly, glancing at Gemory with his best attempt at an apologetic smile. “S-sorry.”

“I don’t think you can help it.” Gemory offered him a bag of frozen peas, and it took Arwyn a moment to realize what they were for. “Put it on your lap and it should calm things down. You’re not the first bearer who has had to suffer this alone. Trust me, if it were a girl, the alternative would be so much worse.”

“Hmm?” Arwyn shuffled to the bed and politely tucked the bag into the crease of his legs and winced. In the presence of a male other than Abaddon, and cold, his cock decided to give up its rampage.

“If you were pregnant with a girl. Trust me, the rage is not fun.” Gemory waved a hand dismissively and Arwyn’s heart seized.

“Pregnant?” He’d been so caught up in having Abaddon and making him realize their love, that he’d missed signs and—a demon pregnancy... What they had said last night was true, but he didn’t feel that way the night before... Abaddon must have left him with child as his parting gift!

So many thoughts swam through his mind, but one rose to the surface. “So it wasn’t a rush? Why did it ebb during the day like that?”

“Well, you and Abe aren’t exactly standard issue creatures, hun.” Gemory strolled through the room and rifled

about for some pajama pants and a longer shirt. Robin had the foresight to get some comfy long shirts for him, and Gemory had been inclined to agree. “So, it could have very well been a rush and your pregnancy will run like a demon’s. I just hope it doesn’t run with the symptoms of a demon pregnancy and the length of an angel’s.”

“I don’t want to feel like this longer than I have to.”

Arwyn closed his legs on the ice pack and winced.

“I think I can help you a bit. You can smell Abaddon everywhere, here.” Gemory strolled into the bathroom and rustled about, returning with an ancient jar of mentholated salve. “Rub a bit into your nose and it should help.” Gemory tossed the jar and put a hand on his hip.

“Would you mind leaving so I can get dressed?” Arwyn squirmed and stared at Gemory.

“I’ll turn my back, but I’m not leaving. If we can get you calmed down for an hour or so, it’ll ebb. Robin has some horror stories about his pregnancy.” Gemory turned and waved his hand about. It made Arwyn a little anxious, and for what, he wasn’t certain. Nudity among men was the norm in his younger days. But the only man he wanted to be naked around since was Abaddon. “Hands off the pickle and clothes on. Got you some boxer briefs so you can keep that cool pack in there for a while.”

Arwyn groaned and gingerly stood, turning to slip his underwear and pants on beneath the robe before squirming into his shirt. He rested a cautious hand over his belly and was almost disappointed he couldn’t feel anything, just the flat

warmth of him. He sighed and shoved the ice pack in his pants and turned, fidgeting with the salve.

Gemory glanced his way and turned with a smile, clapping his hands together. “Wonderful. Breakfast time.”

Arwyn followed at a sluggish pace, his cheeks burning hot in a strange sort of way. Ordinarily, he loved heat and warmth, but this was foreign and miserable. “What’s for breakfast, again?”

“I dunno. Vize is cooking. Tohu is with the kiddies. They’ve already eaten. Now is coffee time for the bearers.” Gemory beamed and ushered Arwyn into the smaller of the dining rooms, the rather informal one. A tea room, if he had it right. Gemory pulled a chair out and pushed a cup of juice into his hands. Arwyn drank deeply and avoided eye contact with a cheery Vize, a snickering Robin, and a rather smug Simon.

“Alright. I may have been an only child, but I understand sibling teasing. Please, out with it.” Arwyn sat and leaned his head over the table, groaning.

“Arwyn. Nobody’s going to tease you,” Simon said, offering paternal, kind words.

“I might,” Robin said. A sharp smack and a soft *ow* ended his commentary and Arwyn glanced up.

“Soooooo, girl?” Simon grinned, and Arwyn shook his head.

“Ohhhh. Yeah, no. I’m not making fun of you. Jeez. And you don’t have your mate.” Robin twisted his lips. “How’d Gemory get you calmed down, dude?”

Gemory shrugged. “Frozen beans of some variety. Peas?” He sat down and glanced up when Vize came in with a plate of pancakes. Arwyn and Simon tied in while Robin and Gemory picked at one each and sipped coffee.

“What’s this about an ice pack?” Vize plucked a few pancakes and coated them with a liberal amount of syrup.

“So, know that bet we had going last night?” Robin gestured toward Arwyn.

“Well, yes. He’s carrying. That wasn’t up for debate.” Vize blinked innocently.

“Yeah, well, it’s a boy.” Gemory snorted and Vize’s brow creased.

“Wh-Oh. Oh!” Giving a cautious glance over, Vize smiled. “That’s what the ice pack is for, then?”

Arwyn pinched his shoulders and nodded.

“Well, eat up. Try to calm down and—I don’t know. What are we supposed to do? Let him...” Vize made a gesture like he was shaking salt.

“Bad idea. He’ll reach a point where he can’t...you know...without Abe. Soooo. We just have to keep him distracted. I’ve never had just a boy pregnancy, but with twins I had both. It’s gotta be painful. I’m sorry, dear.” Gemory sighed and picked at his pancake a little more. It must have been too sweet for him.

“This is worse than rush.” Arwyn stuffed a bite of syrup-coated confection into his mouth and groaned with appreciation. “At least one hole is getting stuffed.”

Simon snorted, and Robin cackled. “He’s one of us!”

Giving Robin a slightly judgmental look, Simon snorted. “Speak for yourself.”

“Oh shush. You’re walking about all jingly and shit, like we don’t know you got nipple clamps on half the time, perv.” Gemory raised a brow and Simon scoffed, cheeks reddening.

“Eroscientia. Remember? I know all the weird sexy shit.” Gemory waved his fork at Simon and the laughter that erupted from Arwyn felt so good. Every bark of joy brought his mind a little farther away from the iced legumes nestled over his softening cock.

“Think that means Rayray knows?” Robin’s upper lip curled.

“Yep!” Rachael shouted from somewhere down the hall.

“Pit’s fucking sake. Stop eavesdropping!” Simon groaned and sank down in his seat and crossed his arms. “*One* time. *Once*. I wear nipple clamps *once* while we’re out and you guys —ugh!”

“She’s not eavesdropping, Simon. Asking her not to be aware of everything around her is like telling you not to breathe.” Gemory sipped his coffee.

A soft smile found its way onto Arwyn’s face, tugging the corners of his mouth. Alone in the moment, with people he knew and loved around him, he felt secure and oddly happy about everything.

A little boy... All odds would be the little one would have dark hair, considering Arwyn and Abaddon’s origins, but not entirely certain. Little Rafael had hair that didn’t match his

fathers. The baby would be male, for sure, but a blend of both of them, two angelic creatures wrought with demon magic and immortal blood.

Arwyn's chest shook, his breath shuddering until he realized it was laughter. "Nipple clamps! I love it. I never dreamed I'd find my brothers and such good company. Thank you." Arwyn finished his pancakes and offered Vize a beaming grin. The angel took the compliment sweetly.

"You're good company, too. I find you bridge the gap between angel and demon here. Plus, anyone that can handle syrup and sweet things can help Jericho and me even the playing field. We're not odd men out!"

Jericho shuffled into the room, baby nestled in his arm. "Morning." He pawed around for coffee and an unreasonable amount of sugar before settling down. He grunted in acknowledgment as Vize gently took Rafael from him.

"Morning, my little one. How are you and your pappa this morning?" Vize cooed to the baby and beamed when he made a little huff of a noise back.

"He's fantastic. He cried half the night. I'm not healed up fully yet, and I want Malkiel." Jericho pouted and relished the minute of reprieve. "Can you watch Rafael while I get a nap, please?"

"Of course. I have no problem watching. When was he changed and fed last?" Vize glanced over as Jericho groped at his chest a bit.

"Think 'bout thirty minutes ago?"

“He feels full.” Vize checked Rafael’s diaper. “Freshly changed. Still powdery. You’re really running on autopilot, dear. Go to the den and curl up on the couch. Have Tohu pat your back a little or something.”

Jericho nodded, and Vize pushed a second cup toward Jericho. Vize smiled. “You can bring him his coffee.”

“Does it bother you when Tohu touches another male?” Arwyn blinked up in surprise.

“Not at all. We’re a family. When angel couples cohabitate, they share certain things. We can be intimate with one another, not sexually, but if I were to find them napping together, or he were to find Malkiel hugging me or something, it’d not be a problem. Intimacy is so hard for angels, and when we cohabitate, we only keep those we can be vulnerable around.” Vize smiled. “See how easily he trusts me with Rafael? I trust him equally with Cora. Even before they mated, Cora knew instinctively that Malkiel was in our family. Whenever I have my rush, Cora sneaks off to sleep at the foot of Malkiel’s bed. She seeks them when she has fevers. It’s a beautiful thing.” Vize’s lower lip trembled through a smile.

