



# Unbroken

HELL NIGHT ACADEMY BOOK III

DREIA WELLS

*Unbroken*

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**Is there anything she can't handle?**

“She has been broken.

She has been knocked down.

She has been defeated.

She has felt the pain that most couldn't handle.

She looks fear in the face.

Year after year. Day after day.

But yet, she never runs.

She never hides.

And she always finds a way to get back up.

She is unbreakable.

She's a warrior.

**She's you.”**

-Unknown



*This book is dedicated to my readers. To all my ride or dies. I bleed on these pages, for you and only you.*

*Welcome to HellNight Academy, where every day could be your last. Survive, scheme, fight, or kill your way into power, by taking it from those who've been crushed beneath your heel.*

*Only the strong will remain; the weak shall perish.*

*Rise to the top, and the Supernatural world will be yours for the taking.*

*Excel at your classes during the day and stay alive at night.*

*Live like tomorrow isn't promised, because at this Academy, it's not.*

*The night calls you home.*

*You've been warned.*

*Enter at your own risk.*

## *The story so far*

Professor Lyrik Bodin here. Well, where do I begin? I know what you're thinking, get to the point and tell us what happened to Micah! It was one hell of a cliffhanger. I am hanging on by my pinky finger...eager to find out what has befallen my *meus amor*. The Ambivalent one is watching, so I promised to come in here and give you guys the run down.

I can't give you what you want straight away, that's too easy. Let's begin at the beginning. Picture it. Micah had been dragged into the Underworld by a Demon. The bloody mess of a corpse, that once was Miss Sasha Monroe, was a feast for the crows in the middle of the pit. The students were in a frenzy, chaos erupted as everyone ran for the safety of their houses and dorms. Forgetting HellNight had begun, most of them ran headfirst to their deaths. A lot of students died.

Micah's Tethers, Ty and Trys, lost their shit.

Rodyn was licking his wounds...while trying to figure out how he could make things right between Micah and himself.

Suddenly Micah returned, as if no time had passed at all. She was literally spat back out through a portal, and we found out her father is the one and only Bishop, A.K.A. Azrael. Micah didn't have a moment's rest from there. She was catapulted from one traumatic event to another.

Do I have enough fingers to count them all? Okay, let me see if I can do this:

Esme found out that Sam is not only the new Alpha of the Edgewood Pack, but he's also her fated Mate.

Rodyn was poisoned by his mother before the assembly and during it he collapsed while Micah was outed as a Nephilim. Rodyn was taken to the Hospital with Ty and Trys in tow.

Micah finally heard from her father, Kalob. He told her Archangel Michael has her brother, Marcus, and her mother as well. We also discovered the Archangel is controlling the Light Guardians. Unfortunately for Kalob Jones, his daughter had to hear him die over the phone.

Micah spiraled emotionally and tried to get Headmistress Larrioux to let her return home, but when we arrived at her office, guess who was waiting inside? Micah's mother, Verity.

We saw firsthand the effects of the control Michael has on the Guardians as he spoke through her mother during the confrontation in the Headmistresses office. Yep, shit got real.

From there it only got worse. There was no rest for my Mate as the hits kept on coming. Some students decided to attack Micah once more outside her home in the Quads as she tried to go to Esme, who'd had a vision of Micah's fate in Tarot class and had been left unconscious, trapped in the premonition. As soon as meus amor disposed of her attackers she was attacked by Gargoyles as she ran through the walled gardens.

Yep. No break at all. She killed those flying assholes and decided enough was enough. Rook and I followed behind her as she stormed into the Hospital and took her Tethers to the Underworld where they would be safe from Michael, who had promised to come for her in seven days.

Whilst in the Underworld, the triplets began to show signs of Demonic madness, extreme aggression which is characteristic to Cambions who had been raised away from hell. They were slowly unravelling, and with their father being an unknown entity, we had no way of helping them balance themselves without their sire.

Micah completed her Tether with Esme, and shortly after sealed her bond with Rook. Yep, I am still biding my time. But it's coming, I hope (\*cough\* \*cough\* Ambivalent One).

Meanwhile: Marcus saw firsthand that he had no control of himself; he was Michael's robot, controlled by his Enochian tattoos. He was commanded to go fight his sister and attack HellNight Academy, all while his mother, beaten and broken, hung from manacles.

Micah almost killed Rodyn during a fight in the combat room in her father's palace, but he was saved by his brothers, who whisked Micah away for a little blood play.

Then, shit hit the fan. The Light Guardians invaded HellNight Academy. Esme found a possible solution to break the connection between the Guardians and Michael.

Micah, her Tethers, Rook, and I left the Underworld, despite Bishop going protective papa on Micah and demanding she didn't go. But you know our girl; nothing could stop her. She's relentless. We followed her back to HellNight Academy and helped to protect the students from complete annihilation.

Micah went searching for her brother, who was under the Archangel's full influence, and an epic battle took place between the two of them.

Micah didn't want to hurt her brother, but in order to break Michael's hold, she blasted her brother in the chest with white hot Angel Fire.

Rodyn, who felt a bit uneasy, went in search of Micah, only to find her approaching her brother as he lay lifelessly on the ground. Micah didn't see the knife in Marcus's hand, and he plunged it deep into her chest.

Rodyn caught Micah, but like the selfless woman she was, her only worry was for her brother.

We had all arrived in the clearing when the Tethers and bonds vanished within us.

Micah had closed her eyes, holding her brother's hand.

I don't want to believe my Mate is gone. I guess I am just as anxious as you to find out what happens next.

Phew...I know it was a lot. I am sure I missed something, but you are getting Cliff's Notes because Micah is not here to give you the rundown herself.

I've taken enough of your time, and I am sure you are ready to turn the page.

Lyrik Bodin.

# *Prologue*

## LUCIFER



*Twenty-three years ago*

“I want to tell you a story about—” groaning, I tip my head back. The lips around my cock add just the right amount of suction to get my attention. Warmth spreads through me as she scrapes her fangs over my shaft, making me growl, the little beast. Grabbing a fist full of the little Demoness’s hair, I force her head down harder, until she gags, taking me, all of me, her mouth working as she swallows me down her throat. I sigh, patting her head in approval.

“—when I fell in love, you see,” I continue without missing a beat. I don’t bother reacting to her exaggerated moans as she bobs her head up and down on my glorious shaft. Her black painted lips spread wide, making me roll my eyes as she leaves traces of her lipstick behind. “My little witch was spellbinding, captivated me from the start. Unlike Bishop, I didn’t have to hide who I was from this woman. She prayed to me. She prayed to the devil to set her free, and I did.” I let the slurping sounds fade into the background as I grab my tumbler of whiskey and bring it to my lips. I let the slight burn center me as I close my eyes and picture my Lucretia.

“I stopped making house calls a while ago, but for this witch I made an exception. I mean, who would dare to summon me? Curiosity killed the cat, or however the saying goes. I had to see for myself. I stepped out of the portal to find her lying naked, prostrate before me in the middle of a pentagram, painted in the sacrificial blood of a goat that lay dead not even ten feet away from her. I could only assume she



summoned me in haste, she must have been desperate, and my interest only ramped up further at the sight.

“She said *‘I praise you and only you, my lord. I’ll give you my soul if you can heal my body. I’m not ready to die’*. Her voice shook when she spoke; her face was pressed to the floor, blood dripped from her body, her perfectly rounded ass in the air. I couldn’t pass that opportunity up. I ordered her to look at me.” I gasp, remembering the vision of my gorgeous little witch like it was yesterday. I feel my balls tighten; the Demoness sucking my cock hums in approval at my sharp intake of breath and picks up speed.

I pause long enough to shoot my load down the Demoness’s throat, raising up slightly, giving her a cursory glance in acknowledgement before I lean back and close my eyes once more. “Now, where was I? Oh, when she set those beautiful browns on me, I knew then that she would be mine. Intrigued, I made a deal with the little witch—” I pause, growing annoyed at the interruption. I crack my eyes open as the Demoness sits back on her haunches, staring up at me, black eyes wide, bright red skin glistening from the firelight, her breasts full and heavy, nipples tightening from my gaze alone. My eyes travel south but I stop my exploration and lean forward.

“Is my cock flaccid? Did I tell you I was done with you?” I ask. She opens her mouth to reply, but I hold up my hand to stop her. I don’t want to hear her voice. If she speaks, I may kill her, and then she will be of no use to me. With a flick of my wrist, I pull her body back down towards my waiting dick, stopping her head scant inches away.

“Suck,” I command, and she opens her mouth, lips parting, not daring to look at me as she takes me into her mouth again. “I will fuck your mouth until I get tired of cumming down your throat. You will not rise; you will take what you’re given and you will do it until I get bored,” I say with disgust for the Demoness between my legs. This isn’t what I want. No. I want *her*. My fist clenches as I toss back my whiskey, shattering the glass in my hand.

“It seems there are things which are beyond even the Devil’s reach. For months I had healed my love of the cancer that plagued her body, only for it to return. I had nudged the right people until she became the Headmistress of HellNight Academy. The place needed a shake up and I had been eager to get a foothold in the school. I knew with my help and influence it would build my army of dark Supernatural’s. I mean, technically, we were still at war, according to Michael anyway. A deal was a deal. She gave her body to me willingly and I promised to...give her everything...to keep her alive. In only a few short months, I knew I loved her. Together, the world could have been ours.

“Fuck!” I shout, grabbing the back of the Demoness’s head, lifting my hips, fucking her mouth; brutally slamming into her as she squeals and grunts. I sigh again as I release my frustration in one, two, three forceful pumps before I watch her swallow my gracious offering. I flop back down in my high-backed chair, the leather soft like velvet as I relax back, my cock still hard with the thoughts of my little witch dancing around in my head. Feelings that I refuse to acknowledge make my heart flutter in my chest. Pain; this is what it feels like to grieve. I’m Lucifer, the Morning Star, the Forbidden, I don’t grieve! Yet, here I am, trying to comfort myself, keeping my dick hard...just to feel something other than what I am.

“She promised me she would carry my children, my future, the Kings of the Underworld,” I say as my toy wraps her lips around my cock once more, but I stop her, and she scrambles back to kneel quickly. So obedient this one, but I know better, I know she’s using me, as I am using her.

“Shift! Show her to me,” I command, shoving my cock into my pants. Enough stories and pity parties. She died. I couldn’t save her. I didn’t intentionally break my deal; other powers were at play. Greater powers. Now that’s a hard fucking pill to swallow. Regardless of my feelings, I have plans set in motion which need my attention. I will have my heirs. I stand, my study almost suffocating, the fire roaring in the fireplace is almost stifling as I walk over to my bar and grab another tumbler.

“I said shift, Abaddon!” I shout. Snatching up the decanter, I turn to watch the shapeshifting Demoness rearrange her face, her red skin turns brown, her black hair straightening, black eyes now shaped like a Human; brown and inviting. Her body changes before my eyes, and my heartache returns. I gaze at her new body, the body of the mortal woman I lost. My Lucretia. I let my eyes finally travel south until I stop at the huge round belly that she now cradles in her hands protectively. My children.

“My Lord—”

“I didn’t tell you to speak!” I bellow, nostrils flaring, the books on the bookshelves around me tremble before they fall to the floor. “I only told you to shift. Perhaps I made a mistake in giving you this task,” I say calmly, my mood switching from anger to cold detachment. I am barely keeping myself in check. When she bows her head, I make my way back to her. As soon as she is within reach, I reach down and grab her arm to yank her up until she stands in front of me. I look down into the eyes that belong to Lucretia, and I cave, slamming my mouth into hers. She moans as I pry her lips open with my tongue and devour her, sucking and biting her lips and tongue like she was life itself.

I pull away just as quickly, almost tossing her back to the floor before remembering the treasures she carries inside of her. I catch her arm as she flails backward and help steady her back on her feet. I immediately take a step back, finding my seat again, drinking the liquor straight from the decanter.

“Tell me again what your role is from now on until I tell you you’re no longer needed.” I wave my hand impassively, keeping my eyes trained on the fires beyond her.

Abaddon clears her throat before she speaks. “I am to maintain the guise of Lucretia Larrieux, Headmistress of HellNight Academy, daughter of Nolan and Claris Larrieux of the prominent Larrieux family,” she replies, and I nod my head for her to continue.

“I am to carry your seed and give birth to your children, hiding them in plain sight and keeping them under the radar

from Michael and any other Archangels. Once the children come of age..." She hesitates, rubbing her belly, my eyes are drawn to her gentle caress and anger surges forward. My grief is hot and heavy. I want to lash out and take it out on her. I failed my little witch and now I must suffer through an imposter.

"And?" I glance up at her from my chair, my jaw clenched tight, power burning under my skin. I need her out of my sight, now.

"I will bring your sons to you, my Lord." She bows her head respectfully. I study her for a minute, taking one last look at my beloved Lucretia. Well, the copy of her.

"Leave. Continue to run the Academy as you see fit. I don't care what you do, as long as you bring me my sons when the time comes," I say dismissively, watching her slowly walk past me towards the door.

"Oh, and Abaddon," I call after her.

"Yes, my Lord," she replies, but I don't turn around, I can't see her as Lucretia for a moment longer.

"If you betray me in any way, I will skin you alive and nail you to my wall. You may be a rare breed, but I will obliterate you and your kind. Now leave." I settle back into my seat, staring at the flames once more. I take one last drink of whiskey before I throw the decanter into the fire.

"A minor setback," I say to myself with a sigh. Lucretia presented me with a chance to have formidable, all-powerful Nephilim. "But alas, my beautiful little witch, you're gone," I whisper, lost in thought, the dance of the flames hypnotic as a smile slowly forms on my face. The first genuine smile I've had in a very long time.

"I may not have the Nephilim I desired, but three Angel Demon hybrids are just as good, if not better." I laugh as I mentally place my Nephalem Kings on the chess board.

# *Chapter One*

## MICAH



A gentle breeze brushes over my face, the sweet scent of honeysuckle fills my lungs. Taking stock of my body, I wiggle my toes. The feel of soft grass against my skin alerts me to the fact that I'm barefoot. Not wanting to open my eyes yet, I move my legs; bending my knees, right leg, then left. I move my arms next, rocking my body from side to side. Finally, my neck, twisting it back and forth, the usual crack of vertebrae is absent. Huh. I feel the need to stretch after a long restful sleep. I am perfectly fine, I assess, but there is still something...

I suck in a deep breath as my memories slam into me. Flashes of my fight with Marcus dance behind my eyelids, playing out as if I am watching a horror film. The final moments as I lash out with my magic, blasting him in the chest, his still body lying on the ground before me. Rodyn screaming my name, then pain, so much pain. The knife, I didn't see it. Marcus, no, not Marcus, that bastard Michael stabbed me in the chest.

When I don't feel the frantic beat of my heart, I press my hand flat to my chest and my eyes spring open. I open my mouth, panting as panic grips me, making it hard to breathe as it consumes me completely. Am I dead? I close my eyes, searching, seeking out the familiar steady thrum of my Tethers, my Mates, and I panic further when I feel nothing. There's a hollow pit where they all used to be.

My chest heaves as I sit up and look around me, trying to find something, anything to focus on besides the

overwhelming fear taking hold of me. I can't feel them. It's like the Underworld all over again. Tears fall unchecked and I wipe them away in frustration. I am so goddamn tired of crying. I blow out a breath but there is no stopping the flood gates as I allow myself to sit here and bawl my eyes out.

"Damn it," I say out loud. "Damn it. Damn it. Damn it." I shrug, feeling hopeless. "If I am dead, I am going to be so pissed." I pull my knees up to my chest, noticing for the first time my change of clothes. I am wearing a white shift dress, well, more pillowcase than an actual dress. My clothes from the battle are gone, my weapons are missing.

Every cut and scratch that marred my skin from the fight with my brother has vanished. I have no clue where I am now, but if I had to hazard a guess, Heaven, or maybe Purgatory. The idea of being anywhere other than on Earth, even the Underworld, only makes me freak out more. It can't end like this. I can't stay here, not like this. God, please. Not like this.

I let sorrow take root, feeling a deep penetrating grief for my Tethers, my Mates, my brother, and my father. Even my mother. Was she still alive? Marcus, oh God, Marcus. Did I kill my brother? My entire family. So much loss in only a short period of time. I didn't even get to say goodbye.

Ty, Trys, and Rodyn were already struggling, this will send them spiraling for sure. I cradle my face in my hands as Rodyn's words, his pleas, the last things I remember hearing him say haunt me, instead of giving me an ounce of solace.

*"How dare you come into my life and rearrange my world, my very existence. I don't even know who I am anymore, and I am not mad at you. I need to thank you."*

*"Stay with me so I can make up for all the shitty things I've done to you. Things you didn't deserve."*

"We never stood a chance," I say as I continue to weep into my hands. "I am so mad at you. Well, I was," I speak, as if he is right beside me. I can almost picture the smug look on his beautiful, stupid face. "I was willing to work it out. I wanted to. Now we will never know." I rest my head on my knees and try to compose myself, but the hollow feeling

remains. The loss of my Tethers and Mates was a sacrifice I wasn't prepared to make. If I had known the cost of freeing my brother from Michael's grasp was this...

Would I have gone alone into that clearing? Yes, a hundred times yes. Without a doubt, I wouldn't change anything. Alive or dead, my brother is now free. I guess Michael got what he wanted in the end. I sigh and allow my eyes to wander.

The tall grass I am sitting on moves unnaturally around me, as if it has a mind of its own. I'm perched on a hillside; from this vantage point I can see a valley below with a river of the bluest water I've ever seen running through it.

Where's the sound? The world around me is so quiet it almost feels as if I've been placed in a sensory deprivation tank. Despite a vibrant pink sky, rapidly moving white fluffy cumulus clouds, and swaying bright green leaves on the trees all around me, this place feels as if someone has pressed pause; the lack of sound is unnerving, or maybe it's just my panicked state. It's strangely beautiful, in an Edvard Munch kind of way, full of color, swirling and pulsing, yet a touch sad and desolate, like my turbulent emotions.

I can't sit here forever; I'm getting sick of my own self. I can't sit here and wallow any longer than I already have. I don't want to think of my father, but his words find me regardless. *"I didn't raise you to fall on your face and not pick yourself up. Get up and fight, Micah Jones."* I blow out another long breath and nod my head slowly.

"Okay, I hear you, Dad. I hear you loud and clear," I say with a grunt as I stagger to my feet. Placing my hands on my hips, I turn in a circle, looking for any other signs of life other than my own. I can't possibly be the only person here, right? My eyes are instantly drawn to the river below. The hairs on the back of my neck begin to rise as some unknown force urges me to move forward. I track the length of the river I can see, shielding my eyes against the bright pink sky, following the bank until finally I see something move, no, someone.

I'm moving, breaking into a jog as I make my way down the hill. The closer I get to the river, the more the world



around me comes to life. The sound of rushing water hits my ears. It's so loud it makes me stagger to a halt. Suddenly my panic returns, the abrupt change in the absence of sound is both calming and alarming at the same time. The whistle of the wind, the crunch of leaves, even the swishing sound the fabric makes in the ill-fitting dress I'm wearing. It's all noise, and I hate not knowing where *this* is.

Nothing about *this* is normal, it's as if it's a construct of someone's design, and I am tired of being an avatar in someone else's game. I need answers, and something tells me that whoever's down by the river is waiting for me to find them.

By the time I reach the bottom of the valley, the land stretches out before me. It seems to grow and expand, allowing me to see more of the landscape. Beyond the river is flat planes of more of the high straw-colored grass that led all the way to what appears to be a dense forest of tall trees: sycamore, spruce, cypress, oak, and pine. Further in the distance I can just make out the outline of a mountain range. I walk for what feels like hours, keeping my eyes trained on my surroundings as I search for the person I thought I saw from the hill.

At this point I'm wondering if I was seeing things and my mind was playing tricks on me to get me to move. With no real sense of time, I amble along beside the water trying desperately not to think about those I love. It's so easy to fall into despair when I'm alone and without a distraction to keep my thoughts at bay. Are they still at the Academy? Are they fighting without me? Or did Michael kill my Tethers and Mates right along with me and that's why our connection is lost?

"Fuck!" I draw in a sharp breath. I can't allow my mind to go there. They are all alive. They have to be alive. I keep the chant going in my head as I put one foot in front of the other. When I come across a fallen tree trunk, I decide to sit. My body doesn't feel tired. In fact, my body doesn't feel anything at all, not even my own heartbeat, which concerns me on so

many levels. I mean, I have been walking barefoot for an indeterminate amount of time.

“I should feel something,” I say out loud to break up the silence that’s doing nothing for my growing anxiety. Moving around the tree trunk, I run my hands over the smooth bark, only to find it as soft as velvet but still solid beneath my fingers.

Not knowing what else to do with myself, I flop down unceremoniously and stretch my legs out in front of me. I sigh. “I guess this is my own personal Hell then.”

“I wouldn’t call this place Hell, Micah.” I startle at the sound of a foreign voice. Standing quickly, my hand goes for a weapon that isn’t there. No weapons, but I am by no means vulnerable. I bend my knees, taking on a defensive stance and ready myself just in case.

The mystery man in front of me smiles and holds up his hands in surrender. “Please sit. I mean you no harm.” He gestures to the tree trunk, but I will be damned if I turn my back on an unknown entity. Uneasy, I look over my shoulder half expecting the tree trunk to grow legs and jump up and attack me. Then, I quickly turn back to glance at the man before me.

He tilts his head, as if he somehow read my thoughts and nods his head. “Smart choice, even with me. Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose, Micah. I get it. I am a stranger in this vast place that only seems to have you and I here,” he says as he gives me a wide berth and makes his way around the trunk, putting some distance between us but remaining in my line of sight. “Please sit.” He gestures again and this time I do. Feeling less uneasy now, I drop down to sit but keep my legs bent just in case I need to move away swiftly.

I see him watching me in my peripheral vision. I turn to study him. He’s tall, with brown skin, appearing almost bronze. Long black locs spill over his shoulders, framing sharp masculine features, and eyes that shine like golden embers. Like mine, but times a thousand, I think as I continue my observations. He is beautiful, ethereal, otherworldly. He isn’t

an Archangel... he is so much more. I tilt my head back as he stands there, letting me come to my own conclusions about who he is.

I am almost sure he can hear my thoughts. His gaze is penetrating, as if he can see through me and beyond, his eyes full of wisdom and unfathomable knowledge I can't begin to understand. His youthful appearance, I can only assume, makes him appear less threatening and maybe more approachable. I almost laugh as the puzzle pieces click together in my head. I don't know how I know it for sure, but I can feel it. I guess this visage is better than him appearing as a burning bush. At that thought I swear I see his lip turn up slightly in a half smirk. But my little joke falls flat. Well, to me it does. This is *God*. He is God. Do I ask him if he's God or do I just play it cool? Hey, God, it's me, Micah Jones.

I feel small and insignificant in his presence, the need to drop to my knees in supplication is strong but I don't move. Too shocked, too stunned. I'm rooted to this spot, as if my ass is glued to this tree. The power radiating off him is both brilliant and frightening as it washes over me, pulsating as brightly as the sun. He is practically glowing, as if the physical form he is wearing is struggling to contain the infinitesimal magic within. He drops his hands and clasps them in front of him patiently. I guess he is waiting for me to pick my jaw up off the ground. Well, that may take a while.

I blink and look out over the water, trying to think of something, anything to say as I grab hold of the last thing he said only moments ago. "You can't harm me if I am already dead, right? So, no worries in that department." I shrug, feeling a little bit sorry for myself if I am being honest. "You're right, this place is far from Hell but to me it may as well be." I turn my head back to face him, only to shriek in surprise, sounding like a Tasmanian devil crossed with a cockatoo, my hand clutches my chest in shock as he's sitting right beside me. I didn't even hear him move.

He mirrors my sitting position from before, barefoot, legs stretched out in front of him, crossed at the ankles. He's wearing cream linen pants and a tunic. It's crisp without a

crease in sight. If that's not power, I don't know what is. All you have to do is look at linen and it wrinkles. He laughs, and I know it's because I can't stop my brain diarrhea from exploding all over the place. Oh hell, I just thought about diarrhea. Yes, I am in the presence of an omnipotent being and my first thoughts are about shit. Great. Smite me now.

"Micah," he calls my name, and my thoughts clear, my focus is absolute as I give him my attention. Wait. Did he do that?

"God," I reply. I had to say his name, just to be sure.

"Yes," he replies with a knowing smile. But his confirmation only makes me angry, excited, nervous; a myriad of emotions churn up inside me like a brewing storm. Everything that's happened comes crashing into the forefront of my mind, all my pain, grief, hell, my trauma.

"Why—"

He holds his hand up to stop me. "I am more than aware of what's going on in my world. I am always present, Micah. I have witnessed what my sons and my creations, have done and are doing. You are a product of that." He stops and touches his finger to his lips, lost in thought. A completely Human gesture by a nonhuman being is surreal. "Although, I will say that you have changed Azrael for the better. I wonder if he will willingly admit it." He winks conspiratorially, and I wonder what the look is for. I guess I will mentally store that away for later. My thoughts turn to Bishop and how overly protective he became when I told him we were going to confront Michael. I have no doubt that I mean something to him, but I don't know him very well. I guess I'll never get the chance. He is going to be so mad at me for dying.

"I guess asking you why would be a question on anybody's lips if they ever got the chance to sit beside you and talk. I have so many things I want to ask but at the same time I don't feel I am worthy of asking them. Who am I to question"—I throw out my hand, lifting it up and down in his direction as he rewards me with a smirk full of humor—"God."

He chuckles and seems to relax further beside me. “What is the point of free will if I intervene any time something bad happens? Life is not like that, Micah. You know that more than most. Everyone doesn’t get granted a miracle or what you all consider my blessings. Without hardship, without struggle, there is no growth. Humans, Supernaturals even, need to grow, learn, and eventually change. As old as my sons are, they still need to grow and learn. Some will be lost to me forever, but it still doesn’t stop me from hoping. Like I said, I am aware of it all. But sometimes, some things surprise even me, which is why I took this opportunity for us to meet.”

“Meet me? This is... Where am I? That should have been my first question.” I stand, stumbling over my words and turn in a circle dramatically, waving my hands around at my weird surroundings.

He tilts his head to study me, and I can only assume he’s searching my thoughts once more. “First, let me answer the real question that is running through your mind. You are not dead, Micah. You are alive but unconscious. This is just an in-between I created to allow myself to speak to you without bringing you beyond the veil,” he says reassuringly, his arms spread wide as he points to the river, sky, and trees. My mouth parts and my vision begins to blur as more tears threaten to spill. *I’m alive*. My hands shake as I reach up and cover my mouth to hold back the sob of relief. I get to see them again. I’m alive.

“You have so much potential, young Nephilim, and you have yet to scratch the surface. The minute my son plunged a blade into your chest the magic you’ve gained from your Tethers took over.”

“But?” I ask as flashbacks from when Marcus’s hand gripped tight around the blade makes me rub where I was stabbed.

“Make no mistake, Micah, your brother would never harm you. His hands were not his own. Michael used him to try to kill you. But you didn’t die,” he says as he studies me. I know Marcus didn’t hurt me, and it was as if nothing I did or said would get through to him. I get it now, he was trapped, just

like my mother was in Professor Larrieux's office. Could he see what was happening to me? Did he watch his hand pierce my flesh with his dagger? My poor panda.

My brows crease as I try to recall everything about my Soul Tethers, how our connections work and what occurs once our Tether is complete, and then it hits me. God nods his head at my realization, smiling proudly.

"Their magic boosts my own, but I also gained a bit of theirs as well," I say in awe. There's been so much happening in such quick succession, I haven't had a chance to test my powers. The little I've been able to wield in Combat class with Professor Maverick was only the magic I already had access to but never really got to use. I've barely had a chance to breathe. It's been one bit of crazy after another. I sigh. I'm not dead, so that means I have an opportunity to rectify that.

"Your Necromancers kept you alive, their magic worked to keep you in your body. With them by your side they make you almost immortal, but you were practically there as a Nephilim," he replies as he studies me once more. Am I surprised that he is giving me this information so freely? Hell yes. Why me? Why now? My brain is working in overdrive to keep up with everything he's telling me but then my mind snags on something he said earlier.

"So why did you want to meet me? Shouldn't you be putting me out of my misery considering what I am?" I swallow past the lump in my throat, my question is a bold one to ask, all things considered I should be grateful I'm alive. But I'm also considered an abomination in the eyes of other Supernaturals.

His eyes soften. "The world was not ready for hybrids like you when the first Nephilim were killed," he says solemnly. "They were different creatures all together, Micah. You are more, child. So much more, and you are the key to breaking the stalemate in a war that's been waging for millennia. You can end this, Micah, and help the world heal."

I stare at him, dumbstruck. How am I supposed to shoulder such a massive load of responsibility? "What? I don't

understand. The Underworld and Heaven aren't at war. None of this has anything to do with me." My brows rise in confusion as the world around us begins to shake, the pink sky turns gray and menacing, the blue river runs red, reminding me of the Sanquin Lake at HellNight Academy. Thunder booms overhead as lightning streaks across the sky. Smoke begins to seep from the mountains in the distance. You've done it now, Micah, you've pissed God off.

God stands as I stumble to my feet, genuine fear makes me wrap my arms around myself protectively at the sudden change in his demeanor. I take a step away, putting a bit more distance between us as I shield my eyes against the power of his gaze alone.

"There has been no peace. There is no end. My Archangels are at war with each other, scheming against each other, playing their long games, waiting for each other to slip up. Who pays for it in the end? Humans. They are always in the line of fire when one of my sons tries to best the other. What Michael is doing is not in my name. Lucifer, even Azrael, their chaos and destruction is pointless. It's been constant chaos. You don't see it because I hold this fragile world together so that it doesn't collapse around you. You think this has nothing to do with you? You're mistaken. You've been a major player on the chess board ever since you were conceived. You and your Tethers!" He roars, his voice booming loud, as the world begins to fall apart around us. Trees are uprooted as fire rains down from the atmosphere and the mountains suddenly erupt, spewing smoke and ash into the sky.

"Someone has to stop this. If I have to, I will bring it all down and start again. A clean slate. If I do, then all will suffer. I can remake it all, even my children. I am merciful, but I have reached the end of my grace. Free my Archangels, free the Witches and Warlocks who call themselves Light Guardians, including your mother. This fight has everything to do with you. I am not commanding you, but just like my sons, the choice is yours. I won't plead with you. No, this responsibility is now yours because you know deep down that it is the right thing to do. You were born to protect, Micah Jones. You can change the world by stopping Michael before war breaks out

on the streets,” he shouts over the cacophony of sound all around us as I try to keep myself on my feet as cracks and fissures appear beneath them. I mean, I know he’s angry, but damn, is this necessary?

“This is not my wrath, Micah, it is yours. You’ve been unconscious for a long time, changing, morphing into something new. The in-between is crumbling because it’s time for you to open your eyes.” God raises his hands, and everything stops. The river, the dark clouds, the fire, the falling trees freeze mid-collapse, as if he pushed pause on all the destruction.

I know deep down that he is right. I mean, I am not going to tell God no. But what if I am not enough? “I don’t know if I can... What if more people—”

“They won’t.” He stops me before I can continue my negative thoughts. “You have everything you need right beneath the surface. Find it, use it. Wake and be reborn, Micah Jones, and remember you have help and you are not alone,” he says with a serene smile on his face, as if he can already see the future. He inclines his head in farewell and my mouth opens to say more, to ask more but as quickly as God appeared... well. He vanishes and the world goes black once more.