“I’m sorry if I upset you.” Arwyn took a sip of a glass of juice that someone had placed before him at some point.

“No. It’s emotional, talking about it. So beautiful. It’s—” Vize choked.

“Vize’s heart is so very big for an angel. He spent too long burying it, and when he broke, it hurt him worse. All those pieces he kept together, so sharp.” Gemory offered a sweet smile that made Vize beam and nod.

“I see. I can imagine having a rush is more difficult with a dependent child.” Arwyn rubbed his lower lip.

“Don’t worry. Whenever any of us are spiced up, the kids have a sleepover.” Robin snorted. “I don’t think Mal and I have had sex once with Xander in the house since he’s been old enough to walk.” Robin snorted and Gemory gasped.

“Robin! Really? I just tell Kir and Zaya we’re fighting.” Gemory waved his hand dismissively.

“Fighting, really?” Vize glared over. “Between them and Moon, they’ve pieced everything together. They know.”

“Ugh. Yeahhhh...” Gemory leaned back in his chair and sighed. “But anyway! Arwyn! You’re feeling alright?”

Arwyn, who’d slowly tuned out of the discussion, blinked and let his mind catch up. “Hmm?”

“Are you okay, dear?” Vize leaned over and patted his forearm.

“Yes. I suppose. I’ve a plastic sack of unsettlingly green, frozen vegetables plastered to my cock and feel like I could size up anything mildly phallic and consider it a challenge worth pursuing.” Arwyn groaned, and Robin chuckled.

“Well, come on. Let’s finish our drinks and head back into the den. Keep the kids from driving Tohu crazy.” Robin waved his hand dismissively and tipped his head back, coffee going down with barely two swallows before he got up, letting one of the staff sweep in to begin cleaning.

Gemory and Vize helped the imp for a moment, gathering up the things with pleasant smiles before they made their way to the den as a group. Arwyn tossed his ice pack in the trash on

the way and found himself much more manageable with food and drink in him.

The older kids were at the center of the room, all bent over a board game playing Monopoly, while Peter, Simon's oldest, seemed to be winning, much to Xander's chagrin. Watching them kept Arwyn's mind off of things, that was, until little ember-colored eyes fixated on him. *Zaya*. The child reminded him of the one he was supposedly carrying.

Gemory lifted Rafael from Vize's arms and tucked him down to sleep on a floor cradle next to another curled-up infant covered in a ridiculous amount of pink. *Shala*. Gemory's youngest daughter stirred with a soft coo.

Jericho lay curled on his side on the floor beside Tohu, one hand rubbing the small of his back in gentle circles while he thumbed through his phone, tail swaying idly behind him. Vize took up space next to him with an expression of utter adoration and leaned in. *Family*. Every one of them.

Robin brought a pillow over for him. "Rest while you can. When Abaddon gets back, you'll need the energy."

"I wish he'd hurry." Arwyn fluffed the pillow and curled up on a lounge, closing his eyes to sleep to the shrill voices of children distracting themselves the best way they knew how. Bickering.

Chapter Sixteen

Abaddon

The twin suns sat once more, and their quarry retreated, tunneling beneath the sands for the fifth time since they'd descended. Abaddon snarled and threw his spear to the ground with a clatter. "Fucking beast! I'm ready to be home!"

"Look at you, Abaddon, eager to return to the surface? How unlike you." Malacoda's dark chuckle sent a bristle up Abaddon's back.

"Fuck. You." Abaddon waved his hand, sending his spear away with a shimmer into the ether from which he'd drawn it.

"Hmm, no. I've Robin waiting at home, growing more frustrated by the moment. So please, take your time. The longer we spend down here, the more he'll need me." Malacoda tilted his head, the shadows surrounding him shifting like black flames as he sniffed the air. "Move south. I caught a whiff of it."

Malacoda took off at a run, feet pounding sand before he took to his wings, snatching Falcalor.

"We have a sighting?" Elliat called out, swooping by on an unsteady wing. He'd not fully gotten control of the appendages yet, and it showed.

"Equally likely that Malacoda is being a piece of shit!" Abaddon flanked Elliat in case he faltered again and set course for Malacoda's direction, Lucifer jetting above him, golden

wings shimmering as Malkiel's red wings disappeared against the rouge sky.

"I want this thing dead as fast as possible. I miss my mate and my babies." Elliat shot forward, determination in his fierce violet eyes.

Abaddon couldn't disagree. The thought of finding his mate once more and doing unspeakable things to him for a fortnight sounded amazing. Their relationship, so young and new, didn't need this separation. He needed to be there, loving his mate and learning to be loved. He needed to be buried to the knot in his mate, making him scream for release.

This thing must die.

Breaking ranks, Abaddon joined Malkiel and Elliat in the front line, determined to do more than wear the creature down.

He'd lost a tail already, several toes, and broken teeth on swords and, in one case, Malkiel's fist. The angel was a force to be reckoned with in ways that made Leramin admit how stupid he'd been to challenge him so many months ago. Compared to one another, Leramin was a powder puff of an angel offensively, but he could take a hit.

Malkiel struck first, going for the legs, trying to break bone while Elliat swooped down to bring his flail down upon the beast's head. He swatted them away and Lucifer streaked by, sword drawn with Malacoda in tow, each going for the same gash in his side to sink the cuts deeper. Globbs of sand and dirt-riddled black blood followed the behemoth in its wake.

Abaddon darted in, feet lithe, his mind full of his mate's toned body, curling and crying out for him. He wanted Arwyn so badly, needed him. "Why won't you die already?" Abaddon shouted as his spear drove home in a gash along the creature's rib cage. Instead of drawing back, Abaddon drove it deep and jerked it, throwing his weight to twist the spear deep inside, scraping bone and slashing organs.

The baleful cry of the beast rang out as he staggered, receiving the volley of arrows the women were adept at.

A strange glow flittered about the edges of the beast. *Summoning...* Abaddon dissipated his spear and flew up, charged with rage and anger. Summoning his spear once more, he drove it hard into the base of the creature's neck, hitting bone with an awful grinding noise. He locked his thighs and gripped onto the beast's back, steering it with a twist of the stave. It reared its head back, tossing its horns, and Abaddon grinned. "Arrows at his neck!"

Glimmering arrows of light shot toward the beast and holy fire streaked past him, a bolt hitting his leg with a sizzling hiss before disappearing. "Fuck!" He didn't curse the archers or blame their shot, for the target was small and he knew his risks. Holy fire would burn him for hours, but he'd known great pain for so long. He bore through it as Leramin led the charge and allowed Lucifer and Malacoda to come in with their swords to cut into his tender flesh.

Malkiel darted in beneath the creature's body and the impact sent Abaddon flailing for purchase, hands grasping onto its wiry, sparse mane. Incensed, he drew his spear out and slammed it into the creature's neck again, this time grazing

bone instead of hitting it, slipping between ossiferous plates to penetrate the meat beneath.

Elliat charged in, flail drawn as the creature lowered its head and staggered. Abaddon wrenched his thighs and pulled all of his weight onto the spear to stir the flesh beneath, doing as much damage as he could. As a rain of holy arrows narrowly missed Abaddon, minus a few grazes, the creature fell, thick black blood drooling and spreading.

“Keep going. It could still heal!” Malacoda rushed in, sword drawn, and hacked the creature’s horns while Lucifer dealt the final blow, wrenching his sword into its neck.

Abaddon, trying to make the pain of the arrows fade, staggered off the behemoth’s back and banished his spear. “F-fuck...” What he wouldn’t give for a dip in a sulfurous hot spring or the touch of his lover to cool his aches.

“Stand back!” Lucifer had that look in his eyes, the seldom seen kaleidoscope of silver that caught light like diamonds. The demiurge in him, a shaper of reality, stepped back and waited. “Zirriel. What stone will it drop?”

“Its horns are useless. They were used last. It will be its heart.” Zirriel turned her head as Lucifer hacked his way into the creature’s chest and shoved his arm into the steaming innards. Ordinarily they’d wait for the creature to be consumed, a few hours for the land to take it. Lucifer had other plans.

From the corpse, he pulled a greasy and bloody stone, tossing it toward Sadriel. Magic, shaping reality and tearing it apart, encompassed the creature. Bits of horn lay shattered and scattered about, but more broke free as well as claws when

Lucifer finally drew light over his hands and the skin of the beast bubbled.