## *Chapter Two*

## LYRIK



I can feel an itch under the surface of my skin. Sex, blood, pleasure, and pain, I am desperate for anything at this point. I need to feed. I. Need. To. Fucking. Feed. I don't know how much longer I can hold back without going damn near feral with lust and rage. I close my eyes briefly, my control slipping but I rein it in, and slowly exhale through my nose. I feel like a newly born Incubus, barely able to contain myself. But I refuse to seek out anyone except my Mate. She is the only person I want to take from, and until she wakes... well, I am fucked.

“Clearly, Professor Bodin here will continue to deputize for Headmistress Larrieux until she returns.” One of the board members drones on as I shift my attention to them, nodding in agreement as they continue. I want to be anywhere else but here, yet we have a responsibility to the students of this Academy. I take my job seriously and it is easier to keep myself occupied with work to distract me from my need to feed. How long it will last, I am unsure.

“What about the students? The enchantments are down. Half the Academy is outside the interdimensional bubble. The entire campus is unstable and exposed to the outside world. Thank the stars above we are secluded here or we would have a very serious problem with Humans on our hands,” Professor Maverick's yell is heard above the chorus of voices erupting around the room. Like me, he has been given a secondary job. He's in charge of Academy security until we can get the enchantments back in place.

“It’s not just the risk of exposure we need to worry about. The very environment has been compromised. In the past two weeks the flora and fauna have begun to wilt and die. Especially the black dahlias, red poppies, and white lily flowers. Without the enchantments and wards in place HellNight Academy is hemorrhaging magic,” Professor Greenleaf, a white Witch who teaches herbology, chimes in as they all begin to talk at once again.

I pinch the bridge of my nose with one hand, whilst drumming my fingers on the table with the other. My headache is getting stronger and stronger by the minute, my limbs are shaky and weak, and my power wants to rebel and take matters into its own hands, eager and waiting to lash out in order to strengthen me.

I’ve listened to the board members drone on around me for what feels like hours as they debate the best course of action for the Academy going forward. Every day for the past two weeks my attention has been pulled away from my unconscious Mate to the matters of HellNight Academy and everything in between.

After what happened in the clearing the night of the battle, all of us closest to Micah were on edge. The minute our bonds and Tethers disappeared, Micah began to breathe again, to our relief, but my *meus amor* hasn’t opened her eyes yet. She’s laying in her bed, in the tower Bishop gave her and her Tethers while they stay in the Underworld. She’s like a fairytale princess waiting on her prince to kiss her awake. Literally. Ty tries every day, yet she remains in a peaceful sleep, and there is nothing any of us can do about it.

Her brother, Marcus, lives, but it is touch and go as his body heals slowly from the Angel Fire that Micah blasted him with to break his connection to Michael. He should be dead from the hit he took but Bishop thinks his connection to Michael at the time helped him survive it somehow. His Enochian tattoos magically rearranged themselves before our eyes, all the letters were broken down his arms. Now they’re dull when once they glowed bright blue. He remains in and out

of consciousness, rambling about the Archangel Uriel and saving some Light Guardian by the name of Bryelle.

Esme has spent every day with Sam in tow, scouring Bishop's labyrinthine styled library, searching for answers, anything to help, but has come up with nothing.

Rodyn, Ty, and Trys are growing more and more unstable by the day. Rook and I have come to the conclusion that Micah is the glue that's been holding them together from the moment they arrived in the Underworld. Without her, they are spiraling, their violent outbursts are to the detriment of Bishop's house staff as their uncontrollable magic plagues the castle. You can only imagine what two powerful Necromancers and their Dark Warlock triplet can do with their powers unleashed. Lots of poor dead Demons and Imps. The entire situation is an utter shitshow, and without Micah giving us direction, purpose, a reason to fight, things are unravelling fast. Including me.

"None of this would have happened if that thing hadn't arrived here at the Academy. I knew the moment she stepped through those doors she would cause a problem. Our beloved school is left in ruins because of Lucretia's power hungry need to have a Nephilim under her control!" Nelson Monroe shouts, slamming his hand on the table, bringing my focus back to the room.

I hold my hand up to stop anyone else from speaking. I am so tired of listening to his incessant bullshit. Every word that falls from his lips is negatively tied to Micah, and somehow, she is to blame for all of it. "Nelson, this has nothing to do with Miss Jones and you know it. She didn't invite Michael and his Light Guardians into HellNight Academy. If I'm not mistaken, you were all about using the Nephilim to your benefit until she affected you personally. I won't sit here and let—"

"Of course you would take her side! She is your fated Mate. Did you forget that your precious Nephilim murdered my poor Sasha? She shouldn't have been allowed to be here." He sneers, after his spit sprayed across the table toward Mary

Stubbs, who subtly had a magical shield up blocking his spittle flying out of his mouth.

“You know what, Nelson? Why are you even here? Your daughter no longer attends this Academy. Your services to the board are no longer needed. Furthermore, with regards to Miss Monroe’s murder, as you so describe it, she was killed by a Demon from the Underworld. She knew the risk when she challenged Micah, just like every other student who attends here. Your daughter punched above her weight and got herself killed in the process. She was no match for Micah Jones. My Mate tried to show her mercy, which was more than she deserved,” I reply as he scoffs and jumps to his feet in anger. I remain in my seat impassively, unaffected by his tantrum, my head is pounding but I try to ignore it as I focus on the livid Warlock in front of me.

“How dare you? I have given everything to this Academy, my daughter, my—”

“Oh, shut up, Nelson! You have other children. Sasha was not a child, and she knew what was required of her when she threw down the challenge. Enough already, we’ve more pressing matters to attend to,” another board member, Thomas Moor, interrupts, clearly as irritated as I am about Nelson’s constant bickering. To our relief, Nelson Monroe huffs in outrage as the entire table stares back at him with equal parts annoyance and frustration until he finally snaps his fingers and dissipates from the concealed room where we hold our meet in. Well hallelujah.

“I agree with Thomas,” another board member presses on, as if Nelson was never here and we hadn’t spent most of the morning glued to these seats. “Has anyone heard from Headmistress Larrieux? It’s been two weeks and she is yet to show her face. Have you found any trace of her, Lyrik?”

If I could groan out loud in frustration I would, but instead I sit up straight, smooth the lapels on my suit jacket, and place my hands on the table in front of me. I force a polite smile in the Witch’s direction. “As you know, we haven’t heard from or seen Headmistress Larrieux since her message to the students right before the enchantment and wards collapsed. We checked

the underground catacombs and came up empty. She is officially missing,” I say with concern, but honestly, I’m not surprised.

Yes, I want to find out what happened to her. It’s not like Lucretia to disappear, she loves the limelight too much. The fact she didn’t stay and fight alongside everyone else is telling. To think when she first took over the job she had so much promise, but she literally changed after a couple of months in the position. The Academy became darker, crueler, more sinister with the initiation of the HellNight cull once the sun had set. The Academy wasn’t always like this, and if I had my way things would change for the better. This should be a place of education, not a place to come to die.

“We’ve lost so many students. The Witches Council are calling for an inquiry, the Wolf Coalition is in an uproar over the loss of most of the Edgewood pack and a few other smaller packs within the Academy, and the Vampire Covens are demanding answers. The Supernatural community is not going to want their children to return if we don’t rebuild as fast as we can. We need to reassure them—”

I hold up my hand once more to the speaker’s annoyance. I’ve had about all I can take and keeping myself composed is exhausting. “My apologies, Celeste, we are talking in circles. We are doing all we can to work through the ruins that are now the grounds of HellNight Academy. All classes have been cancelled, students have been sent home to their parents, and those that don’t have a home to return to are being protected in the Quads. We are short staffed because like you and mostly everyone else in this room, we fought to protect what students we could. We’ve lost valuable professors and staff because no one came to our aid. So, I don’t care who’s upset. I didn’t see or hear from any of those Witch Councils, Wolf Coalitions, and Vampire Covens in our time of need, not one of them lifted a finger or used magic to help us in any way. The lot of them can fuck right off,” I say as a few professors hum in agreement while Celeste stares at me with disdain, her mouth parts in shock. I am not usually so quick tempered, but I am running on fumes, and I am running out of time. I *need* to feed.

“Caelum Academy has gone too far. We need to take the fight—”

I slam my hands down and rise from my seat. “You know what? You want to take the fight to Michael and the Archangels, go right ahead. It’s the least you could do, but don’t expect us to risk any more lives! We’ve spilled enough blood.”

Celeste pulls away from the table as everyone focuses on her. No one here is going to come to her defense. I want to laugh. She’s all boast and no action, all of them. They are just fine sitting on their Supernatural high horses, letting the children fight their battles. Not on my watch.

“This meeting is over. We’ve rehashed this enough. If you will excuse me, there are indeed more important matters to attend to,” I say calmly, trying to keep myself in check. I can almost feel myself fraying, this suit I am wearing is being picked apart one thread at a time. I will not break here, not in front of these people. I keep my head high, and I watch them all leave the room, some vanish before they stand.

Blowing out a loud breath, I wipe my hands over my face. My fatigue is evident as I slowly stand from my chair. “You don’t look so good, Lyrik.” Professor Maverick lingers as the last of the board leaves.

I lean against the table, taking slow breaths as I look up at him. “I’m fine, Beaux. I just need to go and check on Micah.” It’s weird calling him by his first name but all formalities between us have flown out the window.

“Still nothing?” he asks solemnly. I know he means well, but right now, I need to get as far away from everyone as I can. I think by the looks of me right now, he gets it.

“I can only hope she wakes soon. I have a feeling that none of this is over yet,” I reply as my heart rate begins to spike as the purple tendrils of my magic unfurl, pouring out of my finger. My body is struggling, starving from my lack of essence, my physical form is barely holding itself together. I’m not going to make it.

Maverick nods and walks backwards, watching me, brows knitted together in concern. “Well, I am going to shift and patrol the grounds. If anything comes up, I will be in touch,” he says as he takes one last look at me and walks out the secret door of the boardroom.

“Lyrik.” I don’t look up; I know Rook’s been here the entire meeting.

“Shade,” I reply, taking another deep breath, the sweat on my brow drips down on the table as I try to pull my magic back in.

I can see him move closer, then he pauses. “You look like shit, pretty boy. You need to feed,” he says as I give him a “no shit Sherlock” look in reply. I want to wipe the smug look off his face.

“I can only feed from my fated Mate,” I admit.

“Bullshit. You need to take what you need so you don’t fucking lose your mind, Lyrik.” He takes another step closer, and I stand up straight, swaying on my feet.

“I will not feed unless it’s from Micah,” I reply.

“She’s not awake yet, you fool, you are already too far gone.” His eyes search mine, and for the first time I see genuine concern on his face.

“Then I suggest you get me as close to her as possible and lock me up.” I can almost feel myself vaporizing, losing my corporeal form.

“Lock you up? Why?” he questions. I bet he’s wondering why an Incubus needs to be contained, but ultimately, I am Demon by nature. Yes, I feed off sexual energy, but there is so much more to me.

“I don’t think I can contain the monster much longer,” I whisper as my magic begins to swirl wildly all around me. I’ve never in my existence let myself get this far gone. I don’t know what the implications of this means for me. My only hope is that my meus amor comes back to me soon. I need her and I need her now.



“Damn it, pretty boy. You owe me big time,” Rooks says as his own shadows wrap around mine; purple and black intermingle together as he wraps me up tight and we both tumble into the Underworld.

## *Chapter Three*

## TRYS



I want to kill him. The urge is so strong I'm finding it harder every day to distract myself. My brothers are no help. Hell, they are fighting their own monsters. Me. I lost myself to my madness a long time ago. Me and my crazy usually have an understanding, but since we've been in the Underworld, things have changed. The deepest, darkest parts of me, the parts I thought I had control over, sink their barbed claws into me, spreading venom, and with it my anger and rage has become uncontrollable. All I see is death and destruction, whether I'm asleep or awake. Nothing is helping. I feel out of control.

I miss my sunshine; my light that snuffs out all the black that taints my thoughts and brings me back from the brink. It's been two fucking weeks and we are all losing this internal battle with our Demonic selves. If our sire is not found soon, I dread to think of what will become of me. Of us.

I pick up a delicious piece of bacon and chew it thoughtfully for a moment. Moaning at the salty, meaty goodness, I address my brothers, "Don't you both enjoy DinFast?" I say to them as they look up from their own food, which they seem to be pushing around on their plates in front of them. "Or maybe Brupper is better?" I tilt my head, lost in thought, then snap my fingers. "No, wait. Brinner! That's the one. Oh shit, no Supfast! The possibilities are endless."

"Get out of your head, Trys," Ty says from the opposite side of the dining room table. There is always food available at any time of day or night. I mean, trying to differentiate

between the two is very difficult here in the Underworld. There's a dark red, maroonish sky that I tend to associate with night here, and then there is the bright red color, which I assume is the daytime.

"I am not in my head. In fact, I am thinking about murder. There are no thoughts to be had, just need for action. Like my various names for describing what we call this in front of us," I say with a feral grin on my face, gesturing to the food piled high on the table before me.

Ty rolls his eyes, his hair braided on one side of his head and wild like my own on the other. This is Ty's own version of untidy, but the Demoness who attempted to finish the job had her flimsy little throat cut for asking about our Tether. Micah is a very sensitive subject for us. A part of me felt bad, she was only showing concern, but I'm starting to have little to no empathy. I think that might be a problem. Without my sunshine, my gives-no-fucks meter is at zero.

"You can't kill Micah's brother, Trys. I thought we had discussed this." Rodyn sighs in exasperation, rubbing his tired eyes then stretching his arms over his head.

Out of the three of us, he's managing to control his urges the best, but just barely. He's traded in his suits and ties for shorts and muscle t-shirts. He spends most of his time in the sparring room, as if he is fighting through his rage with Rook and sometimes even Bishop.

Ty and I keep to ourselves, our powers are so unpredictable at the moment, the last thing we need is our Necromantic abilities to lash out, snatching souls from bodies and murdering innocent or important people. I don't think Micah would forgive me if I killed her father before she even got a chance to really know the man. I mean Archangel, Demon? She's already lost one dad. Fuck. *Focus*, Trys! My mind is all over the place. I try to reach for something, anything to ground me and I come up with nothing.

I lean on the table, placing my head in my hands and blow out an exhausted breath. "Ro Ro. I can't shake it. When I visit Micah in the bed upstairs, my sweet sunshine doesn't even

know I'm there." I slam my hand on the table in frustration. "All I want to do is hurt the man who put her there." I swallow down the burning acid in my throat and try to control the growl threatening to bubble up out of me.

"Michael," Rodyn and Ty say in unison, making me grit my teeth. I watch them both look at each other and I know they are silently talking about me without saying anything out loud. It's a triplet thing.

"Marcus didn't hurt his sister, Trys." Rodyn stands, his hands clenching at his sides as he looks towards the exit. I don't even have to guess where he's off to. I can only assume he's thinking about that night and how he couldn't get to our girl in time. I know how hard it was for him to hold her when he thought she'd died in his arms. This is our daily, no nightly routine. I think the three of us are struggling with our emotions, especially without Micah's Tether to anchor us. Ty's knives appear out of nowhere as usual and he begins to twirl one through his fingers while he stabs the table with the other. I have no doubt our aggression is feeding each other's...again that whole shared womb thing.

I hold up my hands in surrender, trying to calm myself and them. "I know. I know. But it's hard to stop the voices from convincing me otherwise." Logically, I know that Marcus was under somebody else's control, and I have no doubt that Michael will get what's coming to him. But when I see Marcus's face, it's hard to disconnect my feelings.

"Contain your crazy ass or you will be locked up like Professor Bodin," Ty says as he lifts his knife once more and plunges it into a sausage on his plate. Our trusty professor could barely keep it together when Rook brought him back here yesterday. I shudder at the thought of not being able to move around. It appears our bitch of a mother is MIA, and good riddance to her. Wherever she is I hope she's fucking suffering. She didn't have the decency to at least show up when students and faculty were dropping like flies against the Light Guardian's blades. Lyrik has been working tirelessly for weeks trying to look after both the campus and the students at

HellNight. I'm not surprised he's reached the end of his strength as he's been starving himself.

Rodyn huffs. I can see the indecision in his eyes as he looks at us, then up at the ceiling, as if he can see Micah asleep in her bed in the tower. His eyes shift to the door again, and like I thought he would, he heads off towards the exit, only to be stopped by Bishop.

Micah's father steps in front of him and places one hand on his chest. "You might want to sit down for this, Rodyn. In fact, Ty, put your knives away, and Trys..." He looks at me like he doesn't know what to say. "Just don't move."

Bishop turns Rodyn around and my brother allows him to guide him back to the table. In the past few weeks Bishop and Rook have become the people we've had to lean on, and it hasn't been too bad to have them in our corners. Micah will be pleased to see that we are all getting along. Like a big, crazy, dysfunctional family.

"Sit." He pushes Rodyn into a chair and all three of us look up at him in concern.

"Bishop, what's up?" Ty asks, and I instantly go on alert. Rodyn stands and I follow. Like hell will I be sitting in front of my Brinner and left unawares.

"Ty, Trys, Rodyn, I need to—"

"Oh Brother, there's no need for introductions. I think it is clear who I am, right boys?" A tall man stands in the doorway of the dining room, black shiny wings flex out behind him. He stands there as if he owns the world. The authoritative glare he pins us all with has my hackles raised.

Who the fuck is this guy? Did he just call Micah's father, Brother? I step away from the table to observe him further. I can feel his power thick and heavy in the air. He saunters into the room. His muscular frame fills out an all-black three-piece suit. Dark brown skin, that seems to absorb the light, pulling it in all around him like a cloak of doom. Serious super villain vibes. He stands a foot taller than Bishop, black hair neatly cut, with eyes...his eyes, one such a pale gray it looks white

and the other completely black. Heterochromia...just like... like me and Ty.

A red watch chain hangs from his pocket, swinging hypnotically as he moves. I follow the movement, unsure why, of all things, it's the one object I can't look away from. My brain is failing to piece all of this together, the one time I need to be firing on all cylinders and I'm short-circuiting big time. This is my...my. No!

"Fuck, Luc, I told you to give me a minute to talk to them," Bishop growls and steps into the man's path, placing his hand on his chest.

"You're protecting my sons from me, Bishop?" He tsks. "I'm touched." He looks down to where Bishop's hand sits right in the middle of his chest as the air around us shifts and Rook appears at my side, his eyes widening in alarm.

"Oh fuck, Lucifer," he mutters beside me, confirming the name I had already whispered to myself in the deep recesses of my mind. Lucifer is our father. It's almost laughable, but nothing about this shit is funny. I finally break my shocked stare and quickly glance his way. Oh, of all the Demons in hell, wait, he's an Archangel. Wait. That would mean... I'm so confused.

"No shit," I say, my mouth works, finally. I've a million questions on my tongue.

Lucifer smiles and steps away from Bishop, raising one hand, he snaps his fingers. Rodyn's head snaps straight ahead and he roars like an animal, losing his shit, he erupts into a full-blown rage and explodes like Mount Vesuvius.

I grimace as something begins to poke and prod at my own beast in the hopes that I would do the same. I grit my teeth as my own monster batters at its cage, the pressure builds as I slowly lose my will.

Wait.

Something's not right. My emotions, my actions, they don't feel like my own.

Plates, glasses, and cutlery hover in the air then shoot across the room like lethal torpedoes as Bishop and the fucking Devil throw up shields to block the blast from Rodyn's ferocious attack.

The arched windows around the room begin to shudder, then glass blows out and shatters like a bomb had ignited. Rodyn begins to levitate as a tornado of furniture, glass, and debris swirl all around him. There's so much circling him that I lose sight of my brother, but not before I see a glazed-over look in his eyes. Something is definitely wrong.

Screams begin to break out around the castle as Ty's black Necromancer power pours from him so fast that it flows like a tsunami. My other half's head is tilted back, eyes unseeing, arms stretched wide as he searches and seeks out Demonic lives to take. I can almost picture creatures dropping like dominoes one after the other.

"Stop!" Bishop shouts as the chaos erupts all around us. Rook rushes Lucifer but he is knocked off course, flying through the air until he shifts into shadow to avoid flying through the now open window.

Lucifer looks at me, his eyes are two burning orbs of flames, and he laughs. He throws his head back like he just heard the best joke of his life. "It would be the one with the least control over his beast to ultimately be the strongest. This is better than I imagined. So much better. You are a surprise, Trys. I thought Rodyn would be the one, but you are blocking me like a pro. But not for long." He steps towards me, and I ready myself for a fight. I am not about to be controlled. I was controlled and abused my entire life, and to watch my brothers succumb to his power only infuriates me. I throw up my own shield. I refuse to allow my Necromancy to be unleashed at another person's bidding. Ty's is enough. For once, I let my thoughts clear. I am completely in control as I stamp down my Demon and fight the devil who calls himself my father.

"You do know who I am, don't you, Son? I am the first! The greatest of creations. No one defies me! You are mine. Mine!" Lucifer shouts as he continues to close the distance between us. He reaches out with one hand, creating an



invisible wall to block both Bishop and Rook from getting to us. They both batter against the force separating us until Rook's eyes widen then he vanishes from sight. I don't get a chance to wonder what happened to him, I'm too busy fighting against the onslaught of my no longer absent father's power.

Screams and shouts continue all around us. Shit is flying everywhere. The power in this room is damn near suffocating but I keep myself in check. I would be proud in any other circumstance. I am always the one to break first, but something is helping me keep my darkness at bay. It rises slowly at first, lending me strength, building one strand at a time until...until...

"Sunshine?" I whisper, then I feel it. No, I feel her. My sunshine. I smile, and for the first time in my life I let go. I let go and I let her save me. I let her save us.

"No!" Her voice booms through the room as Rook appears with her in his arms, which are protectively wrapped around her waist, until he places her on her feet. Her appearance fills me up with joy and I feel like I can finally take a full lungful of air now that she's opened her eyes.

I sag in relief as the magic is sucked out of the room, like she's somehow siphoning it all inside of her. Rodyn falls to the floor on his knees, panting heavily, and Ty follows suit, totally exhausted, they've used too much power, too much, too fast. I growl in Lucifer's direction, but I don't get to retaliate as sonic waves explode from Micah. Her magic is the purest color of white I've ever seen. Lucifer is knocked on his ass. Bishop flies backward hitting the stone wall behind him as Rook and I both are left shielded somehow from her blast. It's Micah 2.0 and I am swooning like a bitch in heat.

Micah walks with purpose despite being asleep for two weeks, she practically floats toward Lucifer. Her eyes are like two glowing suns, her presence is almost blinding as she comes to a stop, towering over Lucifer who shields his eyes against her brilliant light.

"No! They're mine!" she shouts. Her chest heaves as she sways on her feet, but she remains standing. "You don't get to

come here and claim what's not yours." She steps back and the light around her dims, until finally, it's just her, my sunshine, my Micah.

She's back.

## *Chapter Four*

ESME



*The foothills of the Blue Mountains are a magical place. Soaring ridges of sandstone tower above me as I move with ease down a path I can navigate with my eyes closed. Rich green plant life grows tall and wide all around me in the valley of a massive ravine. My hand brushes against large ferns that seem to reach out to me in welcome.*

*This has to be a dream or a vision. I am aware that this is not real, but I can't open my eyes to break the pull it has on me, so my feet keep moving. Whatever this is, I must let it play out.*

*The sounds of waterfalls in the distance makes me quicken my pace. Nothing is more majestic than breaking out through the ravine into the algae slick stone landscape leading up to the falls. Water pours down from three sources, the river at the top of the cliffs, its waters trickle down from the snow-capped crest of the Blue Mountains itself. Wild and turbulent and full of unimaginable dangers. I remember the constant warnings against swimming for fear of the jagged rocks and the perilous undertow. But here at the base of the falls is where we celebrated, worshipped, and gave of ourselves to the Gods of the mountains.*

*I almost expect there to be Witches here. The sight is so familiar, I can almost see them now, their long gray robes dragging behind them, soaking in the prayer enriched spray of the blessed waters. Hoods covering their faces, making everyone the same, their voices raised as one, candles in hand, heads bowed in the silver moonlight. At the very top of it all,*

*standing on a rock ledge, her larger-than-life silhouette looms over us all. The High Priestess raises her hands to give thanks for the mountain's powers, for gracing us with our precious ability to see the great beyond.*

*I step up onto the first of the stone steps carefully, my feet bare, the spray of the falls drenches the pajamas I fell asleep in. Looking down at my tank top and shorts, I almost feel the need to cover myself, but there is no one here. No one here to glare at me in disappointment for my lack of respect, the mountains are my only judge, and they seem just fine with me standing in this empty dreamscape of my once home.*

*The need to walk further, to climb higher until I reach our town, beckons me, but I pause. I don't want to see the place where I was rejected. The place that hid me away from everyone else in our village because I wasn't one of them. Not completely. I guess it's not the place but the person. The High Priestess. She's the one who cast me out, not this place.*

*Mist and fog begin to roll across the stones, covering them completely as clouds block out the moon above. My heart begins to pound, and I know something is coming. This is why I'm here after all. The sudden shift in the atmosphere puts me on edge. My instincts lead me to believe that this isn't a mere dream but a summons. I thought I was safe from her reach in the Underworld, but this dream is proof of my error. As if I summoned her with my thoughts, a candle shines, glides towards me as it cuts through the darkness. The flame floats in front of my face then grows, stretching, morphing into arms, legs, and a tall, slight body. Her bright white robe appears next, shimmery with its own mystical light source, until the High Priestess stands tall before me. Her long silvery white locs cascade over her shoulders as she reaches for her hood with dark brown wrinkled hands, pulling back the fabric to reveal a beautiful yet aged face. How many years has she held on to her youth? She never used to age, always maintained a youthful glamour that belied how old she actually was. I guess there's no need for pretence in front of me. Still unworthy in her eyes.*

*I bow out of habit, nodding my head in greeting, when all I want to do is wake up. "High Priestess Isadura."*

*She takes in my appearance as she clasps her hands in front of herself, then she begins to circle me slowly. I stand completely still, but I don't miss her look of disgust, then resignation that graces her features before she masks them with a fake pasted on smile. "Esmeralda, you've been hiding from me," she says it as if she's hurt, and I almost laugh at her.*

*"Beg your pardon, High Priestess. I thought that I didn't belong to this Coven anymore. I didn't realize you were looking for me. I'm no longer a Blue Mountain Witch. But you know that already." I try to hide my own resentment but it's there in every word I utter. I owe her nothing, not one damn thing.*

*"Oh, don't play dumb, Esmeralda, or is this what has become of you under the tutelage of HellNight Academy? You know why I've called you here," she says as she stops in front of me once more. "I've felt your power. I should have known, tainted blood or not, that the daughter of Cashira would be powerful." She offers me another phony smile but at the mention of my mother's name I lose it. She has no right.*

*"As I said, I don't belong to you. You threw me away. It matters not what power I have now. I am nothing to you and I will remain as I am, banished. Remember your words, your command." My anger rises to the surface; I am done being polite, all the things I've ever wanted to say, needed to say, come out of me in a rush of pure hatred. "Don't you dare speak my mother's name. You took me away from her. I was just trash hanging like lint on your robes. You treated me like a second-class citizen, no, maybe worse. When I didn't have the power you thought I should have had, you handed me over to Lucretia Larrieux, like I was a thing to be given away, not a person with thoughts or opinions about my life in any way. So don't you play dumb, High Priestess. I know why you summoned me here. I know that my powers are greater than yours." I scoff and tilt my head when she purses her lips at my outburst. "You feel that what is mine belongs to the mountains,*

*and by proxy belongs to you. You want to use me, and I won't let you. Before you attempt to threaten or demand anything of me. My answer is NO. I don't owe the Blue Mountains shit."*

*She steps back as if I slapped her, then she quickly recovers, her mouth parts in reply, "How dare you—"*

*"Esme!" Sam's voice reaches out to me, giving me the anchor I need to pull myself from the dream she created.*

*"Esme, wake up," Sam calls, and this time I can feel his hands on me.*

*The world around me begins to fade as the High Priestess watches me fade away along with it. "You will come home. You can't hide in the Underworld forever. A Blue Mountain Witch belongs to the mountains. The Nephilim and your Wolf, you think you can have them both. You shouldn't have them at all. There's a reason why we don't take Mates, child. Your heart ache has just begun...but I will come for you, Esmeralda. When I do, you'll welcome me or watch them both die.*

"Esme." Sam gently shakes me awake, but instead of opening my eyes, I allow myself to cling to her last words. Is it true? Are Micah and Sam in any real danger because they are my Tether and Mate? There's so much I wasn't privy to within my own Coven, perhaps this is one of those things. No. Knowing the High Priestess she threw out that last bit of information to make me waver in my convictions; to make me doubt. Well, fuck her. I don't belong to her, and I don't belong to Lucretia Larrieux. As far as my Mate and my Soul Tether are concerned, I will let my own visions guide me on that front.

Micah is still unconscious; I saw her death but she's still here. Sam lost most of his pack, but he is still here. It is time for me to trust myself, to believe in my own power. I won't be the High Priestess's pawn.

"Hey beautiful," Sam whispers softly. "Open your eyes for me." He strokes my cheek and lets his hand linger until he's cradling my head in his hands. I stretch my arms and legs but

keep my eyes closed. I can feel the heat of his body as he leans over me, and I want him closer. So much closer.

He chuckles, a low rumbling sound that makes my stomach flip in excitement. He gives me butterflies, something I've never felt before. The eagerness to be near him, wanting him, the bond between us is begging to be completed. Just thinking about it makes me giddy.

Part of me is torn between the hollow feeling in my chest where Micah once was and the vibrant, thriving bond waiting for me, pulling me closer to Sam. I open my eyes and am rewarded with his brilliant smile, warm green eyes and dimpled cheeks. He'd been in his Wolf form since we had returned to the Underworld; the loss of his pack had been too much for him to bear. I could feel his sorrow and didn't know how to reach him. I can only assume that his Wolf, and perhaps close proximity to me, has helped soothe the ache in his heart.

"Hey," I reply, reaching up to stroke his face, two weeks of stubble on his chin, making him all kinds of ruffled and rugged. I like it. I didn't mind waking up to a big, gigantic brown Wolf every morning, but it's nice to finally see the man again. "You shifted." I smile, knowing it doesn't mean he's over what he's lost. But he's ready to face it on two legs instead of four. I know none of this has been easy or ideal for him. All of this had been thrust upon him and now with his pack gone...

"I wanted you to wake up in my arms for once, but you were thrashing in your sleep." His brows crease together in concern. "I've been calling for you for a while now. I tried not to panic when I couldn't wake you." He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. "I'm just relieved you've come back to me."

He leans forward and brushes his lips against mine, and I sigh, content for anything he wants to give me. I want more, but I won't push him. I don't truly know how Sam feels about me or about my tether with Micah. We never got to finish the conversation before the Academy began to fall apart all around us. I don't want to lose either of them, but does that make me



selfish? To want to hold them both so close to my heart? Sam's a Wolf, my fated Mate. Is it fair of me to want him to share me? Or maybe I should step back from Micah instead. The Tether is complete, we aren't obligated to continue our relationship in a sexual way, but that doesn't mean... Ugh, my head is a mess. Am I being ridiculous? I am out of my depth. Micah has three other Tethers and two Mate bonds. Here I am struggling with indecision about two. Sam is mine. Completely, whole-heartedly, mine. Soul deep, impenetrably, mine. I can't be without him.

"Kiss me, Sam, please" I plead, needing more than soft brushes of his lips against mine.

"Are you sure? I didn't know how you felt about being with me, you know, considering Micah is across the hall... still." He pulls back, searching my face as if he's waiting for me to reject him, and the mere idea stings, making me rub my chest. I don't want him to think I would ever push him away. He should never hold himself back from me. I am his Mate. The stars chose me. I need him to know I am truly his. I know this relationship is new between us, but I don't want him to think the minute Micah wakes, because she will, that I will walk away from him.

"I want you, Sam. Right now, you are who and what I need." I push up on my elbow with one arm and pull him closer to me with the other, our lips inches apart. It would be easy to close the distance between us, but I want him to feel me, believe me, trust me. "Kiss me, Sam."

Our lips meet in a sweet kiss, exploratory nips and bites, strokes, and gentle touches, my soul feels exposed, wide open to him. My body hums in tune with his as the bond between us ignites.

I part his lips with my tongue as he pulls me onto his lap until I am straddling his waist, my body flush with his. Deepening the kiss, we both groan, the heat between us is electric, the bond between us pulses, pulling us closer. Sam wraps his hands around my hips, pulling me on top of his hard length, rocking me against him, hitting my clit over and over

again. The room fills with sound of my moans as I seek more, needing more from him.

I whimper against his lips, breaking our kiss, wishing there were no clothes between us. I lean forward, pressing my forehead against his as I grind my hips on him, making him hiss. “Sam, please,” I beg. I don’t want to push him. I need him to take what he needs. I need him to know my heart, that fate didn’t make a mistake.

“I need you, Esme.” He kisses my lips and pulls away, holding my hips still and my heart skips a beat. Sam locks eyes with me, and I know what he’s about to say before he says it. I feel sick to my stomach, my breathing picks up and my anxiety begins to rise. I can’t lose him when we just found each other.

“Sam.” His name falls from my lips in part sob, part prayer. I take his hand from my hips, and I press it to my chest so he can feel how wildly my heart beats, even though I am sure he can hear it.

“Sam... I—”

“I want only you, Esme, just you. You’ve been here.” He points to his heart with a sense of desperation and my vision blurs with unshed tears. “I’ve carried you with me since the moment I laid eyes on you when you arrived at HellNight Academy. I’m not perfect and I blame myself for not being brave enough to make myself known to you. I should have staked my claim because you are mine. I didn’t save you that night in the forest and it will forever haunt me deep down in my soul. I feel unworthy of you. I feel like the biggest asshole for what I’m about to say, but I need us, if there’s a chance for us still, to begin in truth. I don’t deserve you. This is part of the reason why I remained in my Wolf form, with the loss of most of my pack, I couldn’t bear to lose you too. But I am a Wolf, Esme. You’re it for me, baby. My fated Mate, my once in a lifetime, my forever.”

He presses his forehead against mine once more and I can feel my tears as they slide down my cheeks, his next words are a direct hit to my chest.

“I don’t want to share you, Esme. I don’t know if I can. I would rather you walk away from me now than lie to myself and you. I don’t want to ask you to choose. It’s not fair. You’ve already Tethered yourself to Micah. I can accept that, logically. I know in a way you had to. But I ask that you choose me. Be with me, please. Only me.” He blows out a shuddering breath. “I can’t... I’m sorry... I can’t take this further,” he mutters as he picks me up and sits me on the bed. I watch him stand. The red glow of the Underworld makes his tan skin look olive toned and his bare chest appears darker as he takes a step away from me. The muscles of his stomach tense and flexes as my eyes travel down to his black joggers that sit low on his hips and my throat constricts. I can’t breathe. I’ve already lost so much in my life. I scramble to my knees on the bed.

“Please, Sam,” I plead. My heart and my head are at war with each other. He wants me to choose. I close my eyes and search for my Tether with Micah, but it’s not there, just an empty space, but regardless, she’s emblazoned on my heart. She is mine. But she is also, Ty’s , Trys’s, Rodyn’s, Rook’s, and Lyrik’s. I let my tears fall because I can’t let him walk away. It would break my heart in two and fracture my soul beyond repair, I know that. I will always be Tethered to Micah, but Sam...no. “I can’t lose you, Sam.” I wipe away my tears and climb out of the bed. He steps back further into the room, his sad eyes tracking my every move as I follow him.

I do the only thing I know how to do, I cut open my chest and let myself bleed. “You’ve been in my heart too. I didn’t know what I was feeling. I wish I had. I could have been braver for the both of us, even when all I wanted to do was make myself small amongst the crowd. I forgave you for what happened in the forest. I don’t understand what it means to be a Wolf and have a pack, but I want to learn. I know it was hard for you to stand in the way, to attempt to protect me and go against Patrick’s command. If you want to make it right then don’t walk away, believe me, we can have a lifetime of you making it up to me.” I try to laugh but it comes out as a choked sob. “I have never had anything to call my own. I was taken away from my mother, tossed away by my Coven like a

dirty secret. For the first time in my life I've been given something precious, you, solely for myself."

Sam tilts his head, his own eyes brimming with tears, and it's the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. "I can't choose between the two of you. I know that I can't, because when Micah wakes, I will still be Tethered to her, Sam. Or at least, I think." I shrug and blow out a breath, hastily wiping away more stray tears.

"What are you saying, Esme?" Sam asks, his question barely audible over the loud pounding of my heart and my blood swishing around rapidly in my ears.

I shift from foot to foot, knowing that I'm making the right decision. Micah's words come to me in a rush as if she's saying them right next to me. "*Esme, if you want Sam or both of us in whatever capacity, it's your decision.*"

"I want to be with you. Only you," I say with a watery smile. I watch Sam's mouth part as he takes a step and then pauses. I don't know if he thought my words would somehow make the world implode but I don't waste another second. I pull my tank top over my head and toss it to the floor.

"Esme?" he says my name, his mouth drops open at the sight of my naked body in surprise. I wait for a question that never comes from him as I slide my shorts down my legs and kick them across the room.

"Kiss me, Sam. I am yours."

## *Chapter Five*

SAM



“Esme?” My lips part as I stare at my Mate. Yes, my Mate.

She’s mine. I watched her pour out her heart to me, eyes pleading for me to understand. Understand that regardless of whether she is tied to another, she is willing to be mine. Solely mine. I know I’ve asked a lot. She is Tethered to Micah, but the Wolf wants what he wants. The moment I backed away from her, he battered at my rib cage, acid, bile, and heart burn were shooting pains to my chest and throat from the brutality of his internal attack. He is pissed. She is not just a Mate, she is our chosen, fated. Wolves spend their entire lives never knowing, never finding their fated Mate. It was said that we all had one, that we had to be in the right place at the right time to find them. Well, I found my beautiful little Witch and if I have to have a piece of her heart I will take it, place it in a gilded cage and swallow the fucking key.

My mouth waters as she boldly strips out of her tank top, dark brown skin, smooth and delicate, revealing ample breasts, nipples already stiff peaks begging for my tongue, plump kissable lips and white even teeth. I track her hands; her gray eyes are locked on mine until she bends and slides her shorts down over her curvy hips and thighs. My little Witch straightens and gives me the full view of her body, my new world. My hands tingle, needing to map out each plane, dip, and contour of her body, she is mine to learn. I fall further for her in this moment, she doesn’t shy away from me as she watches me decide what to say, what to do.

My eyes widen in shock. One minute Esme is standing in front of me, the next she is running straight to me. Before we

collide, she jumps and I catch her, my hands grip her ass as I haul her up my body as her lips find mine. I hold her close as she wraps her legs around my waist. You would think we would crash together in a frenzy of limbs. The lust between us thick and potent only moments ago, is now a slow simmer.

She kisses me with a hungry, desperate longing that I return in equal measure. I get lost in the taste of her lips, sucking her tongue hard until she whimpers beautifully. Esme cradles my head in her hands, holding me as if I am the most precious thing she's ever held, and my heart pounds at her reverence. As our passion builds, her hands find my hair, gripping it hard between her fingers, she snaps my head back and breaks our kiss.

“I need you Sam. But I'm—”

I kiss her hard, all of my emotions, my regret, my apology go into one brutal collision. This time it is me who loses all composure, my Wolf eager to bite, to claim, Mate with her, bond her to me forever. I hold her up with one hand whilst dragging my joggers down hurriedly with the other.

Her pussy leaves a wet trail down my stomach, and it only makes me harder as she slides up and down my torso, seeking the friction she desperately needs. I find the nearest wall and turn us so that I take the force of the impact. I'm not gentle when I grab her hips, my fingers bruising her skin as I lift her, positioning her pussy over my cock, I thrust into her wet heat, until I'm met with resistance.

“Sam! Ah!” Esme whimpers then cries out in pain, her grip on my shoulders punishing as she uses her legs to lift herself up slightly, she winces uncomfortably, but she doesn't tell me to stop. I pause, alarmed with her reaction. It's then that I realize.

I grip her hips to stop her from moving. “Esme, am I the first man in this pretty pussy?” I ask with a soft smile, that I swear in this moment will only be preserved for her, and she gives me a tiny nod. “Why didn't you tell me? I don't want to hurt you,” I say feeling crass for not considering that she might be untouched. I kiss her lips and press my forehead to

her crescent moon tattoo. A reminder that she's been sheltered, kept hidden away by her Coven and then shipped to HellNight Academy. The beast in me is excited, thrilled to know that I'm the only one, but my Humanity cries out for her lack of experience in life. It's not fair. I want to give her everything, but I can't bond with her for the first time like this, not when she's basically a virgin.

She casts her eyes down and I'm having none of that. "Esme, look at me," I finally say when she doesn't answer me right away. I wait patiently, not moving an inch, until she slowly raises her head, her eyes beseeching mine.

"I was going to tell you, but you kissed me, and I got lost in the moment." She pouts, her voice small as she adjusts her hips around my waist, opening herself up further, taking more of me inside of her. "Sam." She moans my name and I immediately move us toward the bed, wobbling like a fucking penguin with my joggers around my ankles. Laying her gently on the bed, her silver hair fans out around her head to form an angelic halo. My Angel, my gift from the Heavens. I lean down and kiss her as I ease out of her and my dick weeps, bereft at the loss of contact. I need to take this slow. Kicking my joggers off, I wrap my hands around her thighs and pull her to the edge of the bed.

"Sam, why—"

"Shhh. I don't get to fuck you like an animal against the wall, not yet anyway." I wink and she smiles, reaching out for me and I can't resist her touch as I lean over her once more. "You deserve for this to be done right, thoroughly." I pepper kisses over her neck and shoulder, loving how receptive she is as she squirms beneath me from my lips alone. I plant a final kiss between her breasts, revelling in the feel of her silky skin against my open-mouthed kisses. Getting lost in the lingering scent of cocoa butter, my mouth waters, before I drop to my knees.

Spreading her legs apart, the scent of her arousal and blood makes my nostrils flare. My Wolf stirs, unhappy with the prospect of hurting her in any way, needing, no, desiring to take care of his Mate. I surge forward, my fingers part her



slick folds and I dive in, lapping up every drop of her sweet nectar and blood with my tongue. I lick tenderly, soothing away the pain that I caused, kissing it all better. I groan against her clit, taking it between my lips, I suck hard on her sensitive flesh.

“Sam! Oh, fuck. Sam!” The sound of her shouting as she bucks off the bed is like music to my ears. Esme’s hands are wrapped around my hair so tight, I’m sure I’ve lost a few strands, but I don’t care. She can ride my face like a cowgirl riding a bucking bronco or scalp me and I would take it any day to hear her scream my name.

“Cum for me, Angel.” I flick her clit once more as she cries out, rewarding me with her release, thrashing wildly against my face. I lick and suck her as she rides out her orgasm until she’s whimpering and pleading for me to give her sensitive flesh a reprieve.

“Please, Sam.” She pants heavily as I stand and grab one of her legs, wrapping it around my waist. “I need you. I need all of you.”

I pride myself in my restraint as I climb up the bed and hover over her, wanting to imprint this moment in my mind. “I need you too, Angel.” I reach down and line up our bodies together and thrust into her slowly, watching her reaction as her pussy swallows me. “Fuck, you’re so tight.” I grit out as she opens up for me, blossoming like a flower, taking all of me until my hips touch hers. “You’re my world, Angel,” I say in awe, wondering how I ever thought I could keep my distance from this woman. Covering her with my body, I brace myself with my arm on either side of her head as I pull out, leaving only the tip of my cock in the entrance of her pussy.

“You are mine, Esme. You may be Tethered to Micah, you might not be able to choose, and you know what? It doesn’t matter. From this day forward, this pussy, your heart, all of you, is mine.” I thrust all the way inside her with a snap of my hips and my mouth collides with hers, swallowing her wails as I lose myself in my Mate, thrusting deeply in and out, over and over again. Our combined moans of pleasure fill the room and

bounce off the walls and I want to tilt my head back and howl in response.

“*Mine!*” I growl against her lips and my Wolf recedes, sated, pleased.

Esme rips her mouth away from mine. “Yes, Sam, I am yours. All yours. ” She sobs, tears run down the side of her face as her arms wrap around my neck as I fuck her into the bed. “Oh God, Sam,” she cries as I feel her walls squeezing me tighter.

I lean back on my haunches and pull her up with me, my cock sinking deeper inside her as I grind my hips to slow my impending orgasm to savor her, to feel every inch of her glorious body. I taste her tears on her face first, then her sweat on my tongue as I lick her neck, the swell of her breast, zeroing in on the perfect spot to bite her as my teeth begin to ache with the need to leave my mark.

“Esme.” I pant with each thrust, her body melts around me, draping herself over me, we cling to each other as if our lives depend on it. “I am going to bite you, baby. I need to bite you, but I want you to do the same,” I tell her as I struggle to maintain control, holding myself back until she replies.

“Do it,” she says boldly as her head falls forward and rests on my shoulder. I can feel how close we both are to cumming. I slide my hand down between us and find her clit, pressing down and circling it hard with my fingers. Esme shudders against me as her body jerks, her voice weak and hoarse as she falls apart for me. I pick up my pace, stroking long and deep until my own orgasm hits me like a lightning strike to the chest. My canines elongate and I strike, biting her right where her neck meets her shoulder.

“Sam!” Esme shouts once more before I feel the sting of her teeth press down hard against the right side of my chest. The rush of blood in my mouth and the combination of her teeth on me sends me spiraling. Starlight dances behind my closed eyes as the bond between us weaves together with an unbreakable thread forming between us. Gold. Pure. Solid. I

feel her, all of her, lust, fear, exhaustion, every single emotion hits me deep in my heart.

*I open my eyes to look at my Mate, but I see nothing but darkness around me. I gasp as my soul feels as if it's been snatched from my body. I am sent soaring somewhere far away. I glide through the air effortlessly, with only the night sky and the stars to accompany me.*

*I wonder if this is the effect of our powers joining as one. I free fall until my feet touch down onto a cliff near a roaring waterfall.*

*Robed figures stand silently all around me, unseeing. I step closer, feeling the cold water and the slippery stones underneath my feet as I take in the hundreds of people with their heads tipped toward something up ahead.*

*Where the hell am I? Nothing about these surroundings is familiar to me. The trees, the cliffs, even the sky is foreign to my Wolf. I know this is a vision, I remember my teachings with Professor Adder, so I go with it.*

*Walking amongst the crowd of hooded individuals until I reach the front, I look up at the sight of a woman, standing tall and proud amongst what I can only assume are worshippers. Her long blue robes hide everything from view except her hands that are outstretched toward the sky in supplication.*

*“Goddess of the night, keeper of the flame, guardian of the mountain. Hear us!” Her voice is commanding, crisp, clear, familiar...*

*They all begin to chant. The atmosphere itself begins to close in all around us. The darkness is broken by light from candles that some of the people are holding. The chant becomes more fervent, rising higher until the moon itself seems to rise up like it's answering their call, a beacon behind a mountainous landscape painting the high peaks in glowing blue light. I've never seen the moon look like this before and my Wolf stirs in curiosity as the silhouette of the woman standing above us demands my attention. I stare transfixed at the woman who's leading the worship until her hood falls back*

*and the moonlight illuminates her face; it's my Angel looking down at me.*

“Sam,” Esme calls my name, and my eyes open wide in shock. I blink rapidly, both startled and disorientated as the room comes back into focus. Her eyes narrow with concern as she holds my head between her hands, searching my eyes for secrets I don't have the words to reveal. Her hair forms a silver curtain around us, blocking out everything but us. Right now, right here, it's just my Mate and her beautiful, worried face.

“What did you see? Tell me what you saw.” She sighs. “This happened to Micah as well. I can feel your fear, Sam,” she says with urgency, and I try recall what I witnessed mere seconds ago.

“I saw you, standing at the top of a waterfall—” I try to remember more but all I can grab hold of is the last moment. “You saw me, you saw me, and you smiled,” I reply as I wrap my arms around her waist and pull her into my arms. It was just a smile, but the memory sends a chill down my spine.

We stay like this, wrapped in each other's arms, until Esme sighs and leans back to look at me. “When you woke me earlier, it was her, the High Priestess in my dream. This is not a coincidence. Now you're having similar visions, only it was me guiding the coven. Is that what you saw?” she asks, stroking the crease between my worried brows. I nod, not able to form words. I've never been able to have such vivid visions before and I wonder if my connection to Esme has strengthened my sight through our bond.

“Well, it won't happen. I am not returning, ever,” she says with all the determination she can muster, but I don't feel as confident.

“What if you don't have a choice?” I ask, expressing my deepest fear. The one question I have been afraid to ask from the moment she got a power boost in Tarot class and Professor Adder said to her the High Priestess would come for her.

“Sam, I promise you—” Esme's eyes widen as she sucks in a sharp breath. Her hands shake as she touches the center of

her chest with the palm of her hand. She leans forward and kisses me before she climbs off my lap in a rush.

“What is it?” I ask, watching her search the floor for her clothes only for her to run toward her bathroom.

“It’s Micah. She’s awake!”

## *Chapter Six*

## MICAH



“Well, you must be Micah,” the Demon says, standing there as if I hadn’t just knocked him on his ass. I see Bishop standing behind him and I am glad to see that he’s not hurt. I know he wants to say something, his eyes are imploring me, but we don’t have that kind of connection to speak without words, not yet anyway. I have a lot to work on now that I am not dead.

“I am.” My eyes shift back to the danger in front of me. I would be a fool to underestimate the Devil. I may have been unaware when Rook first brought me into the room but he’s the only other ex-Archangel in the Underworld, well, that I know of, brave enough to throw his weight around in my father’s house. I mean, this is the equivalent to pissing on someone else’s trees. “And you are?” I tilt my head and wait. He smiles but it’s all teeth, menacing, calculating, and dark.

“Lucifer, but I’ll make an exception for you. You, can call me Luc.” He flexes his large black wings behind him, oozing power and maybe too much arrogance to go along with it. If he wasn’t who he was, I would be mesmerized, but I will be damned if I feed his ego. His wings shine with an unnatural light, so like Bishop’s but black, pearlescent in their sheen, almost like peacock feathers.

He steps into my personal space, but I refuse to step back, I will not cede any ground to this Demon. This is a game, right? He wants to posture, then so be it. Lucifer reaches out and grabs one of my braids, working it between his fingers as his mismatched eyes bore into me. Fuck! He’s their father. I

am not a hundred percent sure, but his eyes are a dead giveaway. So much like Ty's and Trys's. My brain is trying to process everything around me to assess the situation.

“Exquisite. A true Nephilim. It's been a long time since I've felt power like yours.” He leans in and takes a deep breath, sniffing me, and it makes my skin crawl for him to be this close. I'm all kinds of uncomfortable but I keep my face neutral, I will give nothing away.

My father growls and so do my Tethers and Mate. “Luc, you need to step away from her now.”

The air shifts around us as a knife passes the side of my face, aiming for him. Lucifer catches the knife before it hits its target; his face. He holds it up between his thumb and forefinger. His eyes glance behind me and I know he is looking at Ty. I can feel Ty's fury. I can feel them all, and instead of the joy I should be feeling to be reunited with them, all I feel is their dread and foreboding.

“Son, your anger is warranted, but so predictable.” Lucifer closes his fist around the knife and I watch it crumble to dust in his hands. Ty growls in response. “But I can work with it. All of it,” he says as he eyes all three of them like he's won the lottery. Lucifer laughs and claps his hands, turning his attention back to me once more.

“If they are your sons, then where the hell have you been all their lives?” I ask, my own fury mirroring Ty's, Rodyn's, and Trys's. I can feel their eyes on my back, but their burning gazes are only for him.

“You can ask your own sire the same question, can you not?” Lucifer counters. Bishop waves his hand and a wave of power washes over us, knocking out the shield I'd managed to place around them when I first arrived. He storms across the room.

“Enough, Luc, you don—”

I hold my hand up and my father goes quiet. I guess that is a win in itself because his mouth parts as if he is going to continue but he closes it slowly. “This isn't about Bishop and



me. We have a shit ton to work through, but I'm talking about you." I point my finger toward Lucifer, and he watches the movement with mild amusement. I guess he's never had someone talk to him this way without them losing their lives over it. Well, fucking tough, I've died once, and it isn't happening again any time soon.

"You're bold, child. Very bold. But they are my sons. I made a—" he stops what he was going to say and shakes his head. Lucifer lets go of my hair that he was playing with absentmindedly. "What matters is that I am here now. I didn't mean to be so dramatic. You know what? Yes, yes I did. I wanted to test their strength and power, that's all." He holds up his hands in surrender, not only to me but to them as well. He steps back and spreads his arms wide.

"They need to come with me," he says matter-of-factly. "This is the only way. They are too far gone to stay here. Until I can aid them in controlling who and what they are." He looks over my shoulder again, talking to them. As if reading my mind, Rook's arms wrap around my waist, clutching onto me tightly and pulling me back to his chest. I let him usher me away from Lucifer, and they all release a deep breath of relief. Hey, I wasn't going to let him hurt me, but if it makes them feel better that I am no longer within his reach, then I'll oblige.

"If you knew we were your sons, shouldn't you have come to us sooner?" Rodyn walks around from the other side of the dining table to stand beside Bishop. I try not to look surprised by the ease they all have around each other but it seems while I was out, a lot happened.

In the midst of all the chaos that I can't help walking into at every waking moment, I close my eyes and search for my other Mate. Tuning out the conversation in front of me, I focus on my Tethers and bonds and follow the ties that bind us together. Knowing Lyrik, he is probably dealing with the fallout of whatever happened after I literally died. I find Esme easily but there are so many emotions flowing from her Tether to mine that I feel bombarded by them. Why is she afraid? But then there's lust and maybe even love. I quickly move away from her, seeking out my Incubus, but when I find him, my

eyes open wide and I turn around to Rook, trying to keep my voice down, but who am I kidding, there is no secrecy amongst Supernaturals.

“Where is Lyrik?” I ask in a hushed voice, determined to keep this between us.

Lucifer tsks from the other side of the room. “It seems in your absence your faithful Incubus has been neglected.” He laughs again. If I knew how I did what I did earlier to knock him on his ass, I’d happily do it again.

“What do you mean?” I ask, stepping out of Rooks reach, then turning in a circle to look at everyone in the room. “What is he talking about?” I rub my chest as the bond between Lyrik and I feels fragile. There’s a sense of wildness about his emotions, anger, lust, and hunger.

“He hasn’t fed, sunshine,” Trys says as he grabs hold of my hand and yanks me toward him. He wraps me in his arms and holds me so tight it feels as if we were about to become one. “He needs you. You should go to him before I steal you for myself,” he whispers in my ear. “I thought you were gone, baby. I thought I lost you forever, sunshine. I must admit, because I would never lie to you, I wanted to kill Marcus,” he says calmly, and for a moment I can’t help but smile because this is why I love this man. Of course, that would be his first thought. He is who he is without shame. But at the mention of Marcus’s name, I think about my dad, who is still yet to be put to rest, and my mother, who is trapped behind enemy lines with Michael who is doing God knows what to her.

“I love you, Trys,” I say, planting a kiss on his chest as he squeezes me tight.

“Always, sunshine. Always,” he replies, kissing my forehead and making me melt further into him.

“This is all very touching,” Lucifer states as Ty comes to a stop beside Rodyn. It’s like everyone in the room is moving around strategically, positioning themselves protectively around me in case something bad was to happen. I am not surprised by their reactions, I would be just as protective if

anyone of them died on me and suddenly awakened after, well, I don't know how long I've been out, but I get it.

"I will give you a few days, my sons, but you will come to my palace. We'll make it a celebration. You need my blood to regulate your Demonic side. Very simple process, really. I will not be Master Yoda-ing you, but I would hope you would want to learn more from me. There is much we need to discuss, and I can help you with your little anger management problem, with a few drops of my blood. I mean you no harm, I pinky promise." He tucks his wings tight behind his back trying to appear less threatening, like that would actually work.

"Why should we trust you?" Ty asks as Lucifer holds out Ty's rematerialized knife to him. Ty takes it from his fingers, and it disappears from view with a sleight of hand trick. He is definitely going to have to teach me how to do that.

"I'm your sire. I would never harm such a high-priced investment," Lucifer says with nonchalance, as if they are commodities instead of Supernatural beings, and my hackles rise.

"Investments? Are you shitting me? How do you expect them to want to seek out your help if you are referring to them as such?" I say in exasperation. The nerve of this Demon.

"What do you think you are, Miss Jones?" Lucifer replies.

"Luc, if you say another word to my daughter about things you know nothing about, we are going to have a problem. Micah is not, nor will she ever be, something I created out of a planned vengeance against Michael or anyone else," Bishop growls, stepping in front of Rodyn and Ty, as if to protect them from their father. Lucifer rolls his eyes. Ha. The Devil rolled his eyes. The mundaneness of the action has me wishing for narwhal slippers and a bowl of popcorn. I look up at Trys and he meets my eyes, smiling as if he can read my mind.

"Give them a chance to think about what you've offered, which, in my opinion, isn't much, but you can't expect them to just follow you blindly," Bishop says, continuing to protect my Tethers as if Lucifer will whisk them away without their consent.

“I wouldn’t have this problem if she hadn’t kept them from me!” Lucifer shouts, but Bishop stands there like this is just your everyday kind of behavior from Lucifer.

“Our mother?” Rodyn chimes in with a thoughtful look on his face. His perfectly shaped eyebrows lift, and lips purse in disbelief, making him appear hotter than he already is for some reason. Wait, is he wearing shorts? Focus, Micah.

“I would hardly call her our mother,” Trys says beside me, and I can’t help but hold him tighter even though I know he doesn’t need me to. Headmistress Larrieux is definitely non-mother material. I mean, she poisoned one of her sons for crying out loud.

“You’re saying she kept us hidden from you?” Ty asks, tilting his head in confusion. “How can a Witch hide from the Devil?”

“Simple,” Lucifer says through clenched teeth. “Your mother is not Human, she’s a Demon. The clever little bitch found a way to hide you from me. You see, you are not Cambion as you assumed. I may be Demonic in nature, but a Demon I am not. You three are Nephalem, both Demon and Angel.” I gasp as the ultimate bomb drop goes off. Do any of us ever get a damn break? Jesus! Oops, I am sure God is listening. Damn it.

“Wait, what?” Rook asks, taking the words right out of my mouth. I didn’t even know that was a thing. I look up at Trys and he looks just as confused. I almost want to reach up and close his mouth for him. But then I remember the test we took in Magical History class.

“How? The test we took with Professor Star didn’t indicate they had any Angelic markers like mine did?” Everyone in the room turns to look at me. But it’s Lucifer who answers me.

“At least she did something right. She was meant to hide my sons until it was time for them to join me in the Underworld when they came into their powers. But she hid them, even from me, therefore they are experiencing instabilities with their magic.” He gestures to all three of them, and Rodyn tsks and folds his muscular arms over his chest.

“You say it with so much sincerity.” Rodyn’s laugh is hollow and emotionless. “I don’t believe a word you’re saying. Our mother can’t possibly be a Demon, we would know,” he says the last part with uncertainty.

Ty wipes his hands down his face and turns toward me. I hold out my hand to him and he crosses the room eagerly. It still surprises me to feel their emotions so strongly. Right now, Ty wants to be anywhere but here. When he reaches me, he pulls me from Trys’s arms and holds me to his chest. Damn it, these men.

“Lucretia is a shapeshifting Demon called a *Rakshasi*, an extremely rare and powerfully vicious creature. Perfect for what I needed her for. Now her life is forfeit for her betrayal.” Lucifer’s wings flex out wide as we all stare at him with wide eyes in shock, even Bishop.

“Fuck, Luc. And I thought Michael was bad. How in the hell did you find a Rakshasi? They are extinct, Luc.” Bishop looks to Rook and my Mate shrugs his shoulders just as clueless.

Lucifer scoffs. “I am the Lord of the Underworld for a reason, Brother. I know all and see all. I have my eyes everywhere.” Lucifer turns abruptly and starts to walk from the room. “I’ll let you reacquaint yourselves with your bond. I’m not heartless after all. You have a week, Miss Jones, then I expect my sons to show up for the ceremony. We are all one big happy family now!” Lucifer laughs, snapping his fingers and vanishing without me getting a word of rebuttal in. His laughter lingers long after he’s gone.

“What just happened?” I ask as Esme and Sam appear at the entrance of the room, in the exact spot Lucifer just disappeared from, looking at us in confusion.

“What did I miss?” She looks at us all in question, but my answer goes out the window when I notice the fresh mating mark on her neck.

“Looks like I missed a hell of a lot,” I say with a knowing smile that makes her look away from me shyly. I’m both shocked and happy for her. I don’t feel an ounce of jealousy. I

don't own her, and I never wanted her to feel like she needed my permission. Before they can reply, I pull out of Ty's arms and hold up my arms to stop the room from erupting into questions of what happened to me. I know if I start talking, I will never get away.

"I know there's a shit ton we need to discuss, but I need to do one thing first," I say to them all. Bishop's turned down lips lets me know he's displeased, but he still nods his head in understanding. After convincing the twins that I would come to see them later and a quick "we can talk soon" nod to Rodyn, I rush from the dining room and back toward the tower. I can hardly feel Lyrik at all. What I can feel is dark and animalistic, almost wild and chaotic.

My Mate needs me, and I can't lose Lyrik when I just found him.

## *Chapter Seven*

## MICAH



“Where is he?” I ask Rook as we both climb the steps of the tower. I should have asked him to carry me. Despite the magic use when I first touched down in the dining room, I am still feeling a little wobbly. The stone steps make my legs cramp up from disuse. I want to stop and stretch them out but the need to get to my Mate spurs me on. It’s amazing how unfit you become after being unconscious for who knows how long.

“I had to lock him in a room at the end of the hallway. Close enough that he can sense you but not close enough that he can feed from you while you were unconscious,” Rook says as he hurries ahead of me.

“Wait, you don’t think he would have tried to—”

“Baby, we are Demons at our core. It is clear the Incubus loves you or he would have gotten his fix from anything or anyone. With you being his fated Mate he is only meant to feed from you now. In the state he’s in there was no way he could have been able to control himself.” He stops to face me once we make it to the top of the steps, stopping me in my tracks. “Look, Lyrik is in bad shape. He can barely keep his form. He is hungry and now that he can feel you I—”

“He won’t hurt me, Rook,” I say to reassure him, reaching out with my hand to stroke his muscular arm. Part of me is not sure at all, but Lyrik is mine. I know he would never hurt me, not intentionally anyway. But none of that matters, I am all he needs now.