“Behemoth no more, rotting beast of sea. Be you behemoth and summon quickly.” Lucifer snorted and laughed before turning to the others, watching them nurse their wounds and gather the trinkets from the creature. “Watch!”

Where the beast lay not moments before, the carcass of a bloated beached whale slowly came into being. The scent of it brought bile to the back of Abaddon’s throat, but the glow of summoning still crawled over its skin.

“Quickly. Follow my lead. Zathir Corinth will be the one summoning, and they have an abandoned factory within a mile of the school. I want to watch our mischief unfold.” Even as they watched, the whale carcass creaked, taut as a balloon. Abaddon wanted to be nowhere near the thing when it blew.

One by one, they teleported and shimmered, following Lucifer’s lead as their glamours fell into place. Disguised, they stood on the rooftop nearby the expansive shipyard. The soft whoosh of traffic and cool air whipped their sweat-dampened bodies, the unbathed scent of them reminiscent of battles long fought, charging Abaddon with vigor.

“Why isn’t it working, Mage?” The icy tones of Zathir shot through the whispering silence around them. The lone shapes of the battle-ridden stared down from their ledge as Lucifer’s smile widened with utter chaos and joy.

They say that children often look for their bearers in a mate... That explains Robin and Mal. Lucifer bit his lower lip, stifling a laugh.

“These things take time. It’s not like I’m summoning a fucking imp, Corinth!” a human hissed in response. Candles flickered on the ground below, a wholly unnecessary step for a demon, but for some reason, humans had this whole idea that there was so much process to magic. They need only pluck it from the air, but no. Alas, poor humans had to draw hopscotch on the ground and light scented candles while chanting mumbo jumbo as they summoned the *behemoth*.

“Oh no...” Abaddon had to stifle a laugh, himself, sharing in the utter joy as Lucifer flicked his fingers, gathering imps pushing in, waiting for the behemoth to come and wait for orders. He’d known what Lucifer was doing but hadn’t thought it through until light blossomed and cheers rang out, until someone shouted.

“Pit’s sake, what’s that smell?”

“Oh, Satan!”

“Jesuit’s panties, my gods!” From the blaring light above descended the transfigured form of behemoth...a rotting, rank whale.

Screams spread about, the human shrieking as imps fled, choking and gagging on the scent.

“What the living fuck?” Corinth slipped on detritus and fell face-first into the mess with a disgusting splat. Others slipped and scrambled, hooves and shoes losing footing.

Lucifer cackled, drawing the eyes of several gathered imps and one very terrified and sick human. “Rachael Pitch of the Half Imps and Right hand of Firstlight sends her regards, imp! Now clean this damned mess up and I expect to see every

one of you at Firstlight at nine thirty in the morning to discuss. These shenanigans have gone on far too long. If you don't show up, what happened to Isaac will be a tea party. I've seen each and every one of you. Many will die. If you come willingly tomorrow, I shall not kill you, nor shall I imprison you. This silly war and rebellion ends now."

Abaddon strolled farther toward the edge and glared down at the scattering imps. Lucifer had made promises, but Abaddon had done no such thing.

"Let's go home." Lucifer turned away from the edge and shimmered, Abaddon following in his wake.

They arrived in the foyer, the barest whiff of whale carcass coming with them. The clatter of bodies drew Tohu out, braced and large, with a cautious gaze that softened. "How was i—Oh my goats!" Tohu blanched at the smell and Malkiel, ever the clever one, spread and fanned his wings. Fortunately, the scent didn't linger and a shrill scream echoed from down the hall.

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" A sharp blur cut through the hallway and bowled into Elliat as Moon beamed, hugging tight. Her little eyes were pink from tears and she sniffled. "Kir and Zaya said you'd probably die first!"

Elliat blinked down at his daughter and hefted her up, loping off with a soft smile. The group migrated and Abaddon

shuffled, wanting nothing more than a shower and to be buried to the knot in his waiting mate.

In the confines of the den, their mates beamed with joy, Robin latching himself onto Malacoda with a squeal of joy as Xander smiled. Delia and Sadriel hugged, and Leramin plucked Nashriel up, holding him tight.

“Da? Can I ask a question?” Nashriel gave Leramin his biggest silvery little eyes, lip pouting. Even Abaddon would have had trouble telling that face no.

“What is it?” Leramin pushed his son’s hair back and beamed.

“I wanna go to school with the others. Please?”

Zirriel caught Leramin’s eye, and they stared at one another, Leramin’s bottom lip quivering, tensing up in preparation for Zirriel’s answer.

“Is that what you truly want, Nashriel?” Zirriel stroked over his head, giving her own brand of fleeting affection.

Nashriel nodded vigorously.

“Then we’ll speak with Lucifer about it next week. How is that?” Zirriel turned to a slightly interested Lucifer who quirked a single brow.

“Hi, mister devil! Can I have ice cream?” Nashriel beamed, so expressive and joyful.

“With extra sprinkles?” Lucifer’s wicked grin widened.

Nashriel nodded, and Lucifer took the child on his hip before slipping off.

Abaddon watched Gemory and his little ones swarm Falcalor, and Cora tackled Malkiel with a squeal of delight. One body didn't greet him, though, missing from the mingle.

"Where's Arwyn?" Abaddon cut his gaze across the room and locked eyes with Vize, who pointed up, his face an emotionless mask.

Abaddon nodded and turned, finding Sadriel and Delia staring at the stone. Delia shook her head and pushed the stone back as Sadriel nodded, a soft smile on her lips.

"You sure it's okay?" Sadriel watched the human and sighed in relief when she nodded, swallowing hard.

Sadriel took the stone and placed it on a coffee table, nodding at Lucifer before waving and leaving with her partner. Sadriel wanted to share their years and grow old together. She'd sacrifice her magic for it soon, and go the way of so many angels before her.

Xander stared at the dirty stone and walked up to it. Lucifer jolted, reaching out to stop him, but Xander picked it up and inspected the bloody crystalline lump. He wiped it on his pant leg and smiled.

"Does it not burn you, Xander?" Lucifer stared at the stone and swallowed hard. Xander shook his head.

"No, sir. I think it's mine." Xander held it up to the light, the blood-red stone glittering through black blood congealing in its crevices.

Malacoda stared at his son holding the stone and then frowned. "How?"

“He...did something to the weapons. I think he helped in his own little way.” Vize smiled, and Xander nodded.

“This is mine.” The green in his eyes glittered, and Abaddon had an uneasy feeling about the lad’s future plans for said stone.

“Alright, then. When we get home, we have to put it up some place special. It’ll be very important for you someday.” Malacoda’s expression softened and Xander didn’t protest when Malacoda scooped him up.

“Hey, Creepy!” Robin jeered. Abaddon winced before he glanced over.

“Take a snack with you when you go up. He’s probably starving.” Robin winked and teleported with his mate and child.

Malkiel checked Abaddon over for a moment, prodding at his injuries with a frown. “Nothing I can do for holy fire like this. It’ll heal in a few hours.” Malkiel shooed Abaddon off and he raided the kitchen, finding half a cold pizza tucked inside. *Jalapeno pineapple*. What a flavor combination. Abaddon added a few cans of cola before climbing the stairs, following the delicious scent of intense arousal and his mate.

Only upon setting first foot on the last stair did Abaddon realize he’d not brought Arwyn a trophy. His gut clenched, but he’d find a way to make up for it. Perhaps cold pizza was enough.

He forged his way into the bedroom and staggered. “Father’s graces...” The scent in their bedroom smacked him

in the face, the bundle of his mate, back turned, shivered under the covers, wings drawn and tail twitching idly.

“Abaddon, my Wildfire.” Arwyn turned in the covers, the blanket sliding down his chest, sheened with a bare mist of perspiration. “I need.” His husky voice grabbed Abaddon by the balls and a dozen things swam in his mind. He had to feed him, to fuck him, to hold him, to bathe and—“Now.”

Abaddon set his plunder in a chair nearby and pulled the ragged remains of his pants off, throwing them to the floor. “I’m not clean.” Freezing in place, Abaddon weighed the options, wanting to descend upon his mate as much as he wanted to be clean for him.

“Then we bathe together after.” Arwyn shuddered as Abaddon abandoned all sense and fought the urge to jump into bed. He would be lying if he said either foot was on the ground when he made to crawl into bed. With a gentle grope and shove, Abaddon had Arwyn pressed into the sheets, face down and covers bunched. He whimpered miserably as Abaddon spied the glistening slick trailing his bare ass and thighs and the nearly saturated towel beneath him. “My love...”