“What would happen to Lyrik if he doesn’t feed?” I ask quietly, not sure that I want to hear the answer. What if I was still unconscious? What would become of my Mate then?

“Death, Micah. He went into that room willingly because he would rather die than take from anyone else but you.” Rook smirks and rolls his eyes dramatically. “Stubborn bastard.” He smiles and reaches for my hand to pull me along down the hall.

“Well, it looks like I definitely need to catch up on the past... How long have I been out?”

“Two long, agonizing weeks, baby. Too fucking long.” Rook whips around and snatches me into his arms. Our chests collide, and his lips find mine. He groans as he tastes my lips, as desperate and needy for me as I am for him. I sigh against his mouth as he kisses me tenderly, reverently, with nothing but wicked promises behind each stroke of his tongue. The door at the end of the hall rattles violently, breaking the spell between us as I look up at Rook in alarm, my eyes widen in surprise as I look around him toward the end of the hall.

“Tell me that’s not where Lyrik is, and there’s a scary poltergeist behind that door instead.” I point to the door as I watch it bend outward before it snaps back. Then suddenly it becomes still and goes quiet.

“I can’t lie to you, baby. I wish I could in this instance, but your Incubus awaits you. Although, I would rather you not go in there alone, but he would try to rip me apart if I followed you. He is too far gone to recognize me right now. I won’t be far. Do you need a safe word, sweetheart?” Rook lifts his eyebrow suggestively, bending down to get eye level with me. I want to kiss his handsome face.

“No. It’s going to be fine. I don’t think I will be leaving that room any time soon. This may take a while. I may need water and food slid under the door if he’s been starving for weeks.” I shrug to myself. “How much sex does an Incubus need if he’s damn near feral from hunger?” I mutter as Rook gives me a little push, slapping my butt in encouragement, like I’m taking one for the team. I guess in a way I am. I blow out

a breath and shake out my hands as I take a step away from him and walk slowly to the door.

“The door is spelled. Touch the handle. It will only open for you.” I nod my head without turning around. I am not nervous, far from it. I want to take care of him. Lyrik takes care of everyone else, but it seems my Mate doesn’t do the same for himself, and I can’t have that. Me and that self-sacrificing Incubus are going to have a serious conversation once he has his wits about him.

“Micah, seriously. I can feel your emotions, so if I feel too much fear from you, I am coming to get you. Whether he’s fed or not. If I have to bring the triplets with me for back up, I will. I can’t let anything else happen to you, Sweetheart.” I look over my shoulder and smile.

“Fear is not always a bad thing, so don’t come rushing in prematurely.” I turn around and give him a pointed look, placing my hands on my hips in the hope that he sees I mean business. Rook stands at the end of the hall, watching me for moment, then nods.

“Okay, baby.” He relents, raising his hands in surrender. “But you just woke, and I’m concerned. If he takes too much I —”

“I love you, Rook. It’s going to be fine,” I say, turning away from him as I reach the door, then stop and turn around again. “Wait, Rook. Is Marcus awake? Is he okay?” In all the hurrying around, I failed to ask about my brother...bad sister I am.

“Still healing but he is fine,” he replies, shoving his hands in his pockets and rocking on his heels. “I love you more, Sweetheart.” My Mate is anxious, I can feel it. I try to push calmness through our bond, and it seems to work as I watch his shoulders relax.

“Can you check on Marcus for me, please? Let him know I’m awake and I will come to see him once Lyrik is done with me,” I say, turning once more and placing my hand on the doorknob.

“Yes, ma’am.” I don’t turn around to acknowledge him as an almost inaudible snap lets me know he has gone. I rub at my chest, all of their concern is giving me heartburn, literally. I try to stay as peaceful as I can. I have no reason to fear.

The door rattles again as the banging resumes, the hinges almost give way, but as soon as I put my hand on the door handle ready to twist it, the noise stops. I step close enough to the door that my body is flush against it, with the palm of my other hand flat against the cold metal.

“Lyrik,” I call his name, keeping my voice serene and quiet.

I lean further and press my cheek to the door, then my ear to hear if he responds. There is nothing but silence to greet me. I wait a minute longer, but when he doesn’t answer, I call out to him again, “I’m coming in, okay?” I push the door open, and it makes an eerie, creepy, creaking sound. Well, that’s not ominous at all. The room beyond is dark except for the red glow from the light outside. I push the door open further, quickly stepping inside and closing it behind me with a soft click.

With my back against the door, I give my eyes a minute to adjust, but I can’t make out any shapes in the room that resemble a person. The room is large like most of the rooms in the tower. This room in particular seems to have the least amount of furniture, as if it’s been adapted to hold a prisoner in luxury. A large wooden canopy bed sits in the middle of the room with two leather wingback chairs set off to the side, creating a cozy seating area. A fireplace sits cold and dark on the opposite side of the room. There’s a wardrobe standing on its lonesome closer to the entrance near the bathroom and that is basically it. Metal wall sconces line the walls with a few paintings that I can’t make out due to my limited visibility. There is a balcony that leads outside with billowing drapes hanging from the entrance. The room is minimalistic but it’s still beautifully designed. I take a step away from the door, searching, seeking, trying to feel for him instead of looking for a shape.

“Micah.” The sound of my name is like a whisper on the wind, it causes a tickling sensation on the back of my neck that sends chills down my spine. Something brushes against my leg and on instinct I lift it in surprise, searching for whatever touched me. With my eyes cast down, my heart begins to pound in anticipation as purple tendrils roll over the floor, filling up the space around me.

Lyrik. He is here but not here, his power is potent and thick like syrup as it hits me slowly, sliding down my entire body, making me shudder with instant need. *Fuck*. I’m so screwed.

I draw in a sharp breath as I watch a purple mist like tentacle climb up my ankles, gyrating all the way up my bare legs, the sensation feels like multiple pairs of hands caressing me. My thighs clench, my body is suddenly on fire as my knees buckle from the force of the lust in the air. I hit the floor on my hands and knees, panting for breath. Lyrik’s allure engulfs me. A purple arm forms, coming out of the mass, reaching out to me like a cobra striking. It encircles my neck, squeezing hard and yanking me up on my knees. I am at his mercy as I struggle for oxygen, head spinning as my entire body comes alive while every nerve ending receives a jolt of ecstasy.

I whimper. “Lyrik.” I can barely croak out his name; the grip on my neck tightens until my vision begins to blur. Lyrik’s magic races up my body in a rush of all consuming pleasure. He’s stroking my clit, impaling my pussy, spreading my ass cheeks and plunging in deep, and lapping at my breasts, all without undressing me.

My back bows, my mouth parts in a silent scream, tears slide down my face, my arms spread out wide on either side of me like a bound sacrifice as he takes from me, stripping my soul bare right here on the floor. Fucking me on a spiritual level, he surrounds me completely. I’m a moaning, writhing, mewling mess before him, riding wave after wave of bliss as I cum for him so many times I lose count. I cum until my knees no longer hold me. The grip on my neck loosens and I collapse to the floor, my cheek hits the cold stone floor in relief,

ignoring the pain as my body shakes from the aftermath. I take in a lung full of air, trying to calm my palpating heart.

“Need...you... Micah.” Lyrik’s voice is louder now but I’m so weak I can’t lift my head to see if he’s materialized. Did he get enough from me to be whole again?

“Take from me, I am yours,” I say from the floor, my voice trembles as I try to lift myself up on shaky arms. I pick myself off the floor, swaying on my feet as I pull the oversized t-shirt off over my head, judging by the color choice I can only assume it’s Ty’s. Hooking my fingers through the waist band of my electric blue yoga pants, I slide them down my legs and kick them across the room. I stand naked and waiting, feeling his eyes on me without seeing him. Lyrik is everywhere, pressing in on me, drinking me in as his allure touches my naked skin in a sweet caress.

“Mine...you’re mine.” His seductive timbre grows stronger as hands...his hands slide down the front of my body, his fingers rough as he skims over my nipples, cupping my breasts, weighing them both. I almost sag in relief as he lays a soft kiss at the nape of my neck, then he scoops me up like I weigh nothing, cradling me against his strong, naked caramel colored skin. I nestle into him, taking in his rich cedar and musk scent like it’s all I need to survive.

“Yours,” I finally reply as I look up into his hazel eyes that appear to be glowing from his renewed power. I reach up and he leans into my hand as I cup his face. “Hey, baby.” I smile weakly as he carries me to bed in the middle of the room.

“Meus amor,” he says so lovingly that it makes my heart and pussy clench at the same time.

My finger traces his bottom lip and his mouth parts for me, his teeth graze over my thumb before he pulls it into his mouth, sucking on it hard. I moan, the strong pull of his mouth sends an electric pulse straight through my body and down between my thighs. My body is spent, you would think I have nothing left, but for him, I will give my all. He could have the last drop of my soul if it means he is whole, safe, and sound with me.

Lyrik lays me down on the bed and I go willingly, too exhausted to do much else. I lift my head and take in his glorious form, broad chest and shoulders, muscular arms and an eight pack that makes me do a double take as my eyes travel along the chiseled V-shape of his waist straight down to his very erect, glistening, long, and girthy golden dick. Well, damn. I've died again and maybe reached Heaven this time.

“You like what you see, meus amor?” He smirks as he leans over me, thick, tree trunk-like thighs straddle my body, leaving me nothing but his swinging cock for me gawk at. I follow the movements, dicknosis is in full affect as he chuckles.

My eyes find his and I reach out to him. “Yes,” I reply, my Lyrik, my fated Mate. Mine, all mine. Lyrik moves gracefully down my body until he's sitting at my feet. His fingers trace up my inner thighs, parting my legs slowly as he looks down at my eager pussy.

“So, fucking beautiful, meus amor. This perfect pussy is all mine.” He groans, eyes blazing as he picks up my right leg and tosses it over his shoulder, lifting my hips he gives me no warning as he positions his cock at my entrance and slides into me hard and fast. My back arches off the bed and I scream as he fills me up, his cock gives no quarter as he leans down over me and grinds himself into me, his pelvic bone doing delicious things to my clit.

“Fuck!” I cry out and our lips collide as he swallows my screams with his brutal kisses, thrusting inside of me at a punishing pace. I hang on, grabbing onto his arms so tight he will be bruised once we're done. Lifting my other leg over his shoulder, Lyrik shifts his hips to hit me in all the right places. My eyes roll into the back of my head as he hits my G-spot, making shockwaves quake through me as I shout incoherently with each powerful stroke.

“Look at how well you feed me, meus amor. You are all I need; all I will ever need. No one else but you,” he purrs as he slows his pace, dragging out the orgasm building up inside of me. I can feel the give and take of his allure as he consumes the sexual energy between us. Lyrik breathes in deep, his

tongue licking the air, as if he can taste and savor the flavor of my pleasure. “Delicious.” He looks down at me with such tenderness, my heart feels like it’s about to burst out of my chest. I can feel the bond between us burning bright, knitting together an unbroken union settling deep in my soul.

“Lyrik. Oh God!” I plead, for what I don’t know, but I feel so full of him, of all of them, that I can’t breathe. Tears threaten to spill once more as I feel them all inside of my chest. Interlocking connections brimming with power but most importantly, love. I didn’t know the heart could give so much of itself; my love is limitless, as I’m overcome with joy at the gifts I’ve been given. I thought I’d died. I thought I’d lost them. I thought I was going to lose him. This beautiful Demon who I’ve barely begun to know and love.

“Give me one more, meus amor,” Lyrik says as he releases my legs and covers me with the warmth of his body, his skin hard and hot against my fingers as he rocks into me as he takes what he needs from me. His fingers slide between us, and I gasp into his mouth as he circles my clit painstakingly slowly. Pressure starts to build inside of me, a tingling sensation from the tips of my toes rising higher and higher, making me delirious with the need to cum.

“That’s right, baby. Let yourself go, let my pleasure wash over you. I can do this all night and I plan to. I can feel your pussy squeezing me, so eager. Cum for me, Micah. Give. Me. One. More,” he croons as he licks my lips before leaning down to take my nipple into his mouth, sucking hard, his teeth graze my hard peak.

“Oh... I can’t... Oh God. I can’t—” I thrash underneath him as my body erupts and I cum so hard I feel like my body transcends. I am nothing but pure light, unravelling, no longer in my Human body but more. I disperse, my body a spectrum of power, I float in the ether as all the threads of my bonds and Tethers dance around me. I collect them, pulling them into me one by one as I levitate in another plane of existence in vast darkness. I see with new eyes as I look inward and see the purple pulsing bond that is solely Lyrik’s. The threads that

bind me to my Tethers, the brand is almost complete, except for one.

“*Micah!*” I snap back into my body as Lyrik roars his release, calling out my name like I am an altar at which he kneels to pray. I lose myself in the feel of his body on top of mine. The feel of his hard cock still buried inside of me.

“*Eu te amo, Micah,*” Lyrik whispers as he pulls out of me. He rolls us over until he has me gathered in his arms. I search his face and he smiles softly, reading my mind. “I love you, Micah Jones. You are truly the greatest of treasures.” He kisses me softly and my lips chase his as he pulls away. My eyelids feel heavy, my body is wrung out, but I want to stay here in this moment with him. Considering I just woke after two weeks, the last thing I want to do is sleep.

“I thought I lost you. I tried to hold it all together, help the students, keep myself busy because I couldn’t bear to sit here and mourn for you. None of us were sure if or when you would wake. I couldn’t feel you.” He strokes my face, peppering kisses along my temple like I am the most precious thing in the world and my heart stutters in my chest.

“I thought I lost you. All of you. I love you too, Lyrik.” He wipes away a stray tear as I come down from my emotional high. I’m so tired of going from one chaotic event to the next. I just want to be still for a while. I want to slow down and finally settle into a life with the people I love, but that won’t happen until I do what is needed to make this dream a reality. Instead of thinking about the insurmountable mountain I have to climb, I put it aside, at least for now, and allow myself this grace. My eyes flutter as Lyrik pulls me closer, tangling our legs together, his breath intermingles with mine as our hearts beat as one.

“Sleep, meus amor, because I am not done with you yet,” he says as he kisses my forehead and I relax, safe in his presence.

“Aren’t you tired?” I ask with a yawn, rubbing at my eyes despite trying to force myself to stay awake.



“I’m an Incubus, meus amor. I don’t have any limits.” He gives me a panty melting smile before he bends over me and takes my breast into his mouth, kissing it like he would my lips, tonguing my nipple gently. I arch my back, pushing my breasts into his face as he licks and sucks them both until I am a puddle of want and need beside him. I moan as he presses his hard length against my hip.

“Lyrik, please,” I whisper as his fingers slip between my slick folds as he caresses my clit, sending electric pulses of rapture through my body.

“Aren’t you tired?” He lifts his brow repeating my question with a smirk on those beautiful pink lips of his.

“Never,” I say breathlessly, letting my fingers roam over his skin, cataloguing every inch of him.

“Good,” he says as he lifts my leg over his hip and slides into me again, inch by glorious inch.

“You’re insatiable,” I say as he begins to fuck me slowly, the slow burn of an orgasm already building inside me.

“You have no idea, Micah. No idea.” At the sound of my name on his lips, I throw my head back, screaming his name. This Demon means to wreck me.

## *Chapter Eight*

## MARCUS



They say when someone loses a limb, there's a phantom sense the limb is still there. The brain takes a while to recognize said limb is gone because the nerves don't forget. The nerves remember the feeling of the missing part and send signals to the brain in hopes it will remember too. Phantom limb syndrome, or at least that's what I think it's called. For me, there's no physical pieces missing but the concept is still the same.

My fingers brush over the now white scar in the middle of my chest where my sister severed my ties to what almost felt like a hive mind. Michael is no longer at home in my head but there are traces, remnants of the hold he had on me. Rubbing the slight pain in my chest, I take in my surroundings of the Underworld and I still can't believe I'm here. If you told me a month ago this is where I would end up, I would have asked when are we leaving and who am I killing?

I chuckle humorously at my naivety. My ignorance of this place is telling and I can't help but clench my fists in frustration at the lies we've been fed. It's not what I expected. The various hues of red streaked across the sky, the harsh mountainous landscape in the distance towers over the homes and castles of Demons who reside here. The clear demarcation of different territories, ruled by other Fallen, or the Demon Kings who were already here before the battle for Heaven and Earth spread out as far as the eye can see. From the balcony of the tower I have a clear vantage point, giving me an aerial view of the varied landscape below.

I shift from my seated position and stand with a groan. It's taken me two weeks to heal from Mi's Angel Fire. The stubborn wound refused to heal faster, much to the dismay of Micah's father. Fuck. Micah's father. Bishop. I am eternally grateful for his continued efforts to take care of me, for Micah's sake. I don't think I would have survived without him. Honestly, without any of Micah's Mates or Soul Tethers. Again, I can't believe I am saying any of this about my sister. It's like we are living in this surreal alternate universe.

I dropped my sister off at HellNight Academy only weeks ago. Now it feels like we are worlds apart. She's lived a lifetime in a matter of days, while I have lived shackled in the recess of my own mind. I shake my head in disbelief at it all. My father, Kalob, is not her biological father, but he is the only father she's ever known. He protected her even when we thought he was overbearing and hard on her for no reason. He shielded her, loved her, and I wish he was still here.

No, Micah's real father is the former Archangel of Death, Azrael. Talk about mind blown. Nothing about him or The Underworld itself is anything like we are taught at Caelum Academy. There's horror and death on Earth, so I know the same applies here, yet, the Demons and Imps I've met in my wandering have been nothing but helpful, respectful, and kind. This entire place sits in a gray area in my mind now. What do I do with that?

What do you do with the knowledge that the Angels, who you thought were your allies, are the ones killing and causing harm? Using Light Guardians like puppets to kill...to kill my father.

"Shit, Marcus, you need to pull it together," I say through gritted teeth. I need to make Michael pay for what he did to my father, and my mother. Is she even still alive? Fuck! I can't fall apart when we finally say our goodbyes.

I wipe my eyes quickly, pacing the balcony, waiting for Micah to show up. It's been two days since Rook appeared and told me she was awake but would come and see me when she was no longer indisposed. I don't want to think about my sister's sex life. Ugh. I don't want to think about what a

starved Incubus could possibly be doing to her at this very moment. Hot poker to the brain, I need to forget that all together.

A soft knock on the door has me turning toward the sound coming from outside. I take a step and stop.

“Fuck.” I groan in frustration as I consider the possibility that Trys is on the other side of the door waiting to pull my spine out through my mouth. No lie, his actual words. I’m a Light Guardian...well, I was. At the top of my game, I don’t scare easily, but nothing prepares you for an unhinged Necromancer with an axe to grind. I shudder at the thought of his mismatched eyes lurking in the shadows waiting to rip my soul from my body. I shrug. Maybe I deserve his wrath for not being strong enough; for not being able to fight Michael harder. The image of me stabbing my sister in the heart, the crunch of her breastbone as I punched a hole in her chest will haunt me for the rest of my life. I know it wasn’t me, I was just a passenger pleading for my sister’s life. The horror and guilt I felt as Michael’s control of me slowly slipped away when the Angel Fire took hold, will remain forever seared into my heart.

The doorknob turns slowly, I watch it move with slight unease. I really don’t want to fight. I am not in the best shape considering I’ve been bedridden for two weeks, but I will not let some psycho kill me, regardless of how justified they are. Hell no. At least let me see my sister first. I pull at my locs, then interlink my fingers together to rest them on my head, cursing under my breath for not checking if I locked the door after breakfast earlier. I ready myself for whatever comes through, as I stand on the threshold between the balcony and the bedroom. Rolling my shoulders back and bending my knees, I shake out my arms as the door pushes inward.

“Come at me *motherfu*— Mi?” My mouth falls open as my sister stands in the open door looking at me in confusion. She knows me, her eyebrows are raised as she tilts her head at the sight of my fighting stance.

She turns to look behind her, as if the assailant is somewhere behind her, and then back at me. “Are you

expecting someone else, Panda?” she asks as she takes a step into the room, closing the door behind her. I take a moment to give her a once over, the first notable change is her eyes, they’re shining like bright embers, a warm golden orange color. She is wearing her Micah standard uniform of black yoga pants, white tank top, and trainers with her braids mirroring my locs piled high on top of her head. Micah is always ready to fight. I guess she has our dad to thank for that.

I blow out a breath and go into full little brother mode. “Yeah, your crazy-ass Soul Tethers are trying to exact their revenge on me. Mi, I woke up with Ty’s knife at my throat and then Trys threatened to take my soul. My soul, Micah. Who the hell are these guys? I mean, at least Rodyn apologized for his brothers by dragging them out of my room each morning.” I wave my arms around hysterically, my voice climbing higher and higher with each sentence.

“Wait, you said each morning? How long has this been going on?” Micah’s face is as unreadable as a stone statue, and I frown at my sister. She thinks this is funny. I know her all too well. Her lips begin to wobble, the first sign of an all-out gut busting laugh. My own lips turn up at the sight, and before I know it, we are both cracking up. I laugh so hard tears start to sting the back of my eyes. Taking a deep breath, I watch her doubled over, her feet stamping the floor as she lets go.

“I’m sorry, Panda. I really am, but you—”

I huff and cross my arms over my chest. I am no longer amused. “Since the moment I woke up, every morning I’ve received a threat from one of the twins. Eventually Ty stopped, but Trys was relentless until two days ago when you finally woke. So, I guess I should say thanks for not kicking the bucket.” As soon as I said the last part, I mentally kick myself because none of this is funny. I could have lost the last important person in my life.

Micah straightens, my words, although said in jest, sobered both of us. She holds her arms open to me and I go to her. We cross the room so fast we collide. I’m taller than my sister but in this moment, I feel like the little boy who followed his big

sister around like a shadow. I lift her up and hold her tight as her head hits my chest.

“I’m so sorry, Mi. So sorry. There was nothing I could do. I tried. I thought I was stronger. I was a prisoner in my own body.” My voice breaks and I am not afraid to let my tears fall, especially not in front of her.

“No. No. Don’t do that,” she says, her voice muffled from being crushed to my chest. Micah pats my back and I slide her back down to the floor. She grabs my face between her hands and gives me the look. The stern, no bullshit look; eyes hard, laser focused on me, despite her tear-streaked cheeks. “You don’t get to blame yourself. You didn’t hurt me, Michael did. You were not the man fighting me in that clearing, it was him. You will not let this eat you up. I need you. I need you to pull it together. Pull it together for me because you and I are going to end this.” She drops her hands and steps away from me, wiping away her tears as she walks around me and further into the room.

I watch her go, pulling my shirt up to my face to quickly wipe away my tears before I cross over to the armchairs in the middle of the room. Micah flops down on one and I join her, taking the seat across from her. She sighs. “I want to say I’m sorry I hurt you too. I thought I killed you. You were there lying still on your back. You weren’t breathing, I...I—”

“You didn’t hurt me. Well, I have one hell of a scar but, Mi, you saved me. I would have rather died than continue being Michael’s marionette. I have so many blank spots in my memory, Micah. I’ve done so many things against my will. Bryelle.” I blow out a breath as she looks up at me in question. Every time I replay the moment in my head it makes me cringe to know that my thoughts were not my own, especially when it was initiated by Michael. It was a violation of my body and hers.

“Bryelle?” she asks, and I can’t help but smile picturing her face in my mind. I am worried about her, worried that Michael will use her to punish me. If he figures out I’m alive, that is.

“A very new person in my life. I wanted to introduce her to you, Mom and Dad,” I say as I drop my head into my hands and continue. “Mi, you have to understand the hold he has on us. I can only equate it to being a sleeper spy without a trigger word or action to make you do your handler’s dirty deeds. I woke in the middle of having—”, I swallow, not wanting to talk about my sex life with my sister.

“You woke up to what?” Micah asks, urging me to continue as she sits on the edge of her seat, her face scrunched in concern.

“Having sex with her, Micah. Fuck. I slowly gained awareness at the end of it. It shouldn’t have happened the way it did, and then it got all weird. I made her leave, well, he made me make her leave, like she was just a booty call. Like she meant nothing to me.” I groan, wanting to punch something, anything, to take my mind off the mess that is my life. Bryelle will probably never look at me the same again. I wouldn’t blame her. That’s if Michael’s not using her as well. We were all there the night we attacked HellNight Academy. I lost her in the mayhem, and I don’t even know if she’s alive. Micah grabs my hands and gives it a squeeze.

“I’m sorry Marcus. I’m sorry I wasn’t there. I—”

“How could you have been there? You just told me not to blame myself. Practice what you preach here, Mi. I am willing to bottle up my emotional trauma for now to harden my heart for the fight to come. We have to help them, Micah.” My words are almost pleading at the end. I know my sister’s strength. She is powerful. When we were kids, I didn’t understand why my father made her hide it. My sister is a Nephilim and if we stand a chance of liberating the Light Guardians, I will need her. “Micah—we have to help Mom too.”

Micah drops my hands and sits back on the chair. “She wants me dead, Marcus. How do I save someone who wanted to have me killed? My mother. Our mother. Who let me go to HellNight Academy to die? She knew I would defy her wishes; she knew I would leave, she banked on it.” She slaps her knee in anger and points a finger directly at me. “As far as



I'm concerned, she can rot in the deepest, darkest circle of hell." Micah crosses her arms over her chest and turns away from me. I understand how she feels, the day I found out my mother's plan for Micah, I was furious, disgusted, how could she be so heartless. Her own flesh and blood so easily disposed of.

As hard as this is, I have to say it. "You don't mean that, Mi. You know deep down that you want no harm to come to her." I keep my voice calm, there is no point in us both getting hyped up.

"I mean it, Panda. I should leave her to suffer—"

"You didn't see her bloody and mangled, chained to the fucking wall of her office. She was beaten, broken, and bound, Mi. Barely alive, and I stood there like a mannequin, and did nothing. I could do nothing. Does she deserve my pity? Hell no. I heard her say she wanted you dead. I want nothing to do with her. But she is my mother, and your mother too. I can't let her die by his hand." I wipe my hands down my face and stand, but Micah still doesn't look at me, lost in her own thoughts. I don't move as I wait for her to see reason, to see that our job is to save them all—not a few, but all of them.

She clears her throat. I know she is battling her own emotions and she doesn't want me to see her struggle. But I am here for whatever decision she makes. I will follow my sister's lead. We don't always agree, but if I have to make it my own mission to free our mother, then I will. Perhaps I should tell Bishop.

"He told me to save them all. To save her... How could I not do what is asked of me? So much to bear...it's too much." She looks up at me as if I can answer her question when I have absolutely no idea what she's talking about.

"Mi, who told you to—"

"God," she says simply, like it's just an everyday occurrence to have a chat with God.

Well, I guess I need to sit again, because I am floored. "God," I point my index finger up as I say it to confirm what

she said, “told you to do this? When Micah? Have you told Bishop? Your Tethers, your Mates?” I am rattling off questions because the first thing I wanted to ask the Archangel Uriel days ago was where was God? How could he allow this to happen under his watch?

Micah stares at something in the distance as she starts to speak. “I thought I was dead. I woke in a place I thought might be Purgatory, but I was alone. I walked and walked searching for other people, but then I stumbled upon God. Well, he found me.” She chuckles humorlessly. “He told me he knows exactly what Michael and Lucifer are up to. He is aware of all the suffering, and that it was he who was keeping the world to rights. But he’s tired of it, Marcus. He’s ready to end us all, including them. A total reset button would be pushed. At least that’s what I got from his words. If I don’t shut Michael down, war will spread, and there will be absolute chaos on Earth. He told me I have to fix this, that I have what I need to do it. I don’t know what the hell I’m doing, Panda. I almost killed you when I blasted you with Angel fire. How in hell can I free all the Light Guardians and the Archangels?”

“Then we help you get there. Whatever it takes.” I stand, feeling renewed. If this is her mandate, then I am ready. Ultimately, I’m a soldier, it is my life’s calling to protect Humanity. I unzip the black hoodie I am wearing and hold out my arms for her to see. The red tank top I’m wearing underneath makes me feel vulnerable, exposed. My Enochian tattoos are black now, broken phrases and letters are down my arm. I don’t feel their power anymore. I can’t call on portals, and my sword is just a sword now. Being a Light Guardian is all I know, a warrior first, a Warlock second, I am not defenseless. I’ll have to find new purpose for my life alongside my sister. “This is who I am now, no longer a Light Guardian. I am a Warlock, a Warrior. We will do this together, just like you said.”

Micah stands to face me. Reaching out her hands she grabs my arms and scans my tattoos. “My Angel Fire completely rearranged them. When Mom came to HellNight Academy, Michael had control of her in the Headmistresses office, I got angry and hit her in the chest with my Angel Fire, the

connection between her and Michael was lost. I can only assume that I rearranged her tattoos as well. Yours were exactly like hers.” She looks up as I nod my head, then continues. “I have to find a way to target them all at once, like a giant bolt of lightning striking their tattoos. It will cut Michael’s connection to them instantly, without knocking them out. This is my theory. But how?” She drops my arms and I get a rush of excitement at the prospect of taking the fight to them. Micah is pacing and I wait, watching her think it through. Then she turns.

“I think it’s time we had a chat with Bishop and Rook. Lucifer too... although.” She pauses at the mention of Lucifer’s name, and I just stand there stunned. She says his name so casually, like it’s no big deal, then she turns to me. “It’s time I figured out how to use all this supercharged power running through my veins. I’m not going to sit around and wait for Michael to come at us unawares ever again. I know it won’t happen overnight and I hope he thinks we are both dead, it will buy us some time. We are going to take the fight to Caelum, away from Humanities eyes. This game they’ve been playing so carelessly ends now.” She turns and marches for my door with determination and I follow eagerly, glad to finally have a plan of some kind. Then she stops and sighs, her shoulders slump forward, visually deflating.

“Mi?” I close the distance between us, unsure of the sudden change in her demeanor. She turns to face me with tears in her eyes.

“First, we need to say goodbye to our dad,” she says as she grabs my hand and pulls me through the doorway behind her.

## *Chapter Nine*



Rodyn paces in front of me as I lounge on the sofa of our shared room. He's been like this for the past hour, and I have lost count of how many times he's circuted the room. Since we arrived back in the Underworld he's been off. I'm not sure what has caused his sudden change. Wait, that's a lie. I would be off too if I watched my kitten die in my arms, felt her last breath. It was hard enough when we reached the clearing only for our connection with her to be ripped out from our chests.

It's unlike Rodyn to be so quiet; he's pensive even, less aggressive despite our Demonic sides hulking out lately. He's definitely handling it better than me and my other half. If I hazard a guess, it has everything to do with our girl. There are so many things they've yet to resolve, and I fear when they do it's going to be cataclysmic.

But honestly, I will probably breathe a sigh of relief. Those two need to fuck and get it over with. Kiss and make the fuck up. I know Micah isn't going to reject him, not now, not after he held her in his arms when she died.

Nope. I won't let my mind drift back to that night. The night I thought I lost my kitten forever and we lost our connection to her. No, those thoughts make the beast beat at my psyche, making me feel murderous, and the last thing I want is to take it out on another Demon here in the palace. Yeah, I regret that. The poor little Demoness was just trying to help braid my hair. Thank goodness for Esme thinking quickly and coming to her aid, healing her up as Trys clapped in

excitement. We are so screwed up without our kitten here. I almost don't remember what my life was like without her in it. It was dismal and bleak as fuck, I was so lost in my own darkness, so busy doing our mother's bidding, I wasn't living, just existing.

"You need to stop pacing before you create a ravine in the middle of the room," I say nonchalantly, picking at my fingernails with one of my knives. Trys hums from the shower, his voice deep and off key as he yells out the lyrics of Rihanna's "*Bitch Better Have My Money*", making me roll my eyes. He's in a good mood, I don't have the heart to tell him he's making my ears bleed.

Rodyn stops and looks toward the bathroom and a smile lifts the corner of his lips. "I guess now that Micah's awake, we don't have to worry about him too much." He gestures behind me as Trys attempts an impromptu high note, making us both cringe.

"I'll never stop worrying about Trys. You know this. He's fine now, but Trys straddles an unstable line more often than not. Unpredictability is his middle name," I say with a one shoulder shrug that gets me an eye roll from my brother as he goes back to pacing. Okay, clearly I need to appear concerned, ask questions, get to the bottom of all this anxiety-riddled pacing.

"You want to talk about it? Or should I not give a fuck?" I try to make the question sound as if I'm mildly interested but fail miserably. Rodyn stops mid-stride, stretching out his arms, his black and gray plaid suit coat strains more than usual from the additional muscle he's gained since being down here. He takes a seat right in front of me, planting his ass on the coffee table, invading my personal space and taking me completely by surprise. I shift back in my seat, yeah, this is some invasion of the body snatchers type of shit. We don't have this kind of closeness, but ever since that night in the hospital, we've been slowly orbiting closer to one another. Well, Trys and I fit together, but after years of separation by our mother, Rodyn is our triplet, but he is on an island on his own. It's not like I hate it per se, it's just weird this slow-forming bond.

He leans in resting his elbows on his knees and looks me straight in the eye. Yep. Weird. “Do you trust him?” he asks, leg bouncing restlessly in anticipation of my reply.

“You need to give me more than that, Ro,” I say as I toss my knife, catching it between my fingers and repeating the action.

“Lucifer. Our fucking father.” He buries his head in his hands and blows out a breath of frustration.

“Do we have a choice? If this is the only way to help us stop climbing the walls all the time, then we take his blood and move on with our lives. We’re too damn old for dear ole Daddy to try to parent us, Ro. We’re grown-ass men with a Soul Tether to take care of. I don’t have time for a family reunion or any of that shit.” I wave my hands, unbothered.

“And our mother?” Rodyn wipes his hands down his face and steeple his fingers against his lips. I realize then that my brother has never had to defer to me or Trys before. He has always been so confident. He is no stranger to giving orders, sending us to do his dirty work, so sure of our mother’s lies. He followed her blindly. Without her pushing him he seems less certain and now I feel the tables turning. We are all on equal footing, finally.

“What about her?” Trys asks as he stomps out of the bathroom, towel around his waist, hair perfectly wild and tousled, thanks to his Superwoman shower cap he wears with pride. I think my twin swooned when kitten presented him with it. It feels like a lifetime ago, not a few weeks. So much has happened. I look over at him, his timing is perfect as he goes to the large walk-in closet to get dressed.

“Do you really think she’s a shape-shifting Demon? I mean, it feels farfetched.” I turn my attention back to Rodyn and sigh.

“I may have done a bit of research yesterday,” I say as I pick up the huge book sitting next to me on the couch and place it on my lap. After Micah went to talk to Marcus yesterday, we all found our way to Bishop’s enormous library,

where I happened upon this behemoth of a book bound in human skin. I lift it and show it to Rodyn.

“Demonology of the Underworld. Every Demon residing down here is catalogued in this book. I’ve been skimming through it until I found the species of Demon Lucifer mentioned the other day,” I say as I flip through the pages until I find the exact passage I’d read the night before. Trys joins us before I begin to read, I pause, eyeing my twin wearing all black, which is not his normal color of choice. Today is important for our beautiful girl and we all agreed to wear black as she and her brother say goodbye to their father, Kalob.

Trys flops down in black and gray argyle knee-high socks, black long sleeve turtleneck and of course his favorite black kilt with silver skulls and giant safety pins holding it all together. He looks at me and gestures toward the book, eyebrow raised as if he’s been waiting for me this entire time.

“Don’t let me interrupt, Ro Ro’s hanging on your every word here, the anticipation is killing me.” He winks, elbowing me in the side as he settles in beside me, propping his combat boots next to Rodyn’s legs on the coffee table.

I roll my eyes at his antics and clear my throat. Looking down at the page I begin: *“Rakshasi, the female counterpart to the Rakshasa. Vicious, malevolent beings who derived out of Hindu mythology. Extremely powerful shapeshifters, the females in particular often appear as beautiful Human women. Their appearance is deceptive, adept at illusion to hide the monstrous-looking beast within—goblin-like long fangs, glowing red eyes, and claws for fingernails, with an insatiable thirst for blood. Akin to Vampires, they are man-eaters, devourers of Human flesh. The Rakshasi thrive on death and destruction, extremely powerful: Invisibility, Levitation, Maya (the power to create illusions). The Rakshasi can take the shape of any creature and should be approached with caution. The most unpredictable of all Demons. Known to be extinct through the Underworld but that too could be deception.”*

“Well, shit. This explains a fucking lot.” Trys leans forward with a haunted look on his face. I can only imagine



what he's thinking about. The things we've witnessed our mother do. The things she made us do.

"So do you believe him?" Rodyn asks.

"Yes," both Trys and I say at the same time.

"Why would he lie? He has no reason to. He is the Great Deceiver, yes, but I don't think he's lying. Hell, if anything, this is exactly what Lucifer would do, find the biggest, baddest Demon in the Underworld to do his bidding. He thought he could use her. Well, look how that played out. The shit she's done. The Headmistress of HellNight Academy, all the deaths, under the guise of 'survival of the Supernatural fittest.' The amount of blood on her hands; the Gargoyles, the culling every night, the Blood Rite, all of it, that was her doing. The things she put us through. Oh, I believe every fucking word of it. It all makes sense now." I clench my fists, feeling my anger rise. Closing my eyes, I see Micah's golden ones and my heartbeat slows.

"I believe there's more to the story here. We have an entire family up top. Who is the real Lucretia Larrieux? We have an entire coven of Witches and Warlocks we are destined to lead. What the hell do we do with that? Are they real? There is a lot we don't know yet," Rodyn says, clearly frustrated. I hadn't thought of that myself. We were born into one of the most prominent Covens in Louisiana.

"Fuck, you're right. This is Nancy Drew mystery-solving at its best," Trys says in surprise, his eyes widening at the realization as he fidgets with the silver rings on his fingers.

"Then we get the information we need from Lucifer. We play the long game and wait. We are at his mercy until this ceremony bullshit is over so let's just be on guard and learn what we can," I say, placing the book between Trys and me. I pull out my pocket watch from the black double-breasted vest I'm wearing, instinctively checking the time when I know damn well it doesn't work down here. Sliding the watch back in my pocket, I grab my jacket and put it on, smoothing my hands down the black satin. I don't suit up often but for my

kitten, I'd wear a G-string and nipple tassels if she asked me too.

“If we go into this knowing there's a possibility of getting played, we will be more inclined to recognize it and respond. I'm done with all the damn surprises. We've grown up in the shadow of a monster. We are not green boys; we've been tested and put under extreme amounts of pressure. We are fucking diamonds!!” Trys chimes in with a smile before he stands and heads toward the door.

“Since when did you two become the voice of reason?” Rodyn blows out a breath and stands.

“Oh, we always have been, Ro, you've just never really listened.” I stand up and follow after my other half, then pause and turn back to Rodyn. His mouth opens, as if he's going to say something, but then he closes it.

“Rodyn, you are hanging on by a thread, Brother. You need to find your peace, and until then you're going to be wandering around like a lost soul. In fact, you already are. Find your peace, Ro. You will be surprised how much clarity you'll gain when you just let go.” I turn and walk away.

“You've found your peace, then?” Rodyn asks as he follows me out the door, buttoning up his black suit coat and smoothing out the fabric.

Both Trys and I turn and face Rodyn and smile. We both give our answer at the same time.

“Kitten.”

“My sunshine.”

“Honestly, I don't think you're worried about Lucifer or our beast of a mother. All this anxiety and nervous energy has everything to do with you and her,” Trys says matter-of-factly, crossing his arms over his chest.

“I agree. You're not yourself because you don't know where you stand. Fix it,” I say, nudging Trys, and we both turn toward the door, leaving Rodyn with his thoughts.



## RODYN

“It’s not that simple or that easy,” I mutter to myself as I watch my brothers leave. I push myself to walk out the door and pull it closed behind me. The hallway is quiet, which means everyone is down in the throne room already.

Because I can’t help myself and maybe there’s an optimistic part of me that remains hopeful, I stand still and allow my power to flow through me, closing my eyes, I listen for the sound of blood rushing through veins and find no one in the vicinity. I always wondered where this power came from, the ability to detect people from a distance by their heartbeat alone. All I am missing is a taste for blood consumption. Thanks, but no thanks mommy dearest. When I’d first developed it, I’d been too afraid of the answer, I guess after what Ty read about Rashaksi, now I know. I got it from her.

Thinking about my mother is the last thing I want to do, so instead I choose to punish myself further. My head turns toward Micah’s door, as if she will miraculously materialize before me and we can finally say more than two or three words to one another. Again, it will never be easy, especially for me.

I get it. I don’t deserve her. What I did was unforgiveable. I should be happy to be here at all. I understand my place in her life a lot more than the others. She didn’t ask for me and I didn’t ask for her, but this is our fate. To be bound in misery for the rest of our lives, skating around each other until eventually I lose my mind. If I could go back to the first day I saw her, the day my brothers walked into my mother’s office with their hearts in their eyes. I would have done so many things differently. I would have gone to her, simply introduced myself and given her a chance to get to know me. Not bulldoze my way into her heart like my brothers did. The love

they have for her is designed specifically for them and them only.

I don't think that was ever going to happen between us anyway. But more importantly, I would have cut ties with Sasha earlier, and maybe she would still be alive. I have so many regrets. I never loved the girl; she was a means to an end. No point in living in the past though, what's done is done, and I am living with the fallout of my actions. I am no longer my mother's pet, now that I know the possible truth about who and what she is. All the things I did in her name, to better our family's standing in the Supernatural community; I physically feel sick. She took pleasure in the blood we shed; she relished it. Hell, she probably drank it up and ate a few hands and feet along with it. I shudder just thinking about it. I feel dirty. Used.

I sigh. I do that a lot lately. Fuck, with every exhalation of breath, I get more pissed off with myself for being so pathetic. I am a powerful Warlock, not some lovestruck peon. I am more than worthy of standing in Micah's presence, if she would only let me.

I can only spar away my pain and aggression for so long before it blows up in my face. Ty and Trys are right, I have to find a way to fix what is broken between Micah and me. But it has to be a two-way street; if she doesn't want it, then I will be stuck pining for her for the rest of my life. If that's the case, then just put me out of my misery now.

Making my way out of the tower, I pass Imps and Demons rushing around doing God knows what around this place. I don't know what Bishop does here in the Underworld but it's always a hive of activity here. This place is massive, and I find myself wandering around frequently. I have no purpose here. Not like I did at HellNight. It is in ruins now and it's going to take a while before we can even get back to our studies.

Who knows what Michael's endgame is going to be. The waiting for something else to happen makes me want to crawl out of my own skin. Micah is the key to it all, maybe that's why my own mother felt so threatened. So, just like before, I am ready and willing to lay my life on the line to make things

right in the world. When Micah is ready to strike the final blow, I will be by her side. It's the least I can do for all the lives I've taken, directly and indirectly.

Slowly, I drag my feet forward. I am stalling and I know it. As soon as I turn into the throne room all eyes will be on me. Rodyn, the odd man out, the proverbial bad guy, with the sad-ass look on his face. I stop before I reach the entrance and straighten my suit and roll my shoulders back as I let my mask of indifference fall over me. It's all false bravado. I don't have it in me to be an asshole, and for me that says a lot. Almost dying will humble a man, or should I say Nephalem. My heart pounds as I turn the corner and walk toward the small gathering of people. Everyone is standing in a circle a few feet away from the platform that holds Kalob's body.

The room is draped in heavy black curtains, a sectioned off space is being used for Kalob's memorial, making an area of the large room intimate. I walk straight toward the group, finding a spot to stand between Sam and Rook. No one notices my arrival at first. Then I feel her. Turning my gaze to her, I see she is wearing a long black dress, that hugs her curves, long braids cascade down her back, and my steps falter. Micah's bright amber eyes search mine, as if she can see straight through me and see the vulnerability inside. All my flaws are laid bare for her, no hiding, no pretense. If I had a knife, I would cut myself wide open for her to scrutinize I am a barely held together house of cards.

Eventually she turns her attentions back to her shrouded father. And I'm released from her spell. I blow out a silent breath I hadn't noticed I was holding. I step forward to take my spot as it closes, and everyone shifts over suddenly. I stand there dumbfounded, until a space appears between Micah and Marcus. She doesn't turn to acknowledge that she's done it, but I move with purpose as I take the olive branch she is graciously extending.

Marcus nods solemnly as I stand shoulder to shoulder with him, his black button-down shirt is rolled up to his elbows. I can't help but marvel at the broken Enochian tattoos down his forearms. By breaking Michael's hold on her brother, Micah

had also broken the Angelic magic that came with being a Light Guardian. I can't imagine what must be going on inside his head; to one day have purpose, to be sure of what you are, then have it snatched away from you. Well, maybe I can, and Marcus and I have more in common than I thought. Either way, every one of us has to find a way to cope with the drastic changes happening in our lives, whether we want them or not.

Bishop clears his throat. My eyes lift to where he stands on the opposite side of the platform. Dressed in all black, his stark white wings are tucked tight behind his back, as his eyes find Micah's. "I've existed a long time in this world. I've been known by many names, done various jobs for the good of mankind and for their demise. I'm a creature of immortality, blessed and doomed. I've chased death and bred chaos, not because it was my purpose, it was my choice. A choice I didn't have in Heaven. No, free will did not find me until I embraced the darkness of the Underworld. I thought it was enough, a millennium of destruction, yet I wasn't fulfilled. I hid who I was when I met your mother, I played a role, a beast, her Demon. But I won't go into the sordid details of our time together." He pauses and looks down at Micah's dad.

Kalob is laying before us on a black and white marble platform. He is underneath a white cotton shroud with what looks like Enochian glyphs etched along the edgings. The sword Micah carried on her back is now laid on top of his body. I'm not sure if this is the way Light Guardians are laid to rest but it's definitely the way a warrior should be. Bishop has held him here in the Underworld, preserving his body magically. I can only assume it has something to do with him being the former Angel of Death. Whatever is stitched on the shroud is in a language I was never allowed to study.

"The night I heard your heartbeat, I was changed. Although at the time I denied it, Micah. If I knew then what I know now, I would have dragged your mother kicking and screaming into the Underworld with me." He looks up at Micah, then Marcus. "But then you wouldn't have had your brother or the honor of being raised by this man." Looking down at Kalob's body once more, he speaks directly to him. "From a distance, I watched you give her everything I could

not. You gave her the tools to survive in a world that wasn't ready to accept who she was or who she would become. You knew she was special, too much for this world and you held her close when I couldn't. For that, you are truly her father. I can never repay that debt, but with the help of her Tethers, I can give you this." Bishop glances left, then right; my brothers on either side of him move silently into position.

Micah's hand brushes against mine, the smallest of touches. She watches in surprise, her eyes narrowing suspiciously, then widening as Ty walks around to where Kalob's feet lay and Trys takes up position by his head. Instead of observing my brothers as they weave their magic, I look at her. The rapid blinking of her eyelids, the way she pulls in her luscious lips, biting down on the lower one with her teeth, and the slight shake in her hand as it continues to brush against my own. She's barely holding it together, and the ache in my chest grows as her grief hits each one of us.

Esme gasps and rubs her chest beside Sam, who in turn is eyeing us warily. I am sure he is getting his first taste of our connection to Micah via Esme. Welcome to your new pack, Wolf. Lyrik stands on the other side of Micah, wraps his arms around her shoulders and pulls her close. Rook's concerned eyes have never left hers as he stands on the other side of the platform next to Sam. Even with all the emotion in the room, Micah doesn't crumble, her strength is astounding. She stands tall beside me as Ty and Trys's white and black essences undulates around each other, hovering over Kalob until they flow down and seep into his body.

After a moment of complete silence, Trys speaks. "He's still here." Trys's unnaturally deep voice resonates around the room. His eyes are closed, his hands are stretched on either side of Kalob's head.

"What do you mean?" Micah asks as she takes a step closer, sliding out from underneath Lyrik's arms. Lyrik follows her, stopping her just shy of the platform and I follow too, like a moth drawn to a flame.

"It means, daughter of mine, that your father hasn't passed over, his—"

“Wait, they are not trying to bring him back, are they?” Marcus asks, his voice panicked as he steps up beside me.

“No, even my brothers wouldn’t be that cruel. Though if it was within their power to bring him back, he would never be whole again. Unequivocally changed and not for the better. Kalob’s spirit is still here, and he wants to talk to both of you, that is all, and then he will pass on,” I reply, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder for comfort.

Micah turns to me in shock, eyes wide and brimming with tears. “He’s still here?” she asks with a shaky voice. She looks so lost, all I want to do is gather her in my arms and take her away from this room, but I can’t.

“For as long as Ty and Trys hold the magic together, his spirit will remain. You get to tell him goodbye and speak to him one last time,” I reply as my heart breaks for her. Tears fall down her cheeks, and it’s too much to bear. I take her hand in mine, lacing our fingers together and she lets me, then she begins to break.

It might not be much in this moment, but for me, it’s enough. I’ll stand by her and be her pillar for as long as she will let me.



## *Chapter Ten*

## MICAH



I'm sobbing and I don't care. I've saved up all my tears for this moment. I'm allowing myself to fall apart today and today only. Tomorrow, I will pick myself up and face whatever the future holds for me. For us. The prospect of speaking to my father—for the twins to give us this chance—has shattered my resolve. I didn't know how much I needed to say goodbye until now. I have so many regrets, things I would have done and said differently the last time we saw each other. If I had known...

"Micah." My father's voice is a hoarse whisper as he hovers over his body. His smile is warm as he materializes in front of me. He appears holographic, transparent, yet whole. I've never seen a ghost before, but I imagine this an upgrade. He's here but not.

"Dad," Marcus calls out. His voice breaks as he slowly moves in front of Rodyn, who hasn't let go of my hand since he took it moments ago. The grip I have on him is unrelenting, he is grounding me, and I hope he feels it. I don't want to push him away. Life is too fleeting to hold onto the bad blood between us. I can't forget how he held me...the pain in his eyes, the plea in his voice when he thought he was going to lose me. It meant something.

"Marcus," Dad says, his head turns slowly, his movements unsteady as he reaches out his hand and strokes my brother's face and then his arms. Transparent fingers skate over Marcus's skin and my brother sucks in a sharp inhalation of surprise.

“I can feel you.” Marcus reaches up but our father flickers in and out briefly before appearing once more. I glance over to Ty and Trys in concern, there is no outward indication of exertion except for beads of sweat on their brows. I don’t know how long they can hold my father here between the two of them. They are both strong Necromancers but from what they’ve told me of their past, they took souls, even destroyed them. So maybe holding my father here instead of allowing him to pass on takes more control than they are used to exerting. Taking my eyes off them, I focus on my father and his eyes meet mine again.

“You saved him. I knew you could. I knew you would.” He sighs, and his face falls. My throat constricts as I try to hold back more tears.

“But...I couldn’t save you,” there, I said it. The one thing that my soul has been holding on to since the moment I heard him take his last breath over the phone. I couldn’t help him. He was lost to me forever. “I’m so, so sorry, Dad.” I break, sobbing into my free hand, wiping away tears as I try to stay on my feet. The weight of his loss, pressing down on my chest makes it hard to breathe, to stand.

“There was nothing you could do.” He strokes my face then turns to Marcus, who looks just as destroyed as I do. “Neither of you could. I can rest knowing that you are both safe and together. But your work is not done,” he says solemnly. He offers us a small smile and continues, “You have to free them all. Jesi was not in control. I don’t blame her for what happened to me, and neither can you. The Light Guardians, Micah, liberate them from Michael’s hold on them. Your mother—”

I shake my hand fervently, cutting him off. “I can’t. How can I save her after what she did? How?” I look up to find Bishop staring back at me, then he turns his head away at my words, his jaw clenching in anger. I know he wants to cut in, but he keeps quiet. After his confession moments ago, I realize he loved her, he still loves my mother. He will want to save her from Michael, and it is not my place to tell him otherwise. If he wants her, he can have her.

“Micah.” My father voice is soft and filled with compassion. “Don’t forget that she is a victim too. She hid you for a reason, she tried to protect you from him. She fought hard to become the Headmistress, to control what was happening at Caelum so they could continue to pass you over. She didn’t want you on their radar, Michael’s radar. Although now I know he already knew you existed. You can’t let Michael continue to hurt her. She is your mother, give her a chance to explain, to talk...to talk...to you,” he says, flickering out again making, me reach out to him.

“Dad!” I cry out, wanting him to stay with us. The fading in and out stops and he looks at Marcus.

“You are not broken. The power you had as a Light Guardian did not define who you are, Marcus. You are a powerful Warlock, utilize your magic, the both of you. Fight beside your sister because you are a team. A formidable one.” He turns to me. “I held you back, my one regret, but you have everything you need inside of you to do what must be done. Find it. You are what the world needs, Micah,” he says as his image is flickering violently now, like a strobe light, pulsing rapidly.

“I am so proud of you both. I didn’t say it enough. I love you both.” My father’s fingers ghost over my face as he reaches out to both of us. He smiles and nods his head, as if he is accepting what’s about to happen. I gasp for breath, hyperventilating as he blinks from existence. Gone.

“I love you too, Dad,” I barely get the words out before I crumble to the floor in a heap of tears and pain. Strong arms hold me close, cradling me, offering me words of comfort, his voice strong, deep, gentle. I open my eyes, even though my vision is blurry, I find him looking down at me, lending me his strength.

Rodyn.



“Let’s go!” I shout at my brother who’s doubled over, chest heaving, his sword dangling from his fingers as he holds up his other hand toward me.

“Mi, we’ve been at this for hours. Usually, I’m all for it but you’re like a machine. I don’t think I can cast, my brain hurts. Let’s just take a break.” He pants, his locs falling into his face as he stands and blows out a breath.

“Do you think Michael will be taking a break? What do you think he is doing right now?” I say as I drop my knives to the floor beside me and summon water to my hands. My power rises as easily as breathing, two growing spherical orbs form above my palms. I let myself marvel at my speed before mentally giving the water direction and send it flying toward my brother so quickly that he doesn’t see it coming until he is drenched from head to toe. If that doesn’t get his attention, I don’t know what will.

He roars. “Micah! Shit!” he shouts, flinging water out of his face before dropping to pick up his sword. I watch his every move, the way he hesitates, his fingers flexing over the hilt, the bend of his knees, they’re nothing more than a distraction before he rapidly shoots two big-ass fireballs directly at me.

I laugh in excitement and block them both, throwing up my defensive shield in front of me as the balls collide with the invisible wall and vanish in a puff of smoke. Marcus groans in frustration. Lifting the tip of his sword up, he charges forward. Drawing my dad’s sword from the sheath on my back, I meet him in the middle of the floor.

“He is probably killing our mother,” he bites out. He brings his sword down in an arc, aiming for my face, growling as he does. I’ve pissed him off, he is still angry at me because I don’t think my mother is worth saving. In the past three days since we cremated my father’s body, I’ve not talked to anyone, preferring to throw myself into training. My magic feels like a second skin finally, instead of an uncertain limb I don’t know how to use. I can’t face Bishop, and I’ve avoided Esme and the triplets. Well, mostly Rodyn; Ty and Trys don’t know the word “no,” and I don’t mean that in a taking away my choice,

they've been the only ones to see through my bullshit and come see me regardless of me pushing them away. I lean away, pivot, my shoes squeak from the move as I swing my sword up to meet his. His comment catches me off guard and I block him at the last minute. I almost forgot the question I asked before my water assault.

I ignore him and keep moving, we both fall into our usual dance of moves and countermoves. Marcus is a beast, his muscles bunch under his sweat-drenched training clothes, a white tank top and red basketball shorts. Not his normal sparring clothes, but he had to make do as all of his belongings are back at Caelum. He isn't holding back, and I don't want him to. The force of his blows are jarring as he slams into me repeatedly. I smile and block another strike as he forces me backward. With a flick of my wrist, I use my telekinesis to pick up one of my knives off the floor and send it flying towards him. Marcus's eyes widen in surprise as the blade flies straight for his face, he spins but the tip nicks his cheek. Blood flows down his face and I falter. The sight stops me in my tracks as I drop my sword and go to him.

“Oh shit, Panda—”

Before I take two steps, he hits me with a fire ball to the chest and I barely get a shield up in time. The force of the blow sends me spiraling as I hit the floor with a hard thud, leaving me winded.

I lay on the floor with my arms splayed out like a starfish. I turn my head slowly to the side as Marcus drops his sword. His face is a mask of fury, lips turned down, face pinched, eyes blazing. He points his fingers at me accusatorially and stops.

“This is the last time you drop your guard for me.” His voice is deadly low, lethal and threatening. My mouth falls open in shock as I slowly sit up.

“Ma—”

“No, Mi. I mean it. I can take a hit. I have been hurt so many times I stopped counting.” He points to the cut on his cheek and wipes the blood away. “You can't come to my aid

every time I get hurt. When we are out there on the battlefield, I am not your baby brother, I am a fellow soldier. Furthermore, if any one of them get hurt, you have to let them pick themselves up, Micah. Don't save the one, save the fucking many, Mi." Marcus's shoulders slump and his face softens. "That is how he was able to get you, and he will do it again because despite you being a badass...you have a heart of gold and are a natural protector. He will use that against you. Don't let us make you weak." He huffs, turns away from me, and snatches his sword off the floor.

"Panda," I call after him as I swallow past the lump in my throat. My baby brother handed me a serious dressing down and I can't deny what he is saying is true. I know this is about what happened that night in the clearing. If I hadn't gone to check if he was alive, I wouldn't have been within reach for Michael to use him to stab me.

"Don't, Micah." He shakes his head and holds out his arm stop me from crossing the room. "I'm done for today. I'll see you later." He storms past me and I watch him go, before he leaves, he pauses in the arched stone doorway.

He turns with his sword tucked tight at an angle under his arms and I wait. I know my brother; he's been stewing for days and ready to deal verbal blows. "What are we doing here, Micah? It's been three days since we said goodbye to dad. Why haven't you talked to Bishop, Rook, your Mates and Tethers? I understand you're grieving, so am I, but this inaction is making me crazy. Why are you hiding in this room everyday instead of telling them what you told me?" He waits for me to speak but my mouth opens and closes, with not so much of an exhalation of breath. Marcus tsks and rolls his eyes. "No one is here but you and me, tell me the truth. Speak freely, Sis, please. Because my answer to your question earlier is fact. Michael will kill our mother, if he hasn't tortured her to death already. So, what—"

I can feel the anger burning hot inside my body, like a boiling pot, ready to spill over. Not at his words, because yet again he speaks the truth; my baby brother, my voice of reason. "I am not ready!" I shout. There is my truth. "I don't

feel ready to bear the weight of so many lives on my shoulders. What if I fail, Marcus? What if all of this, all the pain and death is for nothing because God just wipes us all out anyway?" I pace, feeling ashamed and frustrated. "I have all this power; I can feel it. It's abundant and overflowing, waiting eagerly to be unleashed. What if—"

"You won't know unless you try. I am beside you no matter what and so is everyone else. They are waiting for you. You are our leader, whether you want to be or not. So, lead. Talk to them, Micah. It's time," he says as he backs out of the room and leaves without another word.

"Damn it," I mutter to myself. Marcus is right. What am I waiting for? Even my own argument of not being ready sounds weak to my ears.

"Rook," I call out his name and in seconds my back hits the wall, rattling the weapons above my head and blue piercing eyes gaze down at me. I place my hands on his bare chest, this Demon never wears a shirt and I think he does it on purpose. Kicking my legs apart, I gasp as he wraps his hand around my braids and yanks my head back to look up at him. Rook steps closer and nestles his body between my legs, grinding his already hard cock against my core. Heat floods my body, and for a moment, I forget why I called his name in the first place.

"Hey, baby girl. I've missed you." He leans down and runs the tip of his nose over my sweaty skin and I try to push him away from me. I've been sparring with Marcus for hours; I probably smell like the walking dead.

"I'm all sweaty, Rook," I say in disgust as I try to push him away again but it's like trying to move a mountain, his body doesn't budge. Ignoring me altogether he kisses my neck, then licks my face until he reaches my lips and attacks. With my head tilted back, I'm not in control and I love it. Rook claims me every time he kisses me, his possessiveness is addictive and heady, I can never get enough.

He pulls back, taking a minute to suck my bottom lip, making me whimper. Damn, why did I call him again? My



pussy throbs and with him this close, all I can do is rub myself against his length, suddenly desperate for release. You would think with five dicks at my disposal that I would be thoroughly sated, but I can never get enough.

“I love your sweat, baby. In fact, I prefer you this way,” he whispers, his breath mingling with mine as he pins me to the wall with his hips, leaving me nowhere to go. Releasing my hair, his hands roam my body, setting my skin on fire with each pass of his fingers. He kneads my breasts through my sports bra; dropping his head, he latches onto my nipple through the thick lycra, and he sucks hard. “Oh...oh...shit,” I whine as I feel the pull all the way down in my clit.

“Fuuuck,” I moan as he repeats the action with my other breast, leaving me panting, rocking on my tiptoes as I ride him through my clothes unabashedly.

He pulls away and kisses my lips once more. “I think I might.” He winks, as his hands go to the waistband of my yoga pants. Oh, moons and stars, this man thinks I mean I want to fuck, literally.

“Rook, we can’t do this here,” I shriek, catching his hands before they go any further. He stills, his eyes darken and his eyebrows raise in challenge. I look toward the door and his eyes follow. “What if someone comes in here?” I whisper, and he smirks, those wicked lips spread in a conspiratorial smile.

“Arms over your head, baby girl,” he says seductively, making me want to melt into a puddle on the floor at his feet.

“But—”

“Don’t argue with me, Micah. You want to cum, don’t you?” He kisses my neck, licking my pulse point, and I know I’m done for. “I bet this pussy is begging for release.” With his lips still sucking at my neck, he reaches down and cups my pussy through my yoga pants, and I groan. Just strip me down right here. Take me I don’t care. “You’re frustrated, baby, is that why you called me?” His eyes search mine, and for the second time today I am speechless as his fingers skim the top of my waistband. I lift my hips like the greedy bitch I am and nod my head. Yes to all of that.

“Words. Baby. Give me your words,” he growls against my lips, his fingers teasing the skin of my stomach.

“Yes,” I say breathlessly.

“Then, be a good girl and lift those arms up,” Rook says in a singsong tone. I want to roll my eyes, but I want my orgasm more. I raise my arms over my head and his eyes gleam with victory. My mouth falls open in a gasp as his hand slides inside my pants, his finger parts my slick folds until he finds my sweet spot, stroking my clit lightly.

“Rook, don’t tease me, please,” I say, already too wound up to wait, I’m ready to cum from just a brush of his finger. Rook’s free arm snaps up and he wraps his hand around both my wrists, gripping tight, keeping me firmly in place.