“Now, my Wildfire. Please.” Arwyn gasped like he couldn’t get enough air and arched his back. Abaddon’s hands were filthy and his first urge to plunge knuckle-deep into his mate and open him fell flat. “Please.” His trembling whimper had something deeper in it than need. It was then that Abaddon took in the scents of the room. Arwyn. Lust. Something so sweet, like Arwyn but more. Tears, cloves, sun-

warmed earth. It was intense, but of all the things he scented, cum was not one of them.

“When is the last time you came?” Abaddon asked, nipping the back of his mate’s neck, guiding himself into bed, his cock a compass pointing high north, drooling precum as he sidled in. Guiding the tip of his cock to Arwyn’s hole made both of them groan. He was open already, and from the slick scent on Arwyn’s groping arms and the gleam along his fingers, he was well open and spoiled for him.

“The day after you left. Please.” Arwyn’s voice shivered into a sob. “Please. I’m begging. It hurts and I don’t like it.”

Abaddon’s gut clenched, and he slowly sank into his mate, letting wet, velvety heat suck him deep. Hot, slick tightness squeezed his cock impossibly hard, and Arwyn’s breath halted, held in anticipation. Gently nudging his hips forward, Abaddon angled himself and pegged Arwyn’s prostate a single time, reaching his hand around to stroke his cock with a tight-fisted grip.

Crying out, Arwyn choked on his own breath and brayed as his insides pulsed. Hot cum coated Abaddon’s fingers. Despite the quantity of fresh spend that coated him, Arwyn didn’t cease his clenching, bouncing back against his mate. Undeterred, Abaddon knew what Arwyn needed. His love. Not the pain. Not then. There was no pain to give, for Arwyn made him whole so easily.

“More. Keep. Fucking. Going.” Arwyn’s demanding voice curled into a sharp growl and Abaddon obliged, jerking his hips in short thrusts, aiming for his lover’s swollen spot, moving inside him to torture him so sweetly.

“You missed me.” Abaddon growled, but his greater form did not rise to the occasion, no horns or wings to celebrate his wild magic.

“I did. I need you. Harder. I need your knot.” Arwyn sobbed and silenced into harsh breaths as Abaddon snapped his hips forward, raking his cock over that spot over and over again, each graze making Arwyn tense up more, his body coiling like a spring ready to snap. Abaddon wanted more, wanted to keep loving his mate, keep thrusting, but the telltale tingle shot up his spine, drew his balls up, and had his knot slowly filling, the bulge of it tugging and pushing his mate’s tight hole. Undeterred, Abaddon slammed his hips home, grinding into his lover’s spot. Letting his hand fly, Abaddon braced one hand on the headboard and the other to Arwyn’s unyielding cock.

“Come for me. Let it go, love.” Abaddon’s hips flew at a galloping pace, the strokes becoming faster and shorter until his knot filled and hot cum boiled up his shaft and emptied his heavy sac one pulse at a time as Arwyn came in sympathy, bathing Abaddon’s hand with hot pulse after pulse. “Oh, that’s good. So good. Let it all go for me.” Abaddon slowed his pumping hips, his knot tugging and pulsing just behind Arwyn’s tight ring. Short strokes slowed into languid pumps, Abaddon rubbing ample cum up and down Arwyn’s shaft as he maneuvered his lover onto his side, hand wandering over the hillock of his hip and down his thighs, back up to gently palm his tight sac, over his twitching, softening cock.

Arwyn let loose a pitiful noise and grabbed Abaddon’s wrist, pulling it up to his belly and pressed it in.

Abaddon's first thought was that he'd filled Arwyn in the ways that some demons could, leaving his mate laden with far more seed than his channel could hold in preparation to flood his womb. But Abaddon wasn't that way. He certainly had plenty of cum, enough to put any mortal to shame, but certainly not *that* much. Then the telltale pulse of life, the surge of power between them, everything made Abaddon's heart seize. He sat up, still locked in his mate, and stared at their joined hips, over his waist, and eyed the gentle, small swell. "It seems I have a gift for my returning mate to celebrate his victory."

Abaddon pulled Arwyn's face to his as much as he could, their tongues lapping and lips brushing for awkward purchase until Abaddon managed to wriggle his cock free, forcing Arwyn to face him. His lover's cock stood rigid still, easily riling Abaddon back into shivering need with a mere whimper.

"You bear my son." The words tumbled out of Abaddon's mouth, whispered against Arwyn's lips and answered with a soft kiss.

"I do." Arwyn licked along Abaddon's lips and fought with impatient whimpers to lock their lips in a hungry kiss, their tongues thrusting. Arwyn's jutting cock had Abaddon's stirred with little impatient thrusts until he grasped their cocks together, his knot still tender and not fully deflated. Thrusting together, they found easy release again, and once more after with Abaddon kissing down Arwyn's chest, sucking his cock as the impatient creature pulled his hair and brayed with unrestrained lust. A few sad and small pulses gave Abaddon a little taste, the flavor bitter and watery.

“You’re so fucking beautiful.” Abaddon stared up at his disheveled mate, hair mussed, eyes bloodshot and glistening. Lips swollen and well-kissed. His hard nipples showed signs of gentle swelling around the bars. Abaddon raised a hand, daring to touch over Arwyn’s belly, tracing the soft dome of it on his way to flick a single reddened nipple.

Arwyn gasped and fought to pull Abaddon up for a kiss that stole their breath away and set the pace for them to find pleasure again and again.

Chapter Seventeen

Arwyn

“Nobody told me this would taste even better cold.” Arwyn lounged in bed, eyes hooded with satisfaction, still misty with lust. He moaned around a slice and whimpered, taking secret delight in the way Abaddon’s raw cock twitched, like it had anything left in it. *Poor thing.*

“One of the many mysteries of the universe,” Abaddon said, speaking around a mouthful of pizza. “That, and compound interest.”

Arwyn had no idea about the latter of those two things. He had a vague notion, but such were things for Robin and Simon to fret over. He was discovering the world one thing at a time on his own. Pizza, one of those joyous new experiences, washed down with a delightful carbonated beverage, made his entire body shiver with delight. A light flutter in the gentle swell of his belly agreed. *Life. My son. Our son.*

Millenia ago, when his father sealed Arwyn into the box, knowing the horrific things to come, he damned himself to his fate for daring to fail. For daring to be another Lucifer, a damaged and incomplete thing.

“What are you thinking about, Crackerjack?” Abaddon raised a hand to trail his thumb lovingly along Arwyn’s lip then onto his tongue, cleaning away misplaced sauce.

“That Amenadiel can suck the spigot of a public water fountain.”

Abaddon visibly shuddered, his lips flattening into an unpleasant sort of grimace.

“Exactly!” Arwyn shoved a bite into his mouth and whimpered. He salivated heavily and shuddered, his cock twitching as he contemplated finishing his pizza while bouncing on Abaddon’s *delightful* length. Being filled with his thick heat made Arwyn’s entire world right.

“Take your mind off that. You are to worry about our son and our life to come. Like where you want to raise our child, and names... What we’re to have for dinner or if we should buy a new home or stay here. That is, if Earth is where you wish to stay.” Abaddon stared at Arwyn, such wonder dancing in his silvery eyes. The cool and misty gray of them drew Arwyn in to swallow hard and steal a deep and very pizza-flavored kiss.

“But what if I want more?” Arwyn straddled Abaddon’s hips, held his pizza in his teeth, and grabbed for Abaddon’s cock, working the soft plumpness in his hand to bring it back to full mast much to his weak protests.

“You need to eat and—” Abaddon groaned as Arwyn guided him home, pushing fluidly into his channel. The blunt heat of Abaddon’s cock sinking in made the world sing.

“Mf! I can do both.” Arwyn rolled his hips to get Abaddon’s cock to his sweet spot. The whole world hummed through him. Slick drooled and pooled around him, making each shake of his hips draw forth lewd, wet noises. “Oh... Maybe not.” Arwyn’s entire body shuddered.

“Oh fuck... Get off if you need to.” Abaddon reached to stroke Arwyn’s thighs and gasped when he twisted his torso to

fling the rest of his pizza slice back into the box.

“That’s what I’m trying to do.” Arwyn’s voice came forth harsher than he’d intended.

“Patience, Crackerjack. Patience.” Abaddon rolled his hips and flexed, his cock twitching deep within. So full. So wonderful. Arwyn groaned as he shook his hips more insistently, tagging his prostate with every thrust until their skins adopted beautiful glows, lighting the room from within, throwing stark shadows around them.

Abaddon keened as his knot defied him, filling and locking Arwyn down, stilling him. Filled taut, Arwyn cried out, his cock spasming as it fruitlessly dribbled, reminding him that there was nothing left to give. The spirit was willing, but the body had long since exhausted itself.

“Arwyn, I think we need to tone it down a bit, yes?” Abaddon rubbed his lower back in small circles, his fingertips giving blessed pressure there.

“Y-yeah.” Arwyn shimmied his hips to feel Abaddon, hissing at the rawness and pleasure.

“Want some more pizza and a shower?” Abaddon pulled Arwyn down to nuzzle and kiss with soft brushes of his lips.

“Please.” Arwyn’s breath came out featherier than he’d intended. His breath danced over Abaddon’s lips, leading to another soft kiss.

“Can’t get more pizza if I’m stuck in you.” Abaddon grinned widely, his canines sharp and tempting.

“Is that a challenge, my Wildfire?” Arwyn twisted his hips and leaned precariously toward the pizza box with a

strained noise. Abaddon's skin caught with a fresh glow and he chuckled, pulling Arwyn back.

“Not a challenge. Here.” Abaddon sat up, bunched Arwyn into his lap, and made the awkward scoot closer toward the edge of the bed where the box sat. Arwyn snatched a piece and nibbled contentedly. “There we go. Wanna gimme a slice?”

Arwyn glanced up guiltily. “Uh...”

“That's the last slice?”

Arwyn nodded.

Abaddon smiled and nuzzled into Arwyn's neck. “Then it went to a good cause. There'll be more pizzas to come. I won't die of hunger over a single slice of pizza.”

“I might,” Arwyn said around a mouthful of crust, licking his fingers.

“Then let's get you cleaned up and go raid the fridge.” Abaddon wriggled his hips and slid free of Arwyn with a sigh of relief. The room reeked of sex and lust, but Abaddon could only marvel at the soft belly of his mate and the absolutely disgusting state of their sheets. Most of which could stand of their own volition.

Abaddon swept him into the shower, fingers wandering his mate's body, no level of touch seemingly enough.

“I think we moved a little fast with everything, didn't we?” Arwyn turned in his arms and laughed, catching kisses through the rain of steaming water around them.

“Perhaps? Elliat took Simon before his blood came forth. Malacoda bred Robin on his claiming night. I'm beginning to

think that it's a hereditary thing." Abaddon brushed soft kisses over Arwyn's cheeks and nuzzled his ears, his shivering breath full of something deeper than arousal. The glow of his skin, subtle and continuous, could only be the utter joy he felt.

"Perhaps it is not that we are too fast, but that we are very certain of what we want." Arwyn leaned into Abaddon's arms and touch, letting the evidence of their sessions wash away.

Arwyn ran a finger along Abaddon's side and shoulder, trailing to his thigh with a frown. "You were hurt."

Raw gouges, healed over minimally with thin, raw skin, made Arwyn's eyes sting with tears that Abaddon kissed away with a little smile. "Doesn't hurt much at all. Touching you makes me feel better, and I'll take any number of scars to keep my family safe."

"But it was holy fire. Who would do that to you?" Arwyn traced his finger around a slash on his arm.

"I wanted it over with faster, so I sorta charged in with the arrows. Friendly fire. Accidental, I assure you." Abaddon shut the shower off and hefted Arwyn into his arms, wrapping his mate and himself in a robe, before trotting downstairs to the kitchen.

The house seemed empty with nobody around, no scampering children or Rachael's needling. No snarky comments from Robin or cattiness from Gemory. None of Vize's worry or Lucifer's strangely comforting brand of feigned disinterest. Abaddon must have thought so, too, as he quietly raided the fridge and brought another half pizza to the small kitchen table neatly tucked into the corner. "There's no more after this."

“That’s fine.” Abaddon flipped the lid and frowned.
“What the hell?”

“Another jalapeno and pineapple?” Arwyn snorted and took a slice. “Robin.”

“Robin, indeed. Good kid.”

“I think so, too. And I have the cutest little nephew. He’s so wicked and smart. I hope our child will be just as mischievous.” Arwyn took a bite of cold pizza and hummed happily.

“Think we’ll be able to get some rest tonight?” Abaddon’s heated eyes met Arwyn’s from across the table.

“Okay, but I want head first.” Arwyn nipped his slice of pizza and bit his lip when Abaddon’s silvery eyes hazed with lust.

“I can give you head right now, if you like.” Abaddon curled his long tongue over his lips invitingly and Arwyn’s heart sang.

Of their own volition, Arwyn’s legs spread, the tie of his robe falling away. “I think I’d like that very much.”

Abaddon slid to the floor on his knees, his body unchanged, but those eyes were full of the milky white of his greater form.

Pizza and a blow job, Arwyn decided, was the greatest thing in the history of ever.

Chapter Eighteen

Abaddon

If it wasn't one thing, it was another. He woke with eyes stinging, his cock aching as Arwyn blinked up at him with eyes full of sleep and adoration. A trail of dried drool crusted his chin, but that didn't dissuade him from nuzzling down with hungry noises and slurping tongue.

A harsh buzzing of his phone on the nightstand brought him back to reality a little, and he recalled what had woken them. He pawed about and brought the phone to his ear.

"M'yes?"

"Bring your mate downstairs. Gemory wants to check on him and Robin is dying to give you baby things. Also, I have something for the little one." Lucifer's dry tones tickled Abaddon's ear, but Arwyn did something, tongue curling as he swallowed Abaddon deep.

"Yeah. That's perfect. Keep... Yeah." Abaddon's mind reeled as Arwyn swirled his tongue in a way that made his heart flutter.

"Abaddon!" Lucifer snapped and Abaddon cringed, crying out as he fumbled to hang up the phone. His balls drew up tight, orgasm impending.

Arwyn lifted his head and popped his swollen lips free. "Mmm. I'll make it quick." He circled his tongue and swallowed, bobbing his head until Abaddon's mind went black and his cock tingled, orgasm washing over him with a cold

sweat. Every surge made Arwyn whimper and swallow with greed and delight, dancing in his beautiful eyes.

Spent and panting, Abaddon pulled Arwyn up for a kiss, their tongues thrusting back and forth between one another, sharing the taste of slick and spend from their hours of love. “Father’s here. We need to hurry.”

Arwyn chuckled and slid from Abaddon’s lap and sauntered, bare-bodied, across the room, the firm curves of his ass still glistening and pink in places. His belly? Bigger and full of so much promise. Abaddon wondered if that was what he’d been missing. He’d gotten better since Xander had arrived, looking forward to spending time with his nephew then the twins and Shala. He adored them in his own reserved way, but he’d have his own to deal with.

He followed Arwyn in a haze and rinsed off, dressing in a rush to find his father, Robin, Simon, and Gemory, waiting downstairs with a very nervous and fidgety Vize. They had boxes with them. Abaddon didn’t know whether to be afraid or excited. A shiver of panic shot up his spine as he had the sudden realization that there was a baby coming. An actual little one. And it’d be only a day or two more if Arwyn’s size was to be believed.

“Nice to see you down. Where’s your mate?” Lucifer shifted in his seat, Ella squirming in his arms.

“He’s a little slower than me. Considering everything.” Abaddon stretched and yawned before flopping into a seat.

A soft coo of delight caught his attention and Abaddon glanced over, offering his mother a half smile as she slipped

in. “Abaddon!” Lilith swished over and seated herself on the arm of his couch.

“Mother. It’s good to see you topside. How is everything?” Abaddon smiled.

“Same old everything. But what about you? I want to meet this mate of yo—oh my goodness.” Lilith jumped and gasped when Arwyn slipped in.

“Feels familiar, doesn’t he?” Lucifer raised a brow and Abaddon turned to see Arwyn standing in the doorway, his face a mask.

“One of his, isn’t he?” Lilith beckoned Arwyn over and he flinched for a moment, making Abaddon bristle until he relaxed under the sweep of a gentle hug.

“I have to say, I prefer Abaddon’s company over *his*.” Arwyn offered a gentle smile before skirting free of her grasp to plop firmly into Abaddon’s lap. With a reflexive motion, Abaddon wrapped his hands around his waist and nuzzled into his back.

“It does seem so. I’ve not seen him this happy in a very long time.” Lilith leaned over and brushed her fingers over Abaddon’s hair, a soft smile stretching over her lips. “Is he alright?” Lilith leaned over and rested a hand on Arwyn’s shoulder.

“Abaddon is doing wonderfully so far.” Arwyn beamed and reached for Abaddon’s hands and placed them over his midsection. “Even if I’d much rather be upstairs.”