“Let me worry about the world outside of this moment, you just hang on and feel, baby,” he says as he pushes my panties aside and plunges two fingers deep inside of me while rubbing my clit with his thumb.

“Oh shit, Rook!” I shout as he fucks me against the wall with his fingers, slipping them in and out slowly, stretching me, opening me up wide as he inserts another. My eyes close as I get lost in the feel of his body against mine.

“Look at me, baby,” Rook commands, and I immediately comply as he curls his fingers up and hits my G-spot, making me cry out as pleasure washes over me from head to toe. I want to touch him, to reach out and hold him close but all I can do is take and feel. I give my body over to Rook and he sends me soaring, my orgasm already building from his slow methodical pace. I can hear how wet I am from the squishing sound his fingers make as he strokes in and out of me. It’s filthy and messy but I love it.

“Damn, I wish this was my cock.” He brushes his lips against mine, then pulls away, teasing me. “Look at how greedy this pussy is, devouring my fingers. It’s screaming for my entire hand.” He leans in and nips and bites my neck as he slips another finger inside me.

“Shit!” I shout, raising up on my tiptoes once more. I whimper, unsure if I can take what he is offering, but I want to try as I squirm against him.

“Do you want more, baby?” he asks as he picks up the pace. I begin to thrash against the wall. His fingers drag over my G-spot making my eyes roll in the back of my head.

“Rook...I...yes...” I suck in a sharp breath as he brushes my clit once more before his thumb joins the party. All five fingers fill me. Rook works his hand like a jack hammer, my back arches off the wall as the pressure inside of me mounts. I’m so full. It feels like he’s everywhere, pushing so hard, my pussy squirts. I really hope I didn’t pee my pants.

“Oh God! Fuck!” I cry out, taking his whole hand with ease as it glides in and out of me and he doesn’t let up as he fucks me brutally. I writhe and buck against him as he destroys me. I am sure whoever is close by can hear my screams, and fuck if I care. I needed this. I need to feel something, anything.

“Cum on my hand, baby, give it to me. Now!” he shouts, then slams his mouth against mine as I cum so hard I think I might have blacked out for a second.

“Good girl, baby,” he croons as he kisses my lips softly as I come down from my high as he slips his hand out of me slowly. He pulls back and smiles knowingly. “Better?” he asks as he licks his fingers, groaning after he releases each digit.

“Yes,” I say, slumping against him, my forehead resting on his chest. “I love you, Rook,” I say as emotions bubble up out of nowhere. I love this Demon; he always knows what I need even when I don’t know I need it.

“I love you too, baby girl.” He kisses the top of my head then slowly steps away from me, allowing me to stand on my own.

“Now, let’s go see Bishop. He’s waiting,” he says as he turns toward the door.

“How did—”

“Because, baby, I know you. I let you stew for long enough. If you hadn’t called me just now, I was going to come

to you regardless. But I'm glad you got there first," he says as he holds out his hand to me. See what I mean? He always knows.

"Can I get cleaned up first?" I ask, feeling my face flush. I don't need Bishop to know what we've been doing. Rook laughs, then grabs my hand and pulls me out the door.

"Only if you let me join you." He winks.

Well, I can't say no to that.

## *Chapter Eleven*

## ROOK



The shadows are where I dwell, hidden in plain sight, passing between walls; Bishop's ultimate invisible spy.

There isn't much I don't miss within these walls. There is a collective breath being held between us as we wait for Micah to finally speak. She's avoided everyone since her father's memorial. After three days, enough is enough. Especially when I overheard her conversation with Marcus. Her concerns, her fears, in my opinion, are unwarranted, but how can I or any of us reassure her when she won't express how she's feeling. Bishop, Lyrik, and I have lived a long time between the three of us and we damn sure don't have all the answers, so why would we expect her to?

After taking a little extra time in the shower a few hours ago, we finally made our way down to the throne room. Lyrik appears as if on cue, swooping in and kissing Micah soundly before he moves to the back of the room beside me. We watch her walk; the sway of her curvy hips makes my dick twitch even though I was buried deep inside of her only an hour ago.

Ty holds out his hand to her and she takes it, letting him pull her into his chest. I watch her chest expand and contract as she visibly relaxes. Trys sandwiches her in between the two of them, he bends, pushing his unruly hair out of his face, eyes locked with hers as he whispers something I can't hear from this far away that makes her laugh. Esme and Sam stand nearby, his arm draped over her shoulder protectively as she watches Micah from the corner of her eye. Interesting. Rodyn stands next to his brothers but off to the side lost in thought as

Marcus walks with purpose. His shoulders are stiff, lips pursed in a frown as he joins the others as we all wait for Bishop.

“Any change?” Lyrik leans over and whispers when Bishop suddenly appears in the air above his throne, white wings spread wide as he glides down to the floor. His eyes find mine and I nod, silently communicating that Micah is ready to talk.

“Don’t you feel it?” I ask with a chuckle and the look of confusion on his face makes me laugh out loud, garnering Micah’s attention as she turns around and narrows her eyes at the two of us. I broaden my smile and she gives me a good-natured head shake before she turns her head away.

“What the hell, Shade? Make it make sense. I have had enough bullshit today.” He huffs, clearly being deputized as a Headmaster is taking its toll on the Incubus, he is more irritated by the day. He looks impeccable as usual, in his navy-blue suit with flat cap to match, not a curl of his black hair out of place. No, it’s the shadows under his eyes, the clench of his jaw, and the way his tie hangs loose around his neck, which are a dead giveaway that he is carrying a lot on his shoulders. The Coalitions, Covens, and Councils of the various Supernatural communities are riding his ass about the events that took place at HellNight Academy. Yet not a Vamp, Wolf, Witch or Warlock has attempted to approach Caelum Academy for the displacement of their precious children for fear of Michael’s wrath. Dicks, the lot of them. The Academy grounds are dying and the wards a few professors have put in place are all falling apart daily. It’s a mess of epic proportions. At this rate there won’t be a school left to go back to. Oh, and Lucretia is still missing. Who knows where she disappeared to? I’ve been keeping my eyes and ears open just in case I catch wind of where she’s hiding.

“Tension. It’s so thick Ty could cut it with one of his many knives,” I whisper. “She’s been sparring daily, testing her strength and power, but avoiding everyone.” I gesture toward the group. “Our Mate is feeling the pressure of leadership.”

Lyrik tsks. “She has us. None of us will let her go out there alone,” he says as he wipes his hands down his face in

agitation. I think we are all a little on edge. Even as a Shade, I can't get close enough to Caelum to know what's going on behind their wards. We are blind until Michael makes a move, but when he does, will it be too late to react? What will it cost Micah?

"I think she knows we are here for her. What she needs is to believe that she is enough. Not an easy feat when you are up against seemingly insurmountable odds. Oh, and Michael." I shrug as Bishop clears his throat, getting right down to business.

"Micah," he calls her name and motions toward the throne, bowing slightly and sweeping his arms in front of him to indicate he's giving her the floor. My mouth falls open in shock at the display. She won't understand the significance of this moment, none of them will. He is relinquishing control and allowing her to stand in his place. This is what she needs, and he is giving it to her without even telling her. A silent boost of confidence, that he is with her, ready and willing to follow her lead.

My cold, dark heart hammers in my chest as I watch his wings vanish. He almost looks normal, like any other man, like a father. It has taken me years to understand the intricacies of Human emotions. I've observed them all over time, until I began to feel them myself. With Micah, it was love. But right now, as I watch Bishop walk down the steps, hands in his pants pockets, acting cool and easy, as if this was an everyday occurrence, I feel nothing but pride. He doesn't hesitate as he walks past his daughter and heads toward the back of the room. Lyrik shuffles over, making space between us. We're both stunned by his actions. I thought I would never see this day.

"I know what you're thinking, Rook," Bishop says as he stands beside me. "I want to be who she needs me to be. I wasn't there in her past, but I am here now and for her future. But don't think for an instant that I've forgotten who I am. I will burn this world down around us if anything happens to my daughter, and I won't lose an ounce of sleep over the lives lost.



I still live and breathe chaos, but she makes me want to be more. I can be both.”

“I am but your humble servant, my Lord. I wouldn’t dream of presuming you are anything other than your magnificent self.” I smirk, trying not to smile as I catch the frown on his face from my sarcastic words. Lyrik snorts on the other side of him and Bishop’s frown deepens.

“I can kill you both. Remember that,” he whispers, crossing his arms over his chest. I know he means it and I wouldn’t dare push my luck, but I want to laugh as he huffs indignantly beside me.

Micah steps out of Ty’s arms, slowly walking up the steps, and damn, there’s my silly heart fluttering away in my chest at the sight of my Mate. She turns and the sight of her takes my breath away. It never gets old as I look at the gift that I’ve been given. I don’t deserve her, but she is mine. Ours. I quickly glance at the Incubus, and he is just as enamored as he wears a goofy grin on his face. In fact, all eyes are on her as she shifts from foot to foot, clearly uncomfortable. But in true Micah fashion she cracks her neck from side to side and stands taller, rolling her shoulders back, with her hands loose at her sides.

“A lot has happened to us all these past few weeks. I spent most of them unconscious.” She shrugs, her lips turn up in a quick smile as she glosses over the fact that we thought she was dead. “Well, I didn’t die, even though for a minute there, I could have sworn I was in Purgatory. But I wasn’t far off in my assumption. Apparently, I was lingering in an in-between created by the big man himself.” She runs her hands down her face and clasps her hands in front of her. “Long story short, God paid me a visit and I’ve been given a task. Well, more duty than task, but you get what I’m saying.” She rocks on the balls of her feet as everyone just stares back at her. I can only imagine what their faces look like. Not going to lie, that little reveal is surprising considering how quiet things have been from up above for the past thousand years. Or has it been longer? I for one thought God had already washed their hands

with the lot of us. Bishop stays quiet beside me, face pinched with concern.

“Like God, God?” Sam asks, his hand raised as if he is sitting in a classroom awaiting instruction.

“What other God is there, Wolf?” Rodyn chimes in before Micah can respond. Esme tugs on Sam’s arm but I can see that the Wolf wants to have it out for some reason. Well, this could get interesting. Like I said before, lots of tension in this room.

“Look, I’m trying to be sure. What if it wasn’t God? She could have been halluci—”

Bishop curses under his breath ignoring Sam, who huffed indignantly at being cut off, he asks, “What was asked of you specifically, Micah?” His eyes narrowed as he cuts off the brewing argument only moments from exploding in the room. The way the triplets are eyeing Sam, he needs to be silent. They’ll eat him alive.

“Oh, you know, total superhero movie kind of inspirational speech. Only you can save the world, restore the balance to the force, you’re the chosen one type of stuff. With great power comes great responsibility, talk about pressure, right. Well, I really wasn’t given a choice. How can you tell God no? I’m no one’s savior. Yet here I am standing before all of you attempting to make a life-altering decision to run headfirst into battle once more. Save the Light Guardians, free them from Michael’s hold. If I free them, then I can free the Archangels who no longer want to follow their wayward general. No man or woman left behind...that includes our mother.” She turns her head and locks eyes with Marcus, and he blows out a breath. Considering everything that happened between her and Verity, I can understand why she would want to leave her to her fate.

“You can’t be serious, Micah, you almost died! Wait, you did die. You can’t possibly think you can take the fight to Michael, Archangel Michael. It’s suicide,” Sam replies frantically as he looks to Esme, then Ty, Trys, Rodyn, and Marcus. No one rushes to agree with him, so he continues. “I lost most of my pack when they barged into HellNight

Academy. I am not going to risk my Mate in a fight we can't win."

"Sam!" Esme shouts with exasperation. "You don't get to make that decision for me. You need to leave the possessiveness at the door, this is bigger than us. I would never abandon Micah, I'm her Tether."

"You might not have a choice," Sam retorts, making Esme recoil from him, her eyes shifting from Micah to him, then she takes a step away from him. I watch Micah as she watches them, and Esme practically folds in on herself. Whatever this is about, Esme isn't ready to fess up about it and Micah appears to understand as she turns her eyes to the rest of us in the room.

"I didn't ask you to do anything. In fact, I didn't ask anyone to sacrifice themselves for this. If I have to do this alone, I will." Micah steps down the steps one at a time, her words strong and full of conviction and I know she means it.

"Not a chance in the Underworld I would ever let you walk into danger alone, baby girl," I reply, stamping down the self-sacrificing bullshit before it starts.

"I agree with the Shade here, I mean Rook, meus amor. Too much is at stake, you are too important to everyone in this room. You will never be alone again." I glance past a still stoically quiet Bishop to Lyrik, happy to see we are on the same page.

"Mi, we do this together," Marcus says, crossing his arms over his chest, legs parted, all soldier ready for war.

"Kitten, you don't have to ask. I will die for you. Fight any fight for you," Ty says as Trys cuts across the room and kneels at Micah's feet.

"Trys, what are you doing? Get up!" she shrieks as he grabs her hands but doesn't move to stand.

"Sunshine, marry me. I am literally death on legs. I will kill for you, rain down pain on our enemies because without you I am nothing. You are it for me. So I see no need to wait for the right time, because I have a feeling our lives will

always be hanging in the balance. Marry me, hell, marry us.” He indicates his brothers behind him, and I can’t help but be amused by Trys’s actions. This is not the time or the place, but this is Trys. There is never a right time for his type of crazy.

Micah groans. “Trys. I can’t even ask if you’re serious because I know you mean it.” She slips one of her hands from his death grip and strokes his face. She looks up and meets my eyes, then her gaze shifts to Lyrik’s. I can feel her love through our bond, bright and beautiful, just like her. Do I care if she says yes? No, she is already mine and I am sure Lyrik feels the same way. Technically, none of us are going anywhere, but her Tethers have a choice; once they complete their bonds and tie their magic to hers, they aren’t bound to her. They have a choice to remain by her side or live completely different lives. At least, that’s what I think the few texts about Soul Tethers state. Esme completed her bond with Micah and I can see her heart strayed elsewhere, if that big ass mating mark on her neck has anything to say about it.

“Trys...I—“

A large black envelope whizzes through the air, followed hastily by a hulking Asher as he barrels through the room like a raging storm, interrupting Micah’s reply. The entire room seems to take a collective breath as the envelope whips around the room. Asher barely misses colliding with Marcus as he jumps to catch the envelope only for it to evade capture. The envelope has a mind of its own as it abruptly stops in front of Bishop, then glides gently into his waiting hand. Asher stops short, chest heaving, and I wonder how long he’s chased this letter through the palace.

“That will be all, Asher,” Bishop says as he looks down at the envelope, studying the script on the front. Asher’s big body bows low, then he lumbers out of the room, his huge, black iridescent wings dragging on the floor behind him.

“It seems Lucifer is right on time. These are the invites for tonight’s ceremony. He expects us all to attend,” Bishop says as the envelope spits out tiny gold envelopes into the air, then they separate like some choreographed dance, shooting through the air, aiming for each one of us in the room. I reach

up and snag mine; it didn't have far to go. Lyrik grunts beside Bishop, lips pursed in annoyance as he reads his invite out loud:

## THE UNDERWORLD REJOICES IN THE RETURN OF THE HEIRS OF LUCIFER

RODYN, TYMOND, AND TRYSTAN LARRIEUX

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE BLOOD  
CEREMONY TONIGHT AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

ENTER BY INVITATION ONLY.

*The Morningstar*

“Well, this is going to be interesting. Why is he making a spectacle of this? They just need his blood,” Lyrik says as he places the gold card inside his jacket pocket.

“A show of power, you don't even need to guess. He wants the Underworld to see them. A flex of his muscle and a fuck you to all the other Lords of Hell. His rule and his place in the Underworld secure. This is Lucifer, there is a reason for everything he does,” I reply as Bishop hums nonsensically beside me. I focus on him for a moment, but before I can question his silence, he speaks.

“I will meet you all back here later tonight.” He excuses himself, walking away without a backward glance at Micah. She watches him go, her face unreadable but I know she is wondering what his departure is about. I am wondering the same thing. Knowing Bishop, he will talk when he's ready, but I also know his daughter, she won't wait for long before she demands answers from him. I don't think he realizes how alike they truly are.

“Fuck, finally, let's get this over with so we can get back and make a plan,” Marcus says as he stuffs the gold invitation in his back pocket and goes to leave the room.

“Heirs to what exactly?” Rodyn mutters as he follows behind Marcus. He stops and turns, staring at Micah like a long-lost puppy, then leaves the room with his tail tucked between his legs. Jeez, the boy has it bad.

Esme storms from the room, Sam hot on her heels, while Trys and Ty both usher Micah out of the room, their combined magic whirling around the three of them until they vanish from sight.

“What the fuck just happened in this room? There was so much going on I can barely follow. I hate that my Mate is being pulled in so many directions,” Lyrik growls in frustration.

“It will eventually slow down,” I reply.

“When?” he counters, and I want to play psychologist, I really do, but we have bigger problems.

“Let’s get through this ceremony first. I have a feeling that shit will only get worse from here.” I blow out a breath, at least my words seem to have calmed Lyrik down.

“They have no idea what being his heirs will mean for them, do they?” He asks, then his eyes widen as the severity of the situation hits home. “They will never take his blood if they know the truth.”

I shrug. I like the triplets, but our hands are tied. “It’s either that or they slowly go insane. Three feral beasts with way too much magic. Not even Micah’s love for them can stop the inevitable,” I reply feeling slightly helpless because it’s not like I could warn them. As Demons, we are bound by the laws of the Underworld ourselves. The truth isn’t mine to tell; Lyrik and I are magically gagged. Lucifer has to tell his sons what taking his blood entails.

“They will be bound to the Underworld forever. They have no clue that they will never be able to live on Earth permanently again,” he says solemnly.

“They’re Nephalem, maybe it will be different for them,” I say hopefully. Hey, Demons aren’t allowed to live on Earth permanently, we all have to return to the Underworld

eventually, to keep our darkness at bay. But, maybe, just maybe, with the arrival of three rare hybrids things could be about to change.

## *Chapter Twelve*



## ESME



The sound of bass pumping from the other side of the heavy black doors barely muffles the sound to a low throbbing hum in my head, which is already pounding as sleep continues to elude me. Every night since she first appeared in my dreams the High Priestess has returned, haunting me, taunting me, demanding my presence, that I return to her, to take my place in the Blue Mountains. It is her own sick form of torture, sleep deprivation can break the strongest of creatures, and I am at breaking point. My only solace has been Sam, the reason why I haven't gone mad by now. The little bit of sleep I get is after he fucks me into a coma. It's become our routine, my addiction. He is my drug and I'm hooked. When you're desperate, as desperate as I am...you'd be willing to do about anything for a dreamless sleep. I don't know how much more of this I can take but I can't place my burdens at Micah's feet. I can't.

"I thought this was a ceremony. It sounds like Club Hell No. 666 in there," Micah says to Trys, making him chuckle. I smile at her attempt to lighten the mood.

Ty, Trys, and Rodyn have all been on edge since the invites arrived earlier today. I mean, I get it. They know nothing about Lucifer, other than what they were taught about him on Earth. Add to the fact that he is their dad and he might have some nefarious plans for them he's not telling them about, I would be silent and brooding too. I understand their situation more than most.

Why is it so important for me to return to the Blue Mountains? I was banished. It is an attempt to use me for sure, now that I'm useful of course. I meant nothing to her, yet she insists on popping up every time I close my eyes.

I glance over at Micah. Her long braids hang loose down her back, covering the plunging backless V-shaped cut-out of her dress, leaving little to the imagination as it stops just before it reveals her ass. The black bandage-like body-con mini dress has tiny rainbow ribbon straps that show off her muscular arms and shoulders; the dress fits like a glove, wrapping around every curve of her body. She looks sexy and confident, stunning with her long, thick thighs on display, finishing it off with a pair of hot pink stilettos. I've never seen Micah outside her Academy uniform or yoga pants. Everyone's tongues are hanging out of their mouths—they appreciate the view.

I opted to wear a long, teal satin maxi dress with a tulle overlay, two long splits on either side of my legs, that stop too far up my thighs, if Sam's growl is any indication about it. But the dress is comfortable, it allows me to move freely, with tiny straps holding it all together. No heels, thank the Heavens, I am more than happy to have been given teal ballet flats. For a big burly Demon, Asher has damn good taste. The dress appeared in my closet a few hours ago, my own personal Fairy-God Demon. I doubt Micah had anything that revealing in her suitcases when she arrived at HellNight Academy. The perks of being the daughter of a former Archangel, Chaos Demon Lord. I am not going to complain, the less I need to worry about at the moment, the better and I am sure I am not the only one who feels that way. All the guys, including Sam, look as if they stepped out of GQ magazine or a Tom Ford runway show in a variety of suit jacket and pants combination that is simply mouth-watering. After being stuck inside Bishop's home for weeks on end, we all need a chance to let our hair down.

“Who knows what the fuck you're about to see on the other side of this door. Be prepared for anything,” Bishop says as he weaves between the group to stand in front of us. As soon as he is in place, he reaches up and places his hand on

the doors. They swing open slowly and we are all bombarded with a cacophony of pumping bass and beat drops.

The noise is deafening, making my temples throb. Strobe lighting pierces my irises, making me close my eyes tight against the assault. It feels like I am in the grips of one of the worst migraines I've ever experienced. Nausea rolls through my stomach, yet I manage to keep my dinner down by taking deep, slow breaths.

Sensing my pain and unease, Sam wraps his arms around my waist and pulls me close, my back to his chest. At the same time, Micah emerges next to me, her fingers grab mine, entwining them together. It's been a while since we've had any kind of interaction and I feel starved of it, starved of her.

"Are you okay?" she asks, her eyebrows pinched in concern as we wait for the doors to open completely. Her eyes search mine, as if she can see exactly what's going on with me but I quickly diffuse the situation before she really starts asking questions. I squeeze her hand, reveling in the feeling of her touch.

"I'm fine." I smile genuinely, I have really missed her, even though her room is across the hall from mine, we've danced around each other since her father's memorial. She didn't want to see me and maybe I am to blame for that. I know I put that distance there. I know she saw the Mate mark the day she woke. I know she understood because she has two Fated Mates of her own. But we are overdue a conversation about what all this means for our relationship going forward.

"I can feel your pain, Esme." She arches her brow and points to her chest with one hand, while placing her other hand flat against my forehead. I watch Micah close her eyes, her touch soothing, healing, as a warming sensation flows through me, taking the pain away. All my pain. My eyes widen, blurring with tears as I gaze up into her eyes. She'd healed me, taken away the sick feeling in my stomach, in fact, I feel rejuvenated.

"Micah. You did it. How?" I ask, both astonished at how easily she used her healing magic, and I wonder then if it is

easier for her to use it now that we are Tethered together or if it's just the strength of her power alone. I'd been so tired I didn't think to heal myself. You have to do better, I berate myself. Who knows when we will be facing the enemy again, I need to be ready for anything. Next time I might have to heal more than a migraine. I need to prepare.

She strokes my forehead, then lets her hand trace the side of my face until she is cupping my cheek. "I told the pain to go away, and I let the magic flow through me. It's a new development I've discovered since I woke. I'm different, I feel different and using my power is as easy as giving it an intention and letting it happen." I nod my head in understanding, I am not sure what her death did to her magic, but she is stronger, I can feel it.

Sam growls as we follow behind Bishop into a throng of people waiting to get in the door. His hold on me tightens, making Micah pull away from me with a smirk on her face.

"Samuel, if you growl at my Mate ever again, I will skin you alive and wear your pelt as a jacket." Lyrik materializes beside him, patting him so hard on the shoulder that he winces from the pain.

"Sam." I turn my head to look up at him, my tone admonishing as he looks down at me regretfully.

Sam holds up his hands as Ty turns slowly, one of his knives spinning in the palm of his hand. At this point I am not even surprised. I am sure they all heard Sam's possessive growl. "Look, Micah, I am sorry. I understand your relationship with Esme; my Wolf, not so much. I am working on it," he says, eyes pleading as he shifts his gaze from Micah to the triplets, who are eyeing him like apex predators.

"It's fine, Sam. I get it. I do. I also know where I stand with Esme, and I am okay with that. We've had this discussion before." Micah locks eyes with me and she doesn't have to say it for me to understand. I made a choice and I chose him.

"Micah, we don't have to—"

She waves her hand through the air to cut me off. “With everything going on in our lives, Esme, there is never a good time for anything, we just have to talk to each other whenever we get the chance. Life is too fleeting to wait.” She glances over to Rodyn, Ty, and Trys, then back to me. I am not sure what she’s thinking but I can only assume it’s about what Trys asked her hours ago. I still can’t believe he asked her to marry him. It was a shock. If Sam asked me today, what would I say to him? We are inevitable, regardless of a ring. In the Supernatural world we are already married to one another, our bond is soul deep.

“I am happy for you. The both of you. It doesn’t change the Tether between us. You are still mine.” She smiles knowingly. I am not going to deny myself the memory of her lips on mine, the feel of her skin, the connection between us flares to life, but instead of acknowledging it, Micah releases me. I watch her go, flexing my fingers, missing her touch, feeling the loss deep down.

“Are you not going to tell her about the High Priestess?” Sam leans down and whispers in my ear, holding me close, lending me strength as I shift my focus to him. You chose him.

“I don’t think I will. It’s nothing I can’t handle on my own,” I reply as Lucifer appears in front of the line of people at the door.

“My heirs and their guests do not wait in line. Whose head needs to roll?” His voice booms over the thumping music and the line parts like the Red Sea for us to walk through.

“But what if you need—”

“I got it, Sam,” I say through clenched teeth, not wanting to discuss it further. Micah has enough on her plate. I am not weak, my power is growing daily. I am a Seer. I will see trouble coming long before it actually happens. I pat the arm holding me and lean back into the warmth of his body.

“I’m sorry, Sam. I don’t mean to be cranky. Let’s just enjoy the spectacle because I have a feeling tonight is going to be full of surprises,” I say, tilting my head back to look at him. Sam leans down and presses his lips to mine and I want to lose

myself in him. Later, I think to myself as we walk through the group of people eyeing us enviously. I guess this is the hottest ticket in the Underworld, this place is packed.

“Have you had a vision?” Sam asks curiously, eyebrows raised in question.

“I don’t need a vision. Look at all these Supernaturals under one roof. This night is bound to be memorable.” I chuckle as we move along with the rest of the group.

Let the Blood Ceremony begin.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

## MICAH



This isn't a party, it's a den of iniquity masquerading as a ceremony. As soon as the crowd parts, the entire room comes into view. Large floor to ceiling windows form the wall in front of us, giving partygoers a view of the fiery red sky of the Underworld beyond. The entire room reminds me of a high-end skyscraper penthouse, with its modern, sleek, streamlined furniture. If I hadn't seen the palatial dark palace from outside, I would be convinced I was somewhere else entirely.

"What the hell am I seeing?" Marcus shouts over the loud music and I immediately create a silencing bubble around us to block out the noise. My magic flows through me easily, I didn't even need to think about it too hard before I can feel it wash over everyone around me.

"Welcome to Lucifer's party," Bishop says to my brother. We all follow behind Lucifer as Demons, Imps, and all manner of creatures of the Underworld dart out of his way.

"I think we are more like our father than we thought," Rodyn mutters under his breath, making Trys laugh beside me.

"Yes, the vibe of this party feels like one of our soiree's, only times one hundred," he replies. "I mean, there is at least one person being fucked on every surface in this room." Trys looks around the room in awe, giddy like a kid in a candy store, head tipping back as we all take in the denizens of the Underworld in every color, shape, size, and species.



Letting Ty guide me, I let my eyes wander upward, mimicking Trys as my mouth parts in surprise at Demonesses dangling precariously above us. All of them are completely naked as they hang Shibari-style from the ceiling, but instead of ropes, there are silver chains binding them in various positions. One of them in particular is being held by a thick chain between her legs, her pussy lips spread around the large links, her poor clit bearing all her weight, making me grimace. It looks painful, but she doesn't show any sign of discomfort as the chain spins slowly in a circle. All the Demonesses have blissful gazes. Demons standing underneath them watch them like they are art displays.

“Do you like what you see, kitten.” Ty takes my hand as we leave the last of the hanging Demonesses behind. We move into a dark hallway with large viewing windows showing rooms on either side of us. Lucifer continues walking, speaking to Bishop up ahead like the orgies taking place in each room are commonplace, and maybe they are.

I shrug. “It looks uncomfortable but if you were to tie me up, I wouldn't say no.” I wink and his eyes light up, sending an exhilarating thrill through me at the prospect.

“Baby girl, don't tease him, he might take you up on that offer, right here and now.” Rook appears beside me out of nowhere, making my heart flutter in surprise. I know he is off doing his Shadow Demon thing, always the spy as he checks out the place, even though I am sure he's been here before.

I miss him by my side. Hell, I am clingy, I miss them all, even with them being right in front of me. As if reading my mind, he whispers in my ear. “I miss you too, baby girl, but Bishop gave me a job to do tonight. Don't let all the naked bodies fool you into believing this is a harmless environment, baby. This is merely a distraction. Look past the tits and ass, stay focused, stay alert.” He kisses my cheek, lips lingering long on my heated skin as he becomes shadow once more and whisks himself away.

Ty wraps his arm around my waist, and I sigh. Content that when one leaves another takes his place. If that makes me a selfish, greedy bitch then so be it. I can't wait until I don't

have to worry about being out of their reach and them being out of mine.

I stop outside one of the rooms, joining a few other voyeurs as all of us peer into the window like visitors to a sex zoo. Blue, green, and black mist moves over three writhing Demons, their taut muscular bodies restrained, tied down to the bed, their hips bucking, cocks hard as cum spills from their tips. Their lips are parted, heads thrown back in ecstasy as the individual's essence flows over their sweat soaked bodies. The sight feels all too familiar. Memories of my time with Lyrik, his purple essence caressing my body in the exact same way, it makes me clench my thighs with need. I'm not going to survive the night if this is the only thing Lucifer is offering as entertainment.

Esme gasps as the Demons all start to cum in unison, their cum shoots up into the air like fountains as the three essences split and form into three beautiful women. Marcus presses his face to the window beside Sam, as if he can get a better look at what's happening in the room. The Demonesses each take a Demon, climb on top of them, straddling their waists and slide down the weeping cocks. Yep, I can't look away. I lean in closer, as a deep voice chuckles behind us, sending delicious shivers down my spine.

"You're witnessing Succubi in a feeding frenzy," he says matter-of-factly, sounding more like a commentator for a wildlife documentary. "By the looks of things, it's almost over. Come, meus amor, I don't feel comfortable with you watching someone else in this state." Lyrik grabs my hand and pulls me behind him. "You may all want to come along, the ceremony will be starting soon," he says as the others tear their eyes away from the room and follow us.

"I don't know what I just watched, but damn, I need to up my dick game, for real," Marcus says with a huff, making us all laugh. My brother is definitely getting a different education down in the Underworld. Maybe once HellNight is up and running again he can join me there. But I guess that will be a conversation for after all this comes to an end. That is, if we

are all still alive. The thought is sobering as we approach another set of double doors that open almost immediately.

Lucifer stands in the entrance with a satisfied smirk on his face. “Ah, I see you got lost in the voyeur hall. Tantalizing, isn’t it?” Lucifer looks at me then to his sons, eyes twinkling in delight.

“It’s something,” Esme mutters under her breath.

Lucifer finds her easily, his eyes widening a fraction as he turns his attention back to me. “I thought I was a collector, Micah, but my, your collection of Mates is impressive. A Blue Mountain seer, three Nephalem, and two extremely powerful Demons. Oh yes, let’s not forget your ex-Light Guardian brother and an Alpha wolf.” He whistles. “It’s as if someone has given you a small army at your back.”