“I bet you would. Forneus was a nightmare when he was pregnant with Falcalor. Darling, he was insatiable. I think Lu

was ready to throw in the towel.” She laughed proudly, and Lucifer glared.

“I was not,” Lucifer grumbled and waved them off.

“Ew.” Gemory reminded them he was there.

“Okay, I’ll back off.” Lilith laughed. “Now let’s see what sort of duck things that Robin has brought to upset Gemory!”

“I told Robin no ducks this time.” Simon sighed.

“Jericho has all the duck stuff left over from Cora,” Robin huffed and crossed his arms. “We picked another theme.”

“Theme?” Arwyn leaned forward and glanced at the boxes.

“Yeah. We thought we’d go with primary colors, solid prints, a little boring but easy to clean.” Gemory beamed and Robin scoffed.

“Don’t act all high and mighty! You wanted to do emoji-themed everything!”

“Emojis? Those awful little message pictures?” Arwyn wrinkled his nose and Abaddon snorted.

“Shh! Don’t react! They’ll turn emojis into the new duck game.” Vize blanched.

“And that reminds me! I have something for you two.” Lucifer gestured upstairs, and the others visibly cringed, save for Vize. “I found the most adorable stuffed dragon toy that I had to get for the new grandson.”

Lilith’s gaze slid toward Abaddon, and instant worry settled within him. Lucifer liked *Timothy*. That fucking stuffed unicorn haunted his dreams.

Abaddon pointed at Robin, brow furrowed, mouthing harsh words, “I blame you for this.”

Robin raised his hands in pure innocence, likely for the first time in his chaotic life, and shook his head.

Arwyn, delighted by everything, took a moment to thumb through some of the baby things and followed Lucifer upstairs with a shy grin as the rest of them followed uneasily.

Ella’s room, a few doors down from Abaddon’s, had been touched up a bit with new trim and curtains done in a rather flattering green that matched the highlights in Arwyn’s hair.

“Since Ella isn’t staying over much, I figure she can share when she needs to.” Lucifer tidied the crib all done in shades of gray and gestured toward a rather overstuffed and plumped, wall-eyed, dragon stuffed animal. Abaddon shuddered and reached for his mate at the height of a gasp.

“Shh, it’s okay. We’ll move it to anot—” Abaddon tried to comfort Arwyn, but he rushed forward and grabbed the enormous stuffed animal, squeezing it tight.

“Oh, it’s adorable!” Arwyn rubbed his face into it.

Simon and Robin stood, blinking. Lips drawn back, teeth clenched.

“He’s bonkers, isn’t he?” Gemory whispered to Arwyn’s brothers.

Lilith leaned in. “Abaddon. Are you *sure* this is your mate?”

Abaddon shook his head and sighed, smiling despite the fact the stuffed creature made his skin crawl.

“I knew you’d love it!” Vize beamed and Lucifer’s chest puffed with pride. “Now we have to name it!”

“Ooh. Okay. Let’s find a good name for him... Doug!” Arwyn squeezed it tighter and positioned it very purposefully in the corner behind the crib’s head.

“Doug. I like it.” Lucifer nodded once. “Perhaps Ella can bring Timothy over and play.”

“Oh please, do bring Timothy back where he came from,” Lilith said, earning a dirty look.

Robin and Gemory went about putting things away as Simon gave Arwyn a tour so he’d know where the things were being kept. “But the bassinet is in the closet and we’ll just push that into your room. For the first week or two, you’ll want the baby next to you at least.”

Vize and Lucifer fawned over the stuffed dragon’s pastel blue-and-pink fabric and its enormous saucer-sized black soulless eyes.

Gemory sauntered over and patted Abaddon’s shoulder, a soft grin tilting the corner of his mouth up. “Malkiel, Simon and I are on call. Since none of us know what to expect, the moment you think it’s time, call. Okay?”

Abaddon nodded. “I’ve seen children born before... I know somewhat of what to do...” Hesitantly, Abaddon glanced over at his mate as a soft glow traversed Arwyn’s skin. “It involves boiling water, right?” The smile that tugged the corner of Abaddon’s mouth made his eye twitch as Gemory scoffed.

“Don’t let your mate hurt.” Gemory patted his shoulder and Abaddon wandered over, suddenly interested in their conversation as they talked about how to feed and care for their little one. For some reason, it involved Arwyn hiking his shirt up to show off his pierced nipples. Lilith made an approving noise and glanced over at Abaddon.

He’d spent enough time lapping those piercings again and again since Arwyn had gotten them, that he was almost jealous when Gemory slipped over, helping him squeeze around them.

“Bingo! Called it.” Vize crossed his arms over his chest as Arwyn stared down at his nipples.

“Only a little, but when the baby gets here, feed away!” Robin chuckled. “And if the baby doesn’t want it, daddy might.” Simon gave Abaddon a wink.

Abaddon doubted he’d want Arwyn’s milk more than their child would. Milk, in general, wasn’t on the long list of things he enjoyed on its own.

“Have you thought about a name yet?” Lucifer folded his hands behind his back and stared off at the other bearers with a soft smile.

Arwyn glanced at Simon and Robin.

“Xander had a suggestion.” Robin smiled up at Arwyn. “Samael.”

Lucifer shrugged. “The name has power and there’s no living Samael.”

“I like it. What are your thoughts, my Wildfire?” Arwyn slipped free of his brothers and slid against Abaddon’s side.

“Samael. Rafael. Xander’s name doesn’t fit in to this.”
Abaddon tapped his lower lip.

“Because it’s his middle name that’s the marker, isn’t it?”
Lucifer leered and Robin nodded.

“Azrael.” Robin cleared his throat.

“That makes more sense. Okay. I’m fine with Samael, if it’s what you want, Arwyn. Feel free to say no.” Abaddon’s heart warmed when Arwyn beamed up at him, eyes glittering.

“I think he likes it.” Arwyn drew Abaddon’s hand to his belly to feel the little one having a little tantrum.

“Chill your hooves, little demon. There’ll be plenty of time to run amok once you’re born. Focus on growing big and strong.” Abaddon’s cheeks heated as Lilith and Robin made little *aww* noises.

“I think we best head out.” Lucifer waved goodbye before taking Lilith’s hand and shimmering off.

Robin, Simon, and Gemory found reasons to all go their separate ways, but Vize stayed behind, walking off with Arwyn, drawing Abaddon in to follow behind as they chatted happily. Unbeknownst to Abaddon, the two had known one another in passing some many years ago and under new circumstances, they got along well.

Vize had been stoic and avenging so long ago, hidden behind a wall of emotions that would eventually break him. But these days, he was every bit the emotional bearer he feared being. And it was beautiful.

Chapter Nineteen

Arwyn

“Have you tried, you know, having some rough?” Robin made a rude gesture from his place by the pool, bathing in the simmering sun.

Arwyn stretched out on his lounge chair as it creaked, staring down at the heavy form of his belly. “For hours last night. Abaddon was snoring by the time I was done.”

“You outlasted Creepy?” Robin snorted.

“I usually do. I’ve quite the appetite.” Arwyn beamed and closed his eyes, soaking in the wonderful sun, letting it kiss him in ways he wished Abaddon would.

“Daaaaamn.” Robin whistled. “I’ve straight up passed out during marathons with Spooky.”

“I didn’t need to know that.” Abaddon’s mirthful voice made Arwyn twist in his chair to glance toward the house and smile at his lovely mate, wearing only a pair of swim trunks, his hair a mess from the pool. “And stop telling everyone I fall asleep during sex. That was *once*, and I was exhausted. I didn’t have a two-thousand-year nap to keep me fueled.”

“Aww, isn’t it cute? He thinks he’s got a say. Bottoms rule in this club, nerd.” Robin stuck his tongue out at Abaddon and snorted before rolling over to let the sun warm his back. What Arwyn wouldn’t give to roll over and get some sun on his back, taking advantage of the unseasonably warm day and their heated pool.

Despite being a day late and unbearably tired, he couldn't muster the energy to take a nap. He'd reached a critical point of sleeplessness where he was too tired to sleep. Sunbathing wasn't half bad though. Arwyn turned back to lay in his chair and grunted as a rather sharp sensation knotted up in his belly. "Well, that's unpleasant."

"Gas, or we need to get all hands on deck?" Robin lifted his sunglasses and glanced over.

"I think I just twisted a muscle or som—" A wet gush flooded his shorts, splashing through the slats of the sun lounger.

"Hell of a muscle..." Robin sat up calmly and held up his phone, waving it placatingly.

"Either that, or I'm slicking up and ready for another round?" Arwyn stuck his tongue out, but he couldn't put conviction in it.

"Abaddon, go get him upstairs and I'll call everyone in." Robin prodded a few buttons on his phone and held it to his ear, all smiles as Arwyn's belly twisted. He should have known it'd be soon when his baby had been so still all day. He twitched and kicked, but he'd ceased rolling and flailing so rambunctiously.

"Okay." Abaddon jogged over, his skin still damp and scented with chlorine. Arwyn gasped when he scooped him up and squirmed uncomfortably. "This feel okay?"

Arwyn settled himself and nodded. "I've been far more uncomfortable before. Get me upstairs and boil some water or

something? I'm not certain the purpose of it, but it'll give you something to do to feel useful."

"I'll feel useful holding you." Abaddon traversed the house to his wing and up the stairs to their room. He had towels under and around Arwyn in minutes as a full contraction tightened his belly. It wasn't pleasant, but Arwyn didn't feel like screaming or crying, either. It felt *real*, for lack of a better word.

"Every moment since you pushed that note into my box has been better than the one before. You're everything I've ever wanted." Arwyn caught Abaddon by his wrist and reclined on the bed a little, taking Abaddon in for a soft kiss. Instinct had their tongues roughly twisting against one another's, humming into the sweet tastes of their mouths together.

Abaddon cupped one hand behind Arwyn's head, the other over his belly, deepening the kiss as their tongues thrust. Arwyn pulled back, panting. "Are we having a baby, or are you trying to seduce me?"

"A little of both? I'm so excited and proud." Abaddon's lips brushed over Arwyn's and they were kissing again as the taut pain of contraction took his belly by storm. "Maybe hoping to distract you from the pain?"

"This is one of those pains I am happy to feel." Arwyn panted between laps of his tongue, hungrily claiming Abaddon's mouth.

"Ahem. We good?" Simon strolled in, a stack of towels in his hands. "Everyone is in the main sitting room. How far are

we?” Simon dipped through the room and into their bathroom, washing his hands.

“We’re good. Apologies. I’m excited.” Arwyn chuckled as his breath hitched and his belly did some weird squeezing, disfiguring thing.

“Malkiel’s downstairs just in case and Gemory will be here in twenty. He’s catching the last few minutes of some show.” Simon snorted and returned, drying his hands on a rag. “Get the shorts off him and let him have a towel for modesty.”

Abaddon helped Arwyn to shift his hips and slide free of the board shorts he wore. A rather starkly contrasted tan line ran between his sunned skin and thighs, still the color of milk and tea. A warm towel slid over his groin, and Simon tugged on a pair of gloves.

“Why do we bother with gloves if we don’t get disease?” Abaddon tilted his head.

“Because there’s no amount of washing I can do that will make my hand clean after having a finger up my brother’s butt.” Simon glanced at Arwyn and both fell out laughing, even though the shaking of his belly wasn’t particularly pleasant.

“It’s not that bad, surely?” Abaddon shrugged.

“How would you feel if you had to put a finger up Malacoda’s butt?” Simon glared at Abaddon.

“Hey, nobody gets to put a finger up Spooky’s bum but me! He still won’t let me, but I’ll wear him down yet.” Robin leaned in the doorway and gave a half-cocked smile.

“What’s up?” Simon glanced over at Robin, pausing on his way to check Arwyn’s dilation. He’d been warned that this would come, but nothing quite prepared him for it.

“Oh. Good timing, I’m sure.” Robin stared at his nails and Simon shrugged, tenting Arwyn’s legs.

“Deep breath.” Simon stared up at the ceiling as his gloved fingers navigated his entrance, finding the open channel with ease. “Oh yeah. Surprised you didn’t feel this sooner. He’s on his way down.”

Simon pulled his hand free and stepped back, pushing Abaddon to sit on the bed.

“What do I need to do?” Abaddon swallowed.

“Put this on and wait.” Robin slipped in and handed Abaddon a baseball catching mitt.

Abaddon, a little dazed and confused, had the thing on his hand, composure lost as he stared up, utterly bewildered. Robin snapped a quick photo.

“Okay. Season finale of that show was totally worth being late for. What’s u—” Gemory swept in and stared at Arwyn on the bed, knees tented beneath a towel and Abaddon sitting in front of him with the catcher’s mitt. Gemory took a long and patient breath before gently taking the mitt away from Abaddon.

Robin and Simon turned away, fighting laughter.

Gemory gathered some hot water and a hand towel, handing it to Abaddon. “Slide this over him to ease the stretching.” He guided Abaddon’s hands. Apparently, he was too dazed to do much else than blindly follow orders.

Arwyn's belly knotted up once more, distracting him from their antics and cried out with shock. The hard, jarring sensation of something large descending toward his opening racked Arwyn's body. He shuddered, groaning as the urge to push overcame him.

Then, Abaddon knew what to do. Instinct clicked in and he leaned forward to cup the towel better, stroking the side of Arwyn's face with encouraging noises. Arwyn savored every moment with him and found tears pricking his eyes.

"Does it hurt too bad?" Abaddon shifted on the bed, keeping his hand in place as he plucked a soft kiss over his mate's lips.

"No. It's that I don't feel like I deserve this. You're amazing and powerful. I'm just a broken oracle, and a failed mate." Arwyn sniffled and Abaddon kissed his tears away, smiling so genuinely.

"You didn't fail me. You've made my life so much better." Abaddon shushed and touched noses with Arwyn for a moment before whispering, "I love you. You don't need to be anything more than you."

"How could I possibly fail you? You've given me everything I needed to thrive." Arwyn brushed their lips together for something so gentle that it couldn't be considered a kiss then pulled away, his breath hitching.

Abaddon's startled cry told Arwyn all he needed to know as he pushed, taking in the slow burn and stretch that he'd never experienced before. He closed his eyes and pushed, letting his body do as it would naturally. Simon, Gemory, and Robin mingled about. Robin sat off to the side, pointedly not

looking, typing on his phone. Likely, he was keeping everyone updated.

Gemory sat at the ready by the door and Simon at the side of the bed, tools at the ready and a towel in his hands.

The pressure twisted Arwyn's insides, his entire body trembling and the last thing that crossed Arwyn's mind was the joyous look of wonder across Abaddon's face as he held their child and nearly fought Simon's intervention in trimming the cord and readying him to be bathed. And atop his head, muddled amid the birthing fluids, was a shock of shamrock-green hair. Arwyn smiled and closed his eyes, falling into much-needed rest.

Soft cries drew Arwyn awake to attend the bassinet at the side of the bed. Even if Arwyn didn't know quite what to do, his body did as the sting of milk made his chest ache. Simon strolled over, shushing the child as he helped the little one cradle to Arwyn's chest.

Arwyn balked at his bare nipples, no longer adorned with the fun metal, but the thought slipped away as Samael latched eagerly with little grunts of pleasure.

As if just noticing Arwyn was awake, Abaddon stirred at his side and leaned his head over to watch their child feed. "He's perfect. All eleven toes and all."

"Eleven?" Arwyn puzzled and found himself counting toes before giving a cheekily grinning Abaddon a weak shove.

Their tiny newborn whimpered before needing to be switched to the other side, so very hungry. Arwyn kissed the top of his head and hummed. “Samael.” Dressed in his little burgundy onesie, he looked every bit the little demon. Even when his eyes opened, and didn’t display the silver of angelic blood, but rather a misty sort of white with dark-blue edges. His gaze was intense, as stoic and serious as his grandfather.

Arwyn rubbed a thumb over his temple and frowned.

“What’s wrong?” Abaddon glanced down.

“He has my father’s cowlick.”

Abaddon tilted his head and couldn’t argue from the photos he’d seen. “Genetics won out. It’s kinda cute.” Abaddon rubbed over Samael’s cheek with the pad of his finger. The babe turned his head and opened his mouth, intent on finding something else to nurse off of, making Abaddon chuckle.

“So, has everyone been in here since I’ve been out?” Arwyn yawned and settled back, whining when Simon took the baby from him to put back in his cradle.

“They came and went. All is well. They’ll be by again tomorrow when you’re more rested.” Simon patted Arwyn’s shoulder.

“And everything went fine?” Arwyn blinked up at Simon.

“Textbook. Get some rest. We’ll bother you more for the next wives’ club meeting.” Simon beamed. “But call if you need anything.” He gave Arwyn a brief hug before slipping off to teleport home, leaving in a wisp of smoke.

“Abaddon?” Arwyn spoke after a long few minutes.