I don’t know where this is coming from but I’m not going to let him get under my skin. If he wants to play, then I’ll play. I stare directly into his eyes, unafraid. Lucifer or not, I will face him down just like Michael. “Well, some of us have God’s favor. Some of us don’t.” I shrug carelessly, standing my ground as his nostrils flare and he leans in as if he’s going to reply, eyes hard and menacing.

Rodyn coughs, making himself known beside me as Ty and Trys push against my back. Lyrik’s hand still holds mine on the other side; their presence and love strengthen me more and I give him my full on don’t-fuck-with-me smile. Lucifer straightens, smoothing his hands down his black tux as he flicks out his wrist, showcasing huge ruby cufflinks. He smiles and nods. “I guess you’re right. Fair play, Miss Jones, fair play.”

“My Lord.” A tiny Imp appears beside Lucifer, he bows low then stands as Lucifer looks down to acknowledge him.

“Yes?” he asks, sounding very annoyed by the interruption but I am grateful for it. I don’t need his attention tonight. This ceremony is for Ty, Trys, and Rodyn. I just want them to get what they need so we can get the hell out of the Underworld. The sooner we can get back up top, the better.

“The ceremony, my Lord. The guests.” The poor Imp looks terrified as he bows once more. The sight makes me sad. The Imps and Demons in Bishop’s palace are wary, but they are not afraid.

“Yes...yes...I am aware.” He brushes off the Imp dismissively and the little guy scurries away. “Let the festivities begin.” Lucifer claps his hands in excitement. “Gentlemen, if you will,” he says gesturing for Ty, Trys and Rodyn to lead by stepping aside and let them go into the room first.

“Kitten, join us, please.” Ty holds out his arm for me to take and pulls me away from Lyrik, sandwiching me between him and Trys as Rodyn stands on the other side of him.

Lucifer sighs in annoyance and rolls his eyes. “Do you need her to wipe your asses too? This is the Underworld’s first glimpse of my heirs and—”

“Then the Underworld should see that we are a package deal,” Rodyn says, cutting him off.

“I don’t leave my sunshine behind, not for anyone, especially you,” Trys says with a feral smile on this face.

“Guys, I can walk with Lyrik, Esme, Marcus, and Sam. He’s right, go ahead, I’m not going anywhere,” I reply, eyeing Lucifer warily. I know he reacts impulsively; I’ve pissed him off enough tonight. I don’t want to fight and have him withhold his blood from them because of it.

“No. Absolutely not, kitten.” Ty’s grip on my hand tightens and I sigh. I look at Lucifer and give him an I tried shrug, but his face is an impassive mask as he regards us. Double doors swing open wide, allowing us to see a large ballroom beyond the entrance. The room is packed with regal looking Demons and Demonesses who watch us expectantly.

“Fuck. I didn’t expect this,” Ty whispers. I can feel his anxiety through our bond. My broody Tether is not a people person, and it shows. Sweat breaks out on his brow and I can feel his heart rate pick up through our clasped hands. I have never witnessed this side of him before, but with all the eyes

on us suddenly, it's too much attention. Ty is used to lurking, quiet, reserved, and neither he nor Trys were raised to take center stage, thanks to their god-awful mother and her favoritism.

Sensing his brother's distress, Rodyn steps in front of us, buttoning his suitcoat in a flourish and looks over his shoulder. "I'll take the lead, stay behind me, Ty," Rodyn says as he stands straighter, transforming into the charismatic, arrogant, asshole I'm all too familiar with. He turns around, with his head held high, as he passes between the lines of Lucifer's waiting guests as if he owns the place. He doesn't wait for us to follow as he walks ahead of us. I feel both Ty and Trys relax beside me. I watch Rodyn go and my heart doesn't know how to respond to what he's just done for his brothers. This is not the same man I met weeks ago, I know he has changed, but to see him shielding Ty confirms it. Now I know I need to open my heart and let him in, or maybe he's already there.

Lucifer flies overhead, black wings spread wide as he glides above the crowd then lands on a raised circular platform in the middle of the room. All eyes turn to him as he clasps his hands in front of him, a look of pride on his face as he watches his sons approach. I still find it hard to believe, but as I lock eyes with my own father standing on the other side of the platform, I know anything is possible.

"Kings, Lords, Dukes, Demons, and Demonesses of the Underworld, I present my Nephalem heirs," Lucifer croons and I can't help my eye roll. This is a show to him, a display of power, and I am so over it. "Oh yes, and of course, their Soul Tether." The room erupts in loud gasps of shock and surprise, and I groan. Here we go. "Lord Bishop's daughter, the Nephilim, Micah Jones."

Murmurs immediately break out all around us. A beautiful Demoness, with iridescent skin and bright blue hair, clutches her big giant pearls as we pass, like she fears for her life. This shit is laughable. Demons with giant horns, tiny Imps in tuxedos, Incubi, and Succubi all give us wide berth. We should be afraid of them, not the other way around. By the time we make it to the bottom of the platform the entire room has gone

quiet. It's like they're all holding their breath waiting for some Demonic-Angelic hybrid bomb to go off.

Rodyn doesn't hesitate to join Lucifer onstage, but Ty and Trys don't leave my side until a very angry Bishop comes to stand beside me.

"I told him to keep your name and what you are out of his unnecessary introduction. This entire ceremony is a fucking farce. He didn't need the entire Underworld here tonight. He wanted them here to be afraid. You four together are extremely powerful. There is no one in this room that would dare challenge the three of them, especially with you by their side. Lucifer isn't going anywhere anytime soon, so his place as King is secure." Bishop blows out a frustrated breath as the others join us finally. So, all of this is for show, just like we thought. Another game that Lucifer has somehow won without even trying too hard and I only sweeten the deal with them being mine. I would never let anyone, or anything hurt them, and I hope he knows that includes him. I'm not his Supernatural bulletproof vest and I won't allow him to use us in that capacity.

"Now the introductions are over, enjoy the rest of the party," Lucifer bellows. The doors open wide once more and the room begins to empty as partygoers are ushered out. I guess they are going to join the naked festivities outside. Ugh, I know we've just arrived, but I am already done with this night.

Once the room is empty, Lucifer snaps his fingers and three shot glasses filled with amber liquid float through the air to hover in front of Ty, Trys and Rodyn. The rest of us stand around the platform to watch.

Lyrik moves in closer to my side, bringing Marcus, Esme, and Sam with him. "They need to consume the blood and it's over," he whispers. I nod as I watch them each pluck a glass from the air. I sense their unease through our bond but there is nothing they can do except down the contents.

"A little bit of whiskey helps the medicine go down," Lucifer says in a singsong voice as he waits for them to drink.

I feel as if I can't breathe as I watch them knock back the blood-infused alcohol together. The glasses vanish from their hands. For a moment nothing happens. Trys glances over at me with a bright smile on his face and gives me a thumbs up. I blow out the breath I was holding, finally relaxing now that I know they will be ok.

"Oh shit!" Marcus shouts as Ty hits the floor, then Rodyn, and Trys. Their bodies convulse on the floor as they writhe around in pain. I kick off the stupid stilettos I'm wearing and run toward the platform, but Rook appears in front me, blocking my progression.

"Rook! I need to get to them, let me go." He wraps me in his arms, and I struggle against his hold. I can feel my power is ready, eager for me use it, but I don't want to hurt my Mate. "Micah, wait. They are fine. Just wait," he says urgently as he continues to hold me.

"This is normal, meus amor. They are going to be okay. They are being made whole, the battle of two sides. It happens to all hybrids." Lyrik stands in front of me, blocking my view of the platform so I can't see what's happening to them, but I can feel it. They're in pain. I can feel what they are feeling, a searing, ripping agony, like fire and ants shooting through my veins.

Tears sting my eyes as I shake involuntarily in Rooks hold. "She can feel their pain," I hear Esme say from somewhere behind me. Her voice is like a soothing balm. I grab hold of it as I try to focus on anything but the agony. Then just when it starts to get unbearable, it stops. I open my eyes to see the panicked stricken faces of my brother, Lyrik, Sam, Esme, and Bishop. Rook releases his hold on me, and I don't hesitate to maneuver around them to get to the platform.

As I approach, Trys gets to his feet and leaps off the edge meeting me halfway. "Are you ok—" he stops my question with a kiss, cupping my face in his hands, he kisses me breathlessly. His tongue tangles with mine languidly, like there is no one else in this room but him and I. He pulls away and presses his forehead to mine, leaving me lightheaded and bereft.

“I don’t hear the voices anymore, sunshine, they’re all gone.” He smiles.

I look into his eyes, and I find peace there, no raging seas, just calm waters. Lucifer’s blood bridged the gap between their Demonic and Angelic sides, they are whole now. Thank the stars for that.

“See, perfectly harmless. Although, you must know, now you have to abide by the rules of the Underworld,” Lucifer says finally. I should have known there was a catch.

“What rules?” Rodyn asks, eyes narrowed suspiciously.

“You’re bound to the Underworld. You have to be granted leave to live on Earth, but it is always temporary access. You must return here or die,” Bishop says. I look over my shoulder at Rook and Lyrik, they both nod their heads solemnly in confirmation. So, that’s why Lyrik returns to the Underworld every couple of months, he has no choice. None of them do. What does this mean for us?

“I wanted to tell them, Bishop.” Lucifer pretends to pout, and I want to slap his smug ass face. He knew this and he didn’t tell them. He didn’t give them a choice.

“You tricked them by omitting information,” I say accusingly. Even as the words leave my lips, it’s a weak argument considering the consequences of them not taking his blood.

“It doesn’t matter if I withheld information or not. The ceremony had to happen,” Lucifer snaps, his eyes blazing with anger, then he smiles maliciously. Talk about extreme ups and downs, he needs to pick an emotion and stick with it.

“How about a little I’m sorry I lied to you gift, sons. I have a surprise for you.” He holds his arms out like he’s about to give them the keys to the kingdom. With a wave of his hand a massive wrought iron cage floats down from the ceiling, hitting the middle of the platform with a loud bang. The person inside whimpers and I gasp in horror. This night just can’t get any crazier.



Hanging from a chain on her knees in the middle of the cage is a beaten and bloody Lucretia Larrieux.

## *Chapter Fourteen*



“Hello, mother,” Trys says as he leaves a horrified Micah behind. Jumping up on the platform he and Ty move as one, approaching the cage from either side. Ty summons his knives and reaches out his arm to run the sharp tip against the bars. The clanging sound is jarring, echoing around the now empty, cavernous ballroom. The noise bounces off the walls, chilling and ominous, like a death toll, a countdown of her final minutes. This is not a gift, but an execution wanted by Lucifer, and he wants us to do it.

“Ty, Trys, not like this.” Micah shakes her head in alarm, eyes wide as she pads slowly toward the base of the platform with Rook and Lyrik not far behind.

Bishop stands protectively behind Marcus, Esme, and Sam, his wings spread, as if at any moment he might need to whisk them away from harm. His face is a neutral mask as he watches Lucifer’s every move.

I stand still and try to read the room. There is more at play here, information that we aren’t privy to. Just like before with the drinking of his blood, the omission of us being bound to the Underworld was a secret beyond our reach.

I quickly glance at Lucifer. The murderous gleam in his eyes, lips turning up slowly in a cruel smile while my brothers circle the cage like predators, is enough to give me pause. What am I missing here? Inside, I feel more like myself than I’ve felt in days. Trys just announced his voices were gone. Ty is Ty, his control is impeccable and he will internalize his feelings. There’s no rage, the darkness has receded but the

sight of her alone evokes powerful hatred, too much trauma, way too much pain. I've fantasized about this moment, the three of us have wished and joked about the ways we would end her.

I step forward slowly, fists clenched at my sides, anger rising inside of me at the sight of the woman who manipulated me, used me and my brothers for her benefit. I will never forget the look on her face at the assembly weeks ago as poison coursed through my body while she smiled knowingly. Her cruelty knew no limits.

But not now. Her once impeccable clothes are tattered and blood-soaked. Her arms are chained up high, stretched to their limit behind her as she sags on her knees on the floor of the cage. Looking closer I see there are a plethora of three-inch spikes emerging through the floor, impaling her from below. Her blood oozes slowly, coating the base. My mother prided herself on her appearance. The stench coming from her prison makes me want to gag. I have to breathe through my mouth to get closer to her.

Her hair falls lank and dirty over her face, her breathing is shallow as she seems to barely cling to life. How long has she been this way? More importantly, how long has Lucifer been torturing her? I don't give a shit what happens to her but with every eye in the room on us, the decision to kill her feels like the weighing of scales, as if the world itself is waiting to pass judgment on the three of us. I glance at Micah, her eyes beseech mine, pleading. Is she worried too? God, I want to talk this out, but we've been backed into a corner without even knowing. Another fucking game.

"I found her weeks ago when my gloriously vengeful brother decided to attack the Academy. She ran, afraid of the big bad Archangel, when she should have been afraid of me!" he shouts. My mother reacts with another whimper, her body trembling as she tries to cower, but the chains hold her in place. Is this an act? I can't believe she would be broken so easily.

"Our deal was simple. She was to take the place of your intended mother. There was once a Lucretia Larrieux, that part

was real. The Larrieux Coven never caught on. They thought their beloved daughter was cured by the Devil. I even loved the Witch. I wanted her, but it seems there are things even my power can't reach. I lost her but I wanted you more." He sighs as he paces back and forth.

"I needed a shapeshifter, and Rakashi can be whomever they want to be. Isn't that right, Abaddon?" he calls her a name I can only assume is her actual one, but she remains quiet, shaking uncontrollably before us.

"I offered up a chance to live above ground and she took it. Any Demon would if given the opportunity. Oh, she played nice initially while she carried you three in her belly. I gave her free rein over HellNight Academy so she could kill and feed at will. I didn't care about the students there, if they weren't strong enough to survive her games." He shrugs. "So be it." Micah gasps and Esme covers her mouth with her hands. I can only imagine her thoughts right now. In my mother's eyes the Blue Mountain Witch belongs to her.

"Is this necessary Luc? Why haven't you—"

"This has nothing to do with you, Bishop. If my sons want to exact retribution on the woman who hurt, tortured, used, and abused them, they are well within their right. It is justice, right? This treacherous bitch hid them from me! How she managed to get in and out of the Underworld without detection is something I haven't managed to cut out of her yet. But no matter, I will find out who helped her. I made her a promise that I will seek and destroy the rest of her kind for her betrayal. She doesn't deserve to live." Lucifer's tone is lethal, his voice rises higher and higher as he speaks. The cage begins to rattle violently, jostling our mother and she screams in agony as the latch on the door gives way. Her body swings from the chains and she wails and sobs, arms painfully overextended, as if her shoulders are dislocated, maybe even broken. I should be enjoying this, but right now, I am disappointed. I want to ask her a million questions, but I won't, she doesn't deserve any ounce of courtesy, not even my voice.

“Then why don’t you do it?” Micah shouts, her fist pounds the platform, pulling me from my thoughts, but Ty and Trys are too lost in theirs. They don’t respond to Micah’s outrage and I’m beginning to worry if they are too far gone to care. Their memories, unlike mine, are more vivid, more violent, their punishments were too severe.

“Oh, young Nephilim. You need to learn to be bloodthirsty. Do you think you’re going to survive a battle with Michael without it? You need to be savage and so do they! All of you! You think you can go up against the Heavenly host and live to tell the tale, then you need brutality at your back, not compassion. I don’t know what your father is teaching you, but my sons will not be weak! Kill her!” Lucifer roars at Micah but she doesn’t flinch away. She struggles as Rook holds her back for the second time tonight. I want to call out and tell him to let her loose. She is our savior; I know that now. Nothing is a coincidence in this life and Micah Jones stepped into HellNight Academy to save us from ourselves.

“Luc, enough!” Bishop shouts. “They got what they came for, they are bound. It’s enough.”

“No!” Lucifer jumps off the platform and walks toward Bishop who meets him head on in the middle of the room. “Let the fates decide when it’s enough!” he says as they both face off, eyes blazing. If we remain in this room much longer...

Trys crouches down to peer inside the cage beside me, studying her, the way she used to when she threw them both in cages when we were younger. Ty continues to circle quietly, waiting, calculating his moves decisively. I wish we could speak to each other telepathically because I wonder if he is thinking this through like I am. Do they feel this might be a trap? Is that what’s holding them back? I step closer, my leg brushing against Trys’s side, and I place my hand tentatively on his shoulder. A connection of any kind to keep him grounded. If any one of us acts on impulse, it will be him.

“Rodyn.” The sound of my name is like a beacon, as she calls me into her bright light, and I see this for what it is. We’ve been battling with our Demonic sides for a long time, it

had all been a delicate balance of wills. We weren't whole and our mother kept us that way, teetering on a knife's edge while my brothers became more and more unstable and me more detached and compliant. Taking Lucifer's blood gave us the balance we needed, yes it bound us to the Underworld, but our two halves were one now. This is an internal struggle of which side wins. What happens to our Humanity if we choose death, vengeance, and murder as two newly formed halves struggle for dominance? Wait, we aren't Human at all. The realization hits me hard. Why hadn't I thought of this? What happens to us if we are stripped of the attributes we equate to being Human? That's what I should be asking myself. No, if we kill her, we will lose ourselves to our Demonic darkness with no way back. Lucifer wants this. He doesn't want sons at his side, he wants beasts that he can control. Fuck, that's it.

"No," I say out loud. I look at Micah and I nod slowly as I back away from my mother's cage. By the small smiles on Rook and Lyrik's faces they've given me confirmation that my musings were correct. I just need to bring my brothers back from the brink. They need to look at our girl and remember.

Micah is all we need. We don't need this. Our mother is already dead. According to Lucifer, our intended mother died before we were conceived. We don't need this Demon's blood on our hands. We have our prize. We already won. Let Lucretia or whoever she is rot.

As if sensing my decision, Lucifer turns his attention back to us. "Abaddon, show your sons who you really are. Shift!" Lucifer commands and my eyes move back to her once more. Her breathing evens out and I reach out to pull Trys away and put some distance between the two of them. My mother struggles to raise her head, the curtain of unwashed hair reveals a mangled face, both of her eyes are swollen slits of black, blue, and red bruising, blood drips from her nose and mouth as she dribbles a mix of blood and saliva on the front of her once white silk blouse.

"My boys, come to finish what your cowardly father couldn't?" she rasps, sucking in a breath as she begins to laugh.

“I. Said. Shift!” Lucifer bellows and he leaves Bishop behind to march back over to us. Ty stops finally, standing shoulder to shoulder with me, his face an unreadable mask, his breathing calm, but I don’t feel anger. One down, one more to go.

“Kill me, don’t kill me. I’m already dead.” She spits and three teeth fly out of her mouth to land on the floor near our feet. “Kill me and unleash your darkness. It was the one thing I couldn’t force you to do, not without him.” Her body swings in Lucifer’s direction as he lands beside the cage.

“Shut up, bitch! Shift! Do it now.” He reaches out and closes his fist tight around her neck. We watch as he chokes her, she gags and sputters until she sags again on her chains. Lucifer releases his fist and steps closer as our mother shifts before our eyes. Her skin is red and unmarred, instantly healing from her many wounds and bruises. Multiple black horns grow out of her head, like a crown, twisted and gnarled. While her hair thickens and twists into long woolly ropes down her back. Her face elongates; sharp, angular features, a hooked nose and a wide mouth that house two knife-like serrated fangs tapering into sharp points over her bottom lip. She doubles in size and I can only imagine how tall she would be if she stood upright.

Trys whistles. “She’s an actual fucking monster. A real monster. Sunshine, she’s a beast.” He looks at Micah and points, acknowledging her finally with an aghast look on his face. Mouth falling open, he turns and mouths, “What. The. Fuck.”

I hold back a laugh. I watch Micah’s shoulders sag in relief as the tension visibly drains from her body. Rook pulls her closer into him, wrapping his arms around her protectively. Am I jealous in this moment? Fuck yes. I want that closeness, and as soon as I get a chance, I am going to tell her that, begging on my knees.

“You couldn’t help yourself, Mother. Should I call you Mother or vessel? The latter seems more appropriate. Don’t you agree, Ty?” Trys asks as he tilts his head from side to side.



“I agree,” Ty replies. “But do we fault her for her nature?” he counters and Trys brings his finger up to his lips tapping contemplatively.

I know this back and forth all too well, they will question it together until they come to a collective decision.

“Now that we know more about what she is, I don’t think we can. I vote we leave the island. I don’t like this show anymore,” Trys says with a shrug and turns toward Lucifer and walks past him but stops to pat the Devil on his shoulder.

“You don’t win this, Pops. I think we can go home now, sunshine.” He leaves us behind, like he didn’t just make a life altering decision and joins everyone else on the floor.

“What do you mean?” Lucifer asks incredulously as he looks from Trys then back to Ty and me.

“He means she’s yours to kill. We don’t care what happens to her. Furthermore, I don’t think you need us, really. You’ve paraded us in front of the Underworld, like prize ponies. So, unless you plan on fighting beside us against Michael and then die, we will never inherit this place. You thought we would take your blood, kill our mother, and become your loose cannons of wrath and darkness. Well, I’ve made my choice, it’s her. I followed her here and I will continue to follow her,” I gesture toward Micah, turning away from him without another word. Ty takes one last look at our mother and accompanies me.

“I am your sire! You are mine. Mine! I don’t give you permission to leave!” he bellows, eyes blazing furiously as his wings spread wide behind him.

“I want to see you try to stop them. I told you before. They are mine.” Micah steps in front of us as we reach the floor and folds her arms over her chest. “You don’t own them. They might be bound to the Underworld, but they aren’t bound to you. I think we are done here. I have a war to win. A war you should be fighting with us.” Micah turns her back on him as we all gather around Rook and Lyrik.

“I will do no such thing. If you want to die, then die. Ultimately, that’s what they were for. My own personal avatars who will fight in my place. They will die, and I will make more. Michael will too one day, and the game will continue.” I am not surprised by the smug look on his face, of course that was his intention.

“No! Nobody wins! We all die, including you, you, arrogant, self-serving, asshole!” Micah shouts. Lucifer’s smile falters and he looks to Bishop for confirmation at her words.

“She lies,” Lucifer says. “He wouldn’t, he promised.”

“He’s done being merciful, Luc. Honestly, I am surprised he waited this long with all of our tit for tat. You either join us in this fight or sit down here and hide, but I don’t plan on dying anytime soon, and I am going to make sure my daughter succeeds.” Bishop’s wings wrap around Marcus, Sam, and Esme, and they vanish before Lucifer can reply.

“You will all die,” Lucifer spits out, turning his attention to our mother. He snaps his fingers and she bursts into flames. Her screams are guttural and raw, ringing out all around us, her body thrashes wildly against her bindings.

Lucifer turns his back on us as he watches her burn. I guess it’s his way of dismissing us, and that’s fine by me. Purple and black mist wraps around us as we dissipate with my mother’s screams embedded in my memories forever.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

## MICAH



We all step out onto the familiar gravel path just beyond the ruins of the gazebo at HellNight Academy. The world around us is dark and gloomy despite the sunlight beyond the foreboding gray clouds. Fog settles low to the ground like thick murky soup, shielding the burnt grass that was once vibrant and green. The charred trees seem to lean into one another, clinging to life with the last vestiges of their strength. It's as if the sun can't cut through the darkness that's befallen this place and the land refuses to thrive. The Willow woods had been razed to the ground, a shell of its former self. The decimation is startling, even the resident flowers buckle under the lack of magic this place once held.

I stand there in shock as the others all look around us, horrified by the destruction. The night the Light Guardians broke down the magical wards, there was fire and chaos everywhere. Once Michael thought Marcus and I had indeed killed each other, he called all the Light Guardians back. Unfortunately, the damage to the Academy grounds and the buildings was already done.

Ty and Trys both lead the way, touching trees as they pass. Ty in particular loved these woods. This is their home, like literally, considering Headmistress Larrieux hid them away from Lucifer here. I want to fix it for them. I want to bring it all back. How? I don't know but I will find a way.

We spent a month in the Underworld after Ty, Trys, and Rodyn walked out on Lucifer. Bishop sent us packing a week

later, stating it would only be a matter of time until Lucifer refused to take no for an answer and tried to come for them from another twisted angle. Well, screw that. I know coming above ground is a risk. I think I know my enemy well enough now to know that Michael will be keeping his eyes and ears open if I resurface. I am not afraid, and I vow he won't set foot on these grounds again. I was never allowed to visit Caelum Academy for fear I would be found out. Ha! Well, this time, I'm inviting myself and I am going to blow those doors wide open.

Not that my fa— I pause in my own thoughts. I almost called him father. Have I gotten there yet? I guess, subconsciously, I have.

My thoughts turn to Bishop, our last conversation makes my throat tighten. I can still feel his arms wrapped around me even now. I lost my dad and gained another. The hole in my heart is still there, but Bishop has found a place beside it, and damn, it feels good. The past few weeks in the Underworld have been a trial of ups and downs but I've had an opportunity to get to know my biological father, and I hope that when this is all over maybe there can be more.

*“When you are ready, I will come. You will not go into battle without me,” Bishop says, his embrace comforting, giving me the strength I need to see this through. I look up at him and see his sadness. I think if he could keep me here, he would, but the sorrow on his face is not for me. I know his thoughts have turned to her. Regardless of where life led her, Bishop held my mother in his heart, and dare I say, that love made him better.*

*“Whatever it takes, your mission is to get to her. I know she's still alive. He wouldn't kill her, not yet. Time moves faster down here, so it hasn't been that many days since the battle, right?” I ask and he nods in confirmation. “Then that is your mission. When I sever Michael's connection to the Light Guardians, that will be your opening.” I smile. “He will be too pissed at me to look your way. He will be gunning for me.”*

*Bishop frowns, not liking the sound of what I just said but we both know that in the end this is my fight. “When this is*

*over, you and I are going to have a good talk about self-preservation,” he says, giving me a wicked smile, then he clutches me harder to his chest. He lays his chin on the top of my head and rocks me slowly. “You brought light into my life once more, daughter. I am forever changed.” Yep, total wobbly lip moment as I hold back my tears.*

*“You getting soft on me, Chaos Demon?” I lean back and smirk. I’ll do anything to fight the potential downpour from my eyes right now, so sass it is. Of course his eyes blaze white hot for a flicker of a moment and his lips turn down in a menacing snarl.*

*“Hell no.”*

“Micah!” Esme gasps my name and I open my eyes as the memory fades.

“Mi, don’t move,” Marcus says, and I’m instantly on high alert, but I do what he says.

“I had an inkling that you could do this, but I wasn’t sure until now.” Lyrik places his hands on my shoulders, and I lean back to look up at him, clueless as to what they are all so stunned about.

“What’s—”

“Micah, look down,” Rodyn says from somewhere behind me. His tone both urgent and excited. I’m barely aware of my fingers and toes tingling as I slowly look down at the ground, a huge circle of green grass is growing from underneath my feet, spreading wider throughout the woods. Ty and Trys’s whoops and shouts can be heard in the distance, the sound of their feet crunching against gravel as they rush back towards us has me snapping my head back up to see their big, bright smiles.

“You’re doing this, sunshine. How is this possible? Wait, forget I asked a dumb question. You are truly the light, bringer of life and goodness. You saved my tree!” He kisses my cheek and takes off running down the path.

“Kitten, I’m going to reward you so hard later.” Ty plants a quick kiss on my lips, my cheeks flush at the prospect of Ty’s

reward as he takes off after Trys, like two crazy puppies bounding through the trees.

“It’s your Earth Elemental magic on steroids,” Esme says as Sam shifts, tearing through his clothes. His massive brown Wolf takes off running through the reviving woods. The fog begins to lift, the clouds part as the first rays of sunshine peek down through the slowly unfurling green leaves on the trees.

Sam’s Wolf howls long and low, after a minute only one Wolf answers. Any of his pack members who survived were sent home.

This, what I’ve just done, is a start in the hope the Academy will resume.

“Well, that was Professor Maverick. I better make myself known. I am sure he and a few other staff are watching this with awe and have a hell of a lot of questions.” Lyrik leans into me, making sure he doesn’t break my connection to the ground and kisses my temple.

“You’ve done so much in such a short period of time. You are truly remarkable, meus amor, and I am honored to have you by my side.” He sighs. “I’d better go find Professor Star. We need to get these wards back up. Marcus, let’s get you settled in. You’re one of us now.” He begins to walk away but Marcus stands beside Esme unsure.

“Who knows what’s going on at Caelum Academy? It feels like it was all a ruse for Michael’s continued war. What will happen to all the students? Me?” He looks so lost, and if I wasn’t channeling power into the ground I would wrap my Panda in a bear hug.

“Well, I know of an Academy that’s going to need a fresh set of students. The Council will have to convene, and a decision will be made, I’m sure. But we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it. For now, you need a place to stay, and the Quads were untouched by the fires and magical blasts,” Lyrik says as his lips find mine once more. Damn it, these men and their kisses, how’s a woman to focus? Lyrik gestures for Marcus to follow and he gives my shoulder a squeeze before he joins Lyrik down the path.

“How Micah? What were you thinking moments ago to make your magic respond this way?” Rook asks as he leans down and brushes his hand over a newly formed white lily.

“I was thinking I wanted to fix it. I wanted to bring it all back. I gave my thoughts intention, and my power did the rest,” I say in astonishment. I’ve been practicing this on a smaller scale for days now in the Underworld. This is a lot of work for my intent, yet I feel I can do more. Even now, my magic flows freely, my limbs are loose at my sides as I freely give to the Earth all around me.

“If you can do this, I don’t see why you can’t use your Angel Fire the same way.” Esme turns to me, and I get a good look at her as she gazes at me in wonder. “You can break the connection,” she says in excitement, but the dark circles under her red tinged eyes won’t allow me to celebrate along with her.

I tilt my head, studying her further. “Esme, are you okay? You look exhausted.” I turn my attention internally to our bond and lock eyes with her once more. “I feel it too.” I raise my eyebrow in question.

“I’m fine. I really am. In fact, I better go find Sam. Coming back here is hard on him.” She hesitates for a second, her mouth parting as if she wants to say more. Just let me in, tell me what’s wrong. Instead, she moves past me and I watch her walk away. I know something is wrong and I hope she will open up about it before whatever it is gets worse.

I sigh as birds begin to sing suddenly, like they’d been holding back their song due to the misery of their once beautiful sanctuary. HellNight Academy has seen nothing but death for years, these grounds are soaked in blood. I can only hope that the blood of the students, faculty, and Light Guardians who fell here were the last ever sacrifices.

“Esme will come around. Whatever it is I am sure she will open up. Maybe she’s trying to put some distance between the two of you now that she and Sam are Mated.” Rodyn looks up at me, face relaxed, no mask in place, just him sitting cross legged on the edge of the path.



“Maybe.” I shrug. “She looks like she hasn’t slept in days. I mean, I know she’s newly Mated but—”

“You doubt they’re fucking like rabbits?” Rodyn laughs as my eyes widen. “Micah Jones, I didn’t take you as a prude at heart at all. Not with my brothers as your Tethers.” He smiles, and I don’t think I’ve ever witnessed this side of him before. This feels easy between us, carefree banter between the two of us, but I guess it was hard won.

“You think I’ve reached the entire campus?” I ask as the tingling in my fingers and toes subsides.