“Hmm?” Abaddon leaned in and traced his hand down Arwyn’s chest in slow circles, unable to stop touching his mate, as if no level of closeness was enough.

“I already want another. I want a house full for you to show you just how much I love you.” Arwyn gave him a weak kiss and yawned.

“Let’s play it by ear. After all, we’re going back down to the pit once Xander takes over. May not want to split raise a child?” Abaddon shrugged and nuzzled into Arwyn’s neck. “I love you. I’ll keep loving you no matter how many children you have or don’t.”

“How much do you love me?” Arwyn chuckled.

“Enough to always let you have the last slice of pizza.”

Chapter Twenty

Arwyn

Being away from Samael even for just a few hours was nerve-wracking. The sires and bearers always split for the wives' club meetings, socializing among the aristocracy of Lucifer's hierarchy. Swapping the roles, they always took the children among them, making sure the bearers could fully relax.

Arwyn, Robin, and Simon gathered around with Rachael sitting at a small table, all sipping a coffee of some variety. Robin and Simon avoided alcohol out of solidarity around Arwyn, as it could have tainted his milk.

"Since when did Rachael get an invitation to the wives' club?" Robin grinned over at her.

Rachael sighed heavily. "Because Lucifer insists I start socializing outside of the sires, since the bearers will be more on my side in time. And that the bearers are more important. The base of the pyramid is always the strongest, and people assume that because they're on the bottom, they're weak. A country can be broken if their foundation gives out."

"Truth spoken. When I was a young lad, the menfolk in the village made rules against the women, how they were not to perform certain jobs and when and where they were permitted to speak." Arwyn chuckled.

"How well did that go over?" Simon snorted and Rachael perked up, eyes wide and attentive.

“Well. Pardon my crudeness, but the women obeyed, and they collectively stopped assisting in any capacity with the jobs they were forbidden from. If women couldn’t plow the field, they refused to thresh. They refused to weave baskets if they couldn’t harvest. It was then the men realized that the women were the ones working. Instead, they grew fiercer, and the women stopped, let’s say, *giving them kisses*.” Arwyn cut his eyes toward the teen as her lips pursed in disgust.

“Oooh. Bet that hit it hard.” Robin hissed.

“Well, they tried to make a rule that said no women were to stop giving their husbands kisses, and about that time, the women stopped plucking their chins and caring for themselves. They made the men make one new rule after another until it got violent.” Arwyn smirked. “Men forget that a washing paddle has more than one use and it can reach farther than a fist.”

Rachael nodded slowly. “And then?”

“The men who couldn’t straighten up were, let’s say... They were washed very thoroughly and left to dry. Men forget that sheep can kill wolves once they’re threatened.”

“Oof.” Robin chuckled. “What’s a washing paddle? Kinky?”

“Long stick you used to stir the laundry about to get it clean.” Arwyn nodded and Robin frowned, disappointed slightly.

Robin sat bolt upright, eyes wide, as Rachael stiffened and glanced around.

“Shit going down, Small Fry?” Robin glanced over at Rachael, who nodded. The four rose and slipped toward the door of the room, women and male bearers sauntering about, unaware until the loud wail of an alarm sent the building into lockdown. Bars rolled over the windows as the four stared out at the open, empty lobby of Firstlight, eyes wide as a belch of flame and smoke seeped from around the elevator doors.

Loud hammering sent the doors tenting outward one great echoing slam at a time until the bulging doors curled open and a sooty figure stumbled out, a snarl dashed across his narrow face.

“What—” Arwyn started.

“The—” Simon added.

“Fuck?” Robin stared out at the man as he bolted toward the sealed outer doors, fighting out of the top of his prison uniform.

Rachael was already on her phone, but the freshly shirtless man dove into an office, staggering out as he fought his way into someone’s forgotten jacket. His narrow blue eyes danced about, squinting around to take in all the details then locked on the three and Rachael before offering the most rakish and cocky grin Arwyn had seen in thousands of years.

“Why hello, boys!” Walter Barnes, Turtan Isbarri, the immortal wandering Saxon...

Without warning, guards came from round the corner and tackled him to the ground. Amid the shouts and swears, the three brothers spoke at the same time, hands joined as their power flared.

“Fuck. You. Walter.”

Epilogue

Isaac

Isaac lost count of the days as twin suns swam back and forth before the small window to his cell. He'd given up trying to measure time as the days passed. He slept through so many of them, refusing food. Refusing contact.

Lucifer came by occasionally to check on him, impassive and blank as always, but Isaac had nothing to tell him that would absolve him of the crimes he'd committed. He knew he'd done a horrible thing. But nobody understood the horrible choice his father made him make! It was the trolley problem. On one hand were children that had nowhere to go, that would be abandoned if their parents were taken. On the other were Rachael and Peter. Simon had resources to care for them. He was beyond the reach of the imps and if the bait he'd been told beneath it all, that Simon was a viscount's mate, was true, the children would be very well cared for. It was a hard choice that he had to make, but it was no excuse. He could have been the sacrifice. He could have been the example. Instead, he let families suffer.

A clanging met the door as a guard bustled in, shoving a lanky human into his cell.

"You got a new roommate, Bast." The Cambion at the door, all hulking soft brown skin and avoidant eyes, shoved the human in and he stumbled, swearing loudly. "Have fun."

The door slammed, and the human righted himself, dusting off his clothes, a freshly pressed outfit.

“Why are you down here and not...” Isaac pointed up, his voice cracking and dry from disuse.

“They haven’t made walls yet that can hold me! I just keep getting caught. Minor inconvenience.” The human put his hands on his hips and glanced about, frowning. “Man, you got it better down here than at Firstlight.” He whistled and hopped onto the unoccupied top bunk, wriggling around. Motes of dust rained down over Isaac and he spit a fleck of paint from his tongue. “Bast was it? Not *the* Bastet, right? I knew her. Pretty kitty. Hell of a lay.”

“It’s Isaac.” The imp crawled from his bunk and moved away to sit at the small two-seater table in the room and got himself a cup of water from a nearby pitcher, sipping as the strange man got comfortable.

“Eh. If I am here longer than a week, I’ll remember it. So, what are you in for, kiddo?”

“I... I gave up some information that—Fucking, aye. I sold some friends out to my dad to use as an example and made some kids orphans.” Isaac choked.

“Ahh, you’re the one that fucked with *the secretary*. She uh, took your—” He gestured at his head, indicating Isaac’s sawed-off horns. He barely had an inch on either side of his head left. Looking at it in the mirror was painful, a reminder of what he’d done and what he’d lost. Disfigured. His tail had been reattached, but it didn’t feel normal. Limp and aching.

Isaac nodded and took a deep drink, finding his throat far drier than he’d thought. “What are you in for?”

He laughed, stretching out and folding his hands behind his head. “This. That. A *lot* of shit. I get into trouble.” His ruddy-brown hair stuck up at all angles, matching the mealy beard on his chin.

“Name a few things? We’ve a lot of time to kill.” Isaac toyed with his empty glass.

“Well. First of all, I’ve fucked half the demonesses in the high court. I’ve faked my death far too many times. I’m a ‘mage.’ I’ve sold every kid I ever made to higher-ranking demons for their whole mate-making schemes. By the way. Simon Pitch is my son. So, I guess you fucked with my granddaughter, didn’t you?” A dark chuckle curled in the mage’s throat.

“Walter Barnes?” Isaac stood and stumbled back as the man sat up, folded his legs, and grinned wickedly.

Isaac whimpered. Despite the sweltering heat of hell around him, his skin went clammy and cold. Mages could summon imps, could ruin them. Isaac’s heart sank as he realized that *this* was his punishment.

“Oh, please. Call me *Loki*.”

About the Author

Lilo Quie spends her day moving between her home lab and recording studios working as a voice actress and consumer goods formulation chemist. Her foray into writing began as a curiosity, much like the eclectic mass of hobbies and inventions in her garage, just to see if she could, and there she found her new passion.

WWW.Liloquie.net

By Lilo Quie at Decadent Publishing

[The Inner Demons Series](#)

Delivered to His Demon

Treasured by His Demon

Forgotten by His Demon

Fallen for His Demon

Not Meant for His Demon

Taken by His Demon

[Forsaken Few: The Omegas of Club Despair](#)

Pierce Him Gently

Nick Him Tenderly

Lance Him Sweetly

Mark Him Softly

[Forsaken Few: Finding Home](#)

A Mother's Creed

[Empty Nests](#)

Deep in Dette

Settling His Dette

Dette Management

Dette to Society

High Interest Dette

Red Sky.

At Nite