“What does your magic tell you?” he asks as he stands, dusting the dirt from his gray joggers. Very underdressed by Rodyn’s usual standards, but hell, I am not going to deny that I like what I see.

I close my eyes, because yeah, I need to be serious here. My Earth Elemental magic has stopped flowing through me. The world around us is brighter, even more alive than it was before. There is a feeling of wholeness coming from the ground, and that is the only answer I need.

I shift my feet, stepping on something, I look down and see I am surrounded by black dahlias. I guess when the flower chose me, it wasn’t just a coincidence, it was the magic of this place.

“I think I got it all,” I finally say with a sense of satisfaction. I can’t believe that weeks ago I wouldn’t have dreamed of doing something of this magnitude, but I am different. I died, and I changed; a metamorphosis. I always wanted to be a butterfly, I guess in a way, I am. Shining and new with myriad colors, sans the wings.

“Do you trust me?” Rodyn’s question has my butterfly image crashing to the graveled pavement. He holds his hand out to me, and I pause. I can see the uncertainty in his eyes, a subtle flinch. He’s unsure what I’ll say, and I think it’s time we talk to one another.

“If you had asked me before that night, I wouldn’t have hesitated to tell you no. No, I don’t trust you. But I have

learned enough about who you really are in these past few weeks to know that you were just as much a victim as your brothers.” He shifts his feet from side to side, and although our Tether is not complete, I can feel his vulnerability.

“You know, when I thought I died, the voice that kept me going was yours. You came for me. You held me. You begged me to stay with you. I wanted to. I was clinging to life for you because you’re right. You have to make up for all the shitty things you’ve done.” I smirk and his lips lift in a small smile. “We are going to be okay, you and me. You would’ve had my heart already, if you hadn’t tried to kill me, you dick.”

He closes the distance between us. He stops so close that I can feel the heat coming off his body. He reaches out tentatively to caress my face, we lock eyes. Anticipation floods me as I wait for him to touch me.

“I’ve wanted to do this from the moment I first saw you.” His finger brushes over my chin, his thumb strokes down my cheek and I lean in to feel his skin against mine. I close my eyes and feel the connection between us, the tiny thread from him eager for me. Warm thick lips press gently against mine and my stomach flips, exploding with butterflies. What am I, twelve? He brushes his lips over mine with a chaste kiss and pulls away.

“I don’t deserve you. I don’t deserve any of this, but damn it, I am fucking selfish, and I can’t walk away from you. So, you’re mine, Micah Jones, we will complete the Tether between us because going insane and pining for you for the rest of my life is not in my MO. Take me as I am with all my crazy-ass flaws because I am not an easy man to love. I am a dick, as you so aptly mentioned, and I can’t deny your truth. So, I will ask you again, do you trust me?” He lets his hand linger on my face before he takes a step back and holds out his hand for me.

This is it. The moment where I accept his words. Accept him. I lift my hand and let it hover over his. I have seen the changes in him, I know he is more than what he appears to be. My heart and mind both agree. I look up into his rich brown eyes. “Yes, I trust you.”

## *Chapter Sixteen*

## RODYN



Three little words is all it takes. My heart feels like it's going to explode out of my chest. It's not I love you, but it means more. Especially between us. Trust is so easily lost, and I never gave us a chance, building our foundation on deception from the start. I can't ask for more than what she's already given me. Her trust in me is like gold, precious and rare. I will cherish it for the rest of my life.

"Where are we going, Rodyn?" Micah asks as I pull her enthusiastically behind me. We move through the Willow woods. There's a slight breeze, bringing the fresh scent of renewal with it. We are a couple of months away from Spring, but Micah's power brought forth rebirth in the land and everything is green.

"I am sure my brothers told you that we spent most of our time in these woods. This is where we played and escaped from our mother most days. We never spent more than seventy-two hours away from this place, but I guess now I know why," I say as I pull her along down a winding path, cutting away from Sanquin Lake and the Staff Houses to the deeper part of the wood at the edge of the Academy's barrier.

"Yeah, that she was hiding you. Why make a deal only to renege on it? She definitely wasn't trying to protect you from Lucifer. Why incur his wrath? She must have known she was on borrowed time?" Micah says thoughtfully as a large stone moon gate comes into view, forming a large, round break in the forest around us. The circular stone door is made of jagged stones, as if they had been hand cut. A heavy wooden door

with cast iron fixtures closed the world behind it away, a hidden treasure only a few people knew about. In this part of the woods, the trees are denser, taller, older. The canopy overhead blocks out most of the sunlight, bathing the dark green foliage in shadows, dropping the temperature drastically.

“Protect us she did not. Honestly, I believe she wanted to use us here on Earth, in the same capacity that our dear old sperm donor sought to do in the Underworld. Now that we know the truth about who and what we are, things seem so much clearer,” I reply. I have had a few days to think on our mother’s intentions, and I’m damn sure it wasn’t motherly love.

“Where are we, Rodyn? It’s freezing. I guess I better put my Fire Element to good use.” Micah’s body shivers before her hands suddenly begin to warm, warming me in the process. I turn to gaze over my shoulder as my hand touches the round cast iron doorknob of the heavy wooden door of the moon gate. “You are full of surprises, Miss Jones. You’re getting me all hot and bothered. So forward.” I wink.

Micah throws her head back and laughs, and God I’ve waited for the sound to finally be directed at me. “Well, well... Rodyn Larrieux makes jokes. Who knew?”

I put my shoulder against the door and give it a shove. “I never got an opportunity to really flex my humor muscles, but I will be more than happy to practice if you keep responding like that.” I point to her big smile, and I can see she has no idea what I’m talking about as it slips away from me.

“Like what?” Micah says as I pull her behind me, closing the door behind us. She is quiet for a moment, gasping in shock and awe right on cue as her hand slips from mine. Her mouth parts, eyes widening as she digests the space in front of her.

“Like this, just like this. Like you haven’t a care in the world or a burden to bear. Happy, Micah, this perpetual state of wonder. I want to make you happy, because you deserve to be.” She turns, her face unreadable as she stares back at me, and my hands clench at my sides. This is a shove your hands

in your pockets kind of moment, but I am in joggers, damn it. What the hell do I do with my hands while she scrutinizes my words?

“You can’t say things like that and distract me with a place like this. When you speak from your heart, I want you to have my full attention. I hear you and see you, Rodyn.”

She closes the distance between us, her hands reach out and lay on my shoulders. Her ember eyes flicker like a campfire against a starlit sky and I get lost in dreams of our future and what it could be, what I swear it will be. She rises up on her tiptoes and kisses the corner of my mouth, then reluctantly pulls away.

I want to reach out and grab her, why am I afraid to do what normally comes natural to me? To control, dominate, and claim her as mine. If I act on my impulses, will she pull away? This fragile healing wound between us needs to heal slowly with care, not a quick fuck against the wall. Although, a quick fuck would be nice. Okay, I need to stop thinking. No, when Micah wants me, it has to be her choice, her move, not mine. I don’t get that right.

“Now tell me why there’s ruins of a library in the middle of the woods.” She smiles and turns around, her neck craning back to gaze up at the bright blue sky and the vast empty shell of what once was an ancient library. Tall arched windows surround the large space that once was a place of knowledge. Along the walls climbing high into the sky were rows upon rows of books shelves, full of petrified books. Some so old that a mere touch will have the pages crumble between your fingers. I know from experience. Trees grow through the foundation, big thick roots crawl along the floors. Long green vines and moss have reclaimed the stone shelves and marble walls, while huge pieces of the gabled ceiling litter the walkways.

“According to Ms. Fields, the Academy sits on multiple ley lines. A strong conduit of magic flows underneath the ground we stand on. Hence why it easily accepted your Earth Elemental magic to heal itself, well, at least, I think. But this wasn’t always an Academy. All the ruins around campus tell a

story of many different overlapping interdimensional bubbles from different times in history. That's why the architecture of each ruin is from different historical periods. I've counted Greek, Medieval, and Victorian to name a few, that were once temples, schools, even residences. This place exists because there was once another magical Academy here thousands of years ago. Whatever happened to the bubble that held this place, it cut off this building in haste as the pocket it existed in broke down. All the titles, the ones that are still legible, are magic related. These grounds are one big enigma, there are still so many unknowns. I think that's why it was so easy for my mother to exploit it, to turn it into someone's worst nightmare with her dark influence. So, you see, when Michael destroyed the wards around us, this magically protected world began to die. Who knows how long it would have taken for it to fall apart like the others that stood before it? You saved this place, Micah," I say as I walk over to one of my favorite spots and sit on what I can only assume was once a window seat.

"How do you know all of this?" she asks as she continues to peruse the shelves closest to her, leaning forward to look at books that lost their titles long ago.

"I spent a lot of time in the library. We all did. Anything to escape our mother. Below the dark, broody, stabby exterior, honestly, all three of us are a bunch of nerds." Micah snorts.

"I'm starting to see that," she says as she climbs up a broken set of stone steps leading to the second level. "So, you brought me here because..." she lets her words trail off in order for me to fill in the blanks as she waits expectantly.

What do I say? I want to share my world with you. I open and close my mouth, hesitating, then second guess myself, deciding against those exact words. Why am I so nervous? "I've never brought anyone here before. This is my special place. Well, Ty and Trys know about it. Oh, Ms. Margaret, Ms. Bertha, and Ms. Fields the librarian. Not even my mother knew this place was here," I say as I watch her walk back down the step toward me. Her braids are pulled back in a ponytail, her beautiful face on display, no makeup, just pure Micah. I love her this way. Her powerful toned arms hang

loose at her sides, her blue tank top and yoga pants cling to her curves, making my mouth water. How I thought I could abandon this woman, reject her, is beyond comprehension. I was a blind fool.

“Is this the only special place you want to show me or is there more?” Her eyes sparkle with a little hint of mischief as she steps between my spread legs. I lean back against the wall and gaze up at her.

“I have one more spot I think you might like.” I wrap my hands around her thighs and pull her closer. Her breath hitches as my thumbs brush the underside of her ass. “But I can’t promise to keep my hands off you when we get there.” I quirk my eyebrow as she rolls her eyes in exasperation.

“No promises.” She takes a deep breath. “Just action. Now show me,” she says as her eyes drop to my mouth then back up at my eyes. Giving her thighs another squeeze I stand, leaving no space between us, I let her feel every inch of my body against hers. I want her to feel the effect she has on me as I press my hard length to her stomach. I want her, but I want her to want me first.

“Come on.”

Entwining our fingers, we carefully maneuver our way through the library, climbing over fallen structural parts of the building. Once outside, I continue to walk through the labyrinth of ruins along the outer edge of the campus boundary. If you look closely, you can see the shimmering flicker of the faulty wards.

“You think the wards will be back to full strength soon? If Michael has scouts out there they’ll be here in no time before they alert him to my presence, or Marcus’s. Maybe, I should —”

“Stop. Micah, you have enough to worry about. Allow yourself this moment of peace because it’s fleeting. I think you need to let our Deputy Headmaster do his job. Let him take care of you. Let us take care of you,” I say sincerely.



“We just got back. There’s so much to plan for, so much I still don’t know about what we are up against, about me. I don’t want to be caught off guard again. Too many people I care about are at risk. I can’t lose any more people, Rodyn. I can’t.” Micah shakes her head adamantly as she walks beside me, the slight panic in her voice makes me pause. I turn and take her other hand in mine. I lean down until I am eye level with her, making sure I am all she sees.

“Breathe.” I keep my voice calm and squeeze her hands as an attempt to ground her. Micah blinks and I nod. “Yes. That’s it.” I want to reassure her that everything will be okay but I won’t lie. We don’t know what Michael is up to behind the protective barriers of Caelum Academy. We are going in blind. Bishop thought Lucifer would help but it’s up to Bishop to gather Demons to his aid when the time comes. If not, we will be outnumbered. It will be up to Micah to free the Light Guardians, to even the odds. It is a lot of pressure.

“Whatever happens, remember we do it together, all of us. I may not be able to wield your power but, baby, I will give you all my strength if you ask it of me. I know my brothers, Lyrik, Rook, and Esme will do the same.” I drop one of her hands and go to turn around, but she stops me.

“You’re good at this, Ro Ro.” She smirks, teasing me, the sound of my nickname on her tongue makes my heart happy.

“It’s amazing how profound you can be when you’re allowed to think for yourself,” I say, sobering the moment with another truth. Another realization that I was never really in control, just going through the motions set in place for me by my crazy-ass mother.

“Yeah, I know a thing or two about controlling mothers.” Micah sighs as the sound of rushing water greets us. Her eyes widen at the sound as she looks to me to answer the imploring question on her face.

I don’t say anything else, keeping my next destination a secret until the big reveal. I pull her towards the rocky outcrop jutting out above us with its own natural arch to walk under.

“What—”

“Just wait,” I say, cutting her off as we walk under the arch and into a beautiful oasis. Water crashes down into a circular pool of water. Steam rises invitingly from the crystal blue water; a crude ledge of rocks surrounds the small lagoon with high grass and low shrubs along the perimeter. I’ve only been here a few times with my brothers. The woods became more dangerous with all my mother’s pets roaming around. We haven’t really ventured this far into the woods in years.

“A hot spring? What the hell, Larrieux?” She playfully smacks my shoulder. “You all have been holding out on me. How is this place even possible?” She holds up her hands before I can answer her. “Don’t answer that. I get it. I think I do. This interdimensional bubble stuff is a mindfuck for real.”

I wanted to tell her Ty and Trys hadn’t had time to bring her here, with all the shit that’s been going on. But I keep it to myself. “It’s magic. Who knows where this little piece of paradise came from? This entire pocket of land is like a magical, mystical mystery.” I stifle my own nerdy use of alliteration as Micah looks at me as if I was a Cerberus with three heads.

“You really are a nerd.” She chuckles and walks toward the pool. “There is nothing in here that’s going to kill me, right? I mean, Sanquin Lake is possessed, I only got near it with Lyrik and something wanted to eat me.”

I frown at the mention of the lake, hoping like hell that the entity was purged along with all the other evils when the wards were destroyed.

“Nope. You’re safe. It’s just water,” I reply as she stuns me by removing her tank top revealing a black lace and satin bra. I stare transfixed, watching her bend at the waist as she slides her yoga pants down long, thick legs, her ass on display, begging for my touch. Micah lays her clothes over a larger boulder and sits on one of the rock ledges and eases herself into the water.

“Holy mother of moons”, she groans, and my dick twitches at the sound. “After all the training and sparring, this is

Heaven,” she says, closing her eyes as she submerges her entire body into the heated water.

“Rodyn.” Micah opens her eyes and watches me. “Are you coming in?” she asks. I don’t give myself a chance to overthink it before I pull my t-shirt over my head, kick off my trainers and joggers, leaving nothing but—

“*Fuck,*” Micah whispers, making me smirk. Yeah, I am completely naked, opting to go commando when I got dressed in the Underworld earlier.

I can feel her eyes rake over me as I saunter over to the spring and step down into the water. The heat seeps into my muscles, washing away all my doubts, fears, and worries as I sit back on a rock near the ledge.

We lock eyes, the heat of the water is nothing in comparison to the heat in Micah’s eyes. She doesn’t move and neither do I. If she wants me...well.

“Did you mean what you said?” she asks after a few minutes of palpable silence.

I clear my throat, trying and failing to act unaffected, but fuck I am affected. “About?” I lift my arms and spread them along the rocks behind me as I relax further into the water.

“To keep your hands off me,” she says breathlessly, the rise and fall of her chest has the tops of her breasts cresting in and out of the water, and I’m suddenly thirsty.

“I said I couldn’t promise that,” I reply, the sexual tension between us building, so thick and heavy I can almost taste it on my tongue. My heartbeat spikes as blood rushes frantically in my ears with the urge to take what I want. Her. I *want* her.

“And I said no promises.” She glides through the water slowly, inching toward me, tempting me to close the distance. “Come to me, or are you going to leave me out here on my own?” She tosses something through the air, and I watch it go as it lands by her clothes. My mouth forms an O shape as I turn around to see her standing, naked from the waist down, her pretty pussy ready, waiting, calling to me.

“Shit!” I groan. “Micah. I—”

“What, Rodyn? What’s stopping you?” she says as she unhooks her bra and slides it down her arms and tosses it as well. “Did you not say you wanted me? That you don’t deserve me but you’re a selfish man and you have no intention of walking away?” She lifts her brows in question but all I have eyes for are the rivulets of water running down every dip and plane of her body. Fuck it.

I stand and walk out to meet her in the middle of the spring. “I did say all those things, didn’t I?” I stop, leaving only an inch between us. “But what I didn’t say is that if I come closer, the need to touch you would be unbearable.” I reach up and cup her face with both hands as I look down into eyes of pure fire. She lifts up her face, all but offering me her mouth, but I don’t partake in the taste of her, not yet. I let my hands slide down her face, then her neck, and she releases a soft moan as my hands squeeze her breasts and tease her nipples with my thumbs.

“Fucking beautiful, Micah Jones. I’ve laid awake at night wishing and hoping for this moment,” I say as I drop my hands and step into her space, her body flush with mine. Our chests heaving with anticipation, the Tether between us thrums with potent energy, I couldn’t walk away from her now even if I wanted to.

“Rodyn, I forgive you. Is that what you need from me?” Micah wraps her arms around my neck, bringing my head closer to hers, our lips close to touching. “Rodyn. I want you. Is that what you need me to say?” Micah’s tongue flicks out, licking my bottom lip, and my mouth parts for her, my body giving her invitation, shutting down my brain all together.

I stop thinking. Guilt, regret, and self-deprecation, all the negative things that have plagued me for weeks. I drop all that shit in the fires of Micah’s eyes and let go. I snap. I open myself up to her kisses, scooping her up in my arms, moaning from the taste of her on my tongue. I carry her back to the rock ledge as she wraps her legs around my waist. We kiss as if our very souls have been searching for each other for an eternity. She is my puzzle piece that I didn’t know was missing until she clicked into place inside me.

I sit down with her, refusing to let her lips leave mine as our kisses become more frantic. I swallow her needy moans and whines as she lifts her hips and slides her pussy against my waiting cock. I break our kiss and my lips mourn hers as I grip her hips, stilling her movement.

“Rodyn, please,” she whines. “I need...I can’t...” She pants, eyes wild. I nod, because I feel it too. The strong need to complete the Tether between us. Her magic seeking mine, making us mindless, primal beasts.

“I know, baby. I know. I feel it too. You want to cum on my cock?” I ask as I lean forward and take her nipple between my lips, sucking and teasing it then turn my attention to the other one, each one teased as she writhes in my arms. Her wet pussy marking me as hers as she slides up and down my body.

“Yes, God. Yes!” she shouts. “Rodyn, fuck me, please!” she pleads.

“You never have to beg or plead for me ever, baby. That is the only promise I will ever make you,” I say as I thrust up inside of her. Micah’s back bows, her pussy slides over my dick, gripping me so hard my eyes roll from the pleasure of it.

“I am yours.” I pull her off me until only my tip remains, then slam her home where she belongs.

“Oh fuck! Rodyn. Fuck!” she screams as I lose myself in her. Standing with her in my arms, she wraps herself around me and we fuck hard and fast, chasing our release. Micah’s eyes glow white hot as I roll my hips, grinding against her clit as she cries out for more. With my hands free, I grip her ass and let my fingers roam until I push past the tight ring of her hole and slide inside her ass.

“Oh...Oh... Oh shit!” she cries as I thrust faster, my finger matching my tempo as I fuck both her holes. My legs threaten to buckle from the feel of her pussy and ass gripping me. My orgasm builds slowly as pleasure washes over my entire body.

“Cum for me, baby. Cum for me, Micah.”

I pant as I reach for her clit with my other hand, stroking it hard with my fingers. Micah’s lips collide with mine as she

screams her release into my mouth, and I kiss her hungrily. The Tether between us flares to life as I cum, breaking our kiss, I shout her name to the Heavens in atonement.

I feel alive, I feel pure euphoria flow through me as fire licks at my chest. Micah's head tips back, her mouth parted in ecstasy. I watch in awe as the brand on her chest begins to glow, black, white, gold, followed by a blazing silver infinity symbol which slowly appears on her skin.

Looking down, clenching my teeth together from the pain, the same symbol mirroring hers glows and settles against my chest. We both gasp as our powers intertwine, becoming one solid thread before they separate into two silver threads, Tethering us together forever. I stumble with her still wrapped around me until I find the ledge and sit.

“I can feel you.” I lean my forehead against hers, feeling complete. Finally complete.

“I can feel you, too. All of you.” Micah opens her eyes as tears run down my cheeks. “I feel everything... Is this what it feels like when the Tether is finally complete?” she mutters as she clutches her chest. Her eyes widen with alarm and she cries out in pain. A Wolf's mournful howl sounds in the distance.

“Sam!” Micah shouts, jumping off me and climbing out of the spring as a scream rings out around us. “Oh no! Esme!” Micah screams, throwing on her clothes as I follow her lead. Micah curses under her breath as she tries to slide her clothes over her wet body. With a flick of her wrist, a gust of wind brushes over the both of us, drying us instantly.

“Have I told you I love you yet?” I ask, shoving my feet into my shoes as we break into a run out of the oasis.

Micah stops and turns back to me as another howl calls out for aid. “Save it. Hold on to it and tell me when I really need it. I have a feeling I am going to need it more then, than now,” she says solemnly as her head turns left and right, confused as to what direction to run in.

“Let me,” I say, grabbing her hand in mine and pulling her behind me once more as I run us into danger.

We find Sam, butt ass naked, pacing frantically in the middle of the path leading to the Quads. Ty and Trys round the corner almost at the same time, definitely feeling Micah’s distress as Lyrik appears suddenly, stepping out of his purple mist.

“Meus amor. What’s happened?” he asks, glancing between us frantically, with a I can’t leave you all for five fucking minutes before the shit hits the fan look on his face.

“Sam. Where is she?” Micah releases my hand and runs towards him. Sam stops, the eyes of his Wolf stare back at us. He growls, pulling at his hair.

“They took her. They stopped me, I couldn’t get to her,” he growls. “They took her!” he shouts.

“Use your words, Wolf,” Trys says calmly, raising his hands in surrender as he approaches Sam. “Who took our little witch?” he asks.

Sam’s head snaps toward Trys unnaturally and he growls. “Mine!” he shouts possessively.

“Okay, yours. Yes, we know she’s yours. Again. Use. Your. Words.” Trys claps, emphasizing each word.

“Trys, baby, please. He’s aggravated enough,” Micah admonishes as she pleads with my brother to leave the Wolf alone.

“Sure, sunshine, but keep your distance,” Trys says, holding his arm out to stop her from getting any closer.

“Who took her, Sam?” Micah asks, her voice laced with concern, her face pinched in pain as she rubs at her chest.

Sam looks to Micah, mirroring her movement, rubbing at his chest as his knees buckle and he falls to his hands and knees. “The High Priestess. They took her back. They took her,” he says as his growls become deeper and his back arches as he begins to shift.

“Where, Sam. Do you know where?” Micah asks as his limbs break and rearrange slowly. Shifts usually happen instantaneously, but this looks fucking painful as his Wolf forces the transformation on him. He’s lost control.

“Blue Mountains,” he mumbles out before he shifts completely and his Wolf runs away into the Willow woods, howling in sorrow for his Mate.



## *Chapter Seventeen*

## ESME



Something wet hits my face. One drop, then two. Three. The pain in my skull ebbs enough to allow me to register rain. Forcing my eyes open, I squint against firelight. How long have I been out? It is still light. Wait. This isn't a dream or a vision.

I try to remember what happened. Dark gray robes appeared before me on the path, Sam growling and fighting against magic holding him in place. They threatened his life. Go with them or he dies. I had no choice. I screamed as magic slammed into my chest and the world went black. I was so distracted after I left Micah, so plagued with guilt of putting distance between us that I hadn't noticed them until it was too late. Isadura has me. There's no escape. I'm trapped.

Lightning strikes across the sky before the thunder booms shortly after. I try to raise my head, but I'm met with resistance. Something presses against my forehead, digging into my skin but there's no use. I'm bound. Don't panic, I tell myself over and over again as I take stock of my body. I can't move, the more I wiggle on this hard slab of stone, the tighter the bindings on my wrists and ankles become. The rain falls faster, soaking into my skin, the cold sinks deep into my bones, making my teeth chatter, sending shivers through my body.

"It is time," I hear the High Priestess's voice before she comes into view. The sound that's been haunting me for weeks. It sends my heart into overdrive. Fear, exhaustion, and anger hit me all at once as her piercing, glowing gray eyes

stare down at me with a wicked smile on her face. I startle as she pulls back her hood, her once youthful skin is haggard and wrinkled with heavy bags and dark circles under her eyes. She has become a hideous shell of her former self, a terrifying sight to behold. A crone. What the hell happened to her?

“Esmeralda, you thought you could hide from me, but I’m patient. Oh, so patient. It was only a matter of time, and as soon as you stepped out of the Underworld your power called home.” Her frail fingers stroke my face and all I want to do is turn my head away.

“You don’t like what I’ve become.” She tsks. “Neither do I, but the burden on the High Priestess weighs heavy on my mind, body, and soul. They take so much, yet it is never enough,” she says as she continues to stroke my face, letting her fingers travel down my body. “So much power and you’re not even pure.” She spits the words out in disgust. “Your mother broke all the rules when she gave birth to you and now you continue in her footsteps. But you won’t get to walk away with what is truly mine.”

My eyes widen and she laughs, harsh and hard. “Oh, you thought I would keep you here, beside me, let you take my place eventually? No, you are unworthy, and you don’t deserve the power you possess. I brought you back here to die. It’s the only way. The magic in your veins belongs to the Blue Mountains and I am the High Priestess, so that power is mine. I am going to bleed you dry, Esmeralda. I will drink and bathe in your blood until I am whole again. Until I am rejuvenated by your essence, and I am myself again.” Her eyes sparkle with manic glee as she throws her head back and lifts her arms up into the sky as lightning strikes so close it lights up the area around me enough to see other robed figures standing in a circle around us.

They begin to chant, low and harmonious. I get lost in the calm cadence as they all speak as one. It lulls me into acceptance, that this is my fate. I want to give in. She’s right. I didn’t want this power. But I don’t want to die.

*Anima ad animam (Soul to Soul)*

*Caro carnis meae (Flesh of my flesh)*

*A sanguine exsuli (From the Blood of the banished)*

*Infunde me potentia tam iniuste data. (Infuse me with  
the power so unjustly given)*

*Servus tuus sum, audi me, deas montium  
caeruleorum. (I am your servant, hear me,  
goddesses of the Blue Mountains.)*

It's futile but I buck my hips and try to get free. Anything to loosen the bindings holding me down. The High Priestess holds out her hand as the other Witches around her continue to chant. A shiny glint of silver in the corner of my vision has me straining to see a sharp curved blade with glyphs etched onto the blade.

“No! Help me!” I shout, but if it bothers any of the Witches around me that I'm about to be gutted they make no moves to show it. I am on my own. It's almost laughable if my situation wasn't so dire. I should have told Micah, made her aware of what was going on the moment I had a chance earlier, then maybe we could have been prepared. She would be here; they would all be here. There is no one here to save me but me.

I thrash and buck and scream. I won't die quietly. Fuck her. The High Priestess pushes her hand against my stomach, pressing me down against the stone slab to hold me in place. I am completely immobile. Well, fuck. She might look like a decrepit zombie but damn, she is strong.

The weight of her hand lessens from crushing to a firm hold as she yanks my sopping wet shirt up to place her hand flat on my stomach. Her eyes close for a moment before she opens them again and locks eyes with me. She smiles slowly, like one of my worst nightmares. I never felt safe in her presence, she took me away from my mother, my home, hid me away like a leper and threw me away like trash. She has always been the villain in my story, and I won't let—

“I see you chose after all,” she says as she closes her eyes once more. “Yes,” she croons. “The Wolf.” She opens her eyes

and raises them over my body. “Well, two souls are better than one. Either way, there will be one less abomination in the world.” Her words strike true, hitting me in the chest, sending my thoughts spiraling, no...no... I’m—

Something in me snaps. Fire floods my veins as adrenaline courses through me. It fills me up, making me stronger as my power rushes to defend myself, to defend us. A tiny spark of life, swirls around in my mind, pulsing bright, the vision comes to me so fast that all I can do is react. I snap the bindings on my wrists just as she begins to plunge the knife into my belly. I grip the blade tight between my fingers, my blood pours down my hands as Isadura fights to gain control.

The chanting Priestesses go quiet, but I won’t give them a chance to try and subdue me. With my other hand, I unleash my Water Elemental magic. Water blasts the High Priestess in the chest and sends her fragile body careening away from me. Then I turn the force of it on the women standing around me, pushing them back into order to give myself enough time to free my legs.

“Contain her! Now!” Isadura shouts just as I slide off the stone table, clutching her blade between my bloody fingers. My legs tingle as blood rushes to my extremities and I stumble out of reach of my pursuers. I feel for my Tether and my bond with Micah and Sam, but I feel nothing. I don’t know if it’s because we are behind the wards of the mountains or if the High Priestess has somehow taken my bonds away from me. Anger fuels my thoughts as I blast my way around the stone circle. I can see clearly now that I’m upright. Torches light the circle, surrounded by the all too familiar tall Spruce trees.

“Where are you going, Esmeralda? You can’t escape. I will never grant you permission to leave. You are mine! Surrender now!” The High Priestess bellows maniacally, her eyes wild as she pushes more of her Priestesses toward me. I grew up with these women, none of them gave me an ounce of acceptance. All of them treated me like I was invisible most days. I will be damned if I feel bad about bombarding them with water.

I watch them fumble, tripping over their feet as the force of my power brings them down all around me. It’s moments

like this that I wish my magic was more defensive, that I could control Fire or Earth. Anything to give me an advantage. I'm not kickass like Micah, and it's moments like this I wish I hadn't been so afraid at the Academy and actually learned to fight. Hell, to get away from this place I wouldn't feel bad about snatching a few souls to stop them from coming after me. But I will never admit that to Ty and Trys.

I need to get back there, back to the people who actually give a damn about me. My family, as weird as it sounds, they are my people. Now, I have to free not only myself but the child I carry inside of me to freedom as well. I make a run for it, reaching the edge of the circle as I collide with an invisible force that sends me flying backwards.

I hit the ground with a smack as the wind is knocked out of me. The Priestesses closest to me pounces, pinning me to the ground, but not before I stab one of them with the knife and slash another one in the face. They both cry out, falling away from me, giving me just enough room to kick out with my legs so hard even Professor Maverick would be proud. Scrambling to my feet I face off with the High Priestess as she slowly steps forward, attempting to corner me with her uninjured Priestesses at her back.

“You're done, Esmeralda.”

I swear, if she says my name one more time. “No.” I grip the knife in my hand, my last line of defense. Exhaustion from lack of sleep hits me hard and from all the power I've used. If I don't get out of here soon, I am as good as dead. Then she will win.

“No? You don't have a choice.” She sneers as she grabs the robe of a Priestess next to her and shoves her forward. “Bring her to me,” she says, sending the poor woman barreling my way.

Goddess give me strength, I send up a prayer, even though in the time that I've lived here, my prayers were never answered. No one ever came to my aid, not even the family I had left. No, I gave up on praying a long time ago, but to protect my future, I am desperate. I flip the knife in my hands

the way I've observed Ty doing numerous times and I throw it with all the strength I have left.

I watch in slow motion as the Priestesses running towards me slows, watching the trajectory of the knife as it twists through the air, until with a satisfying thunk, it embeds itself in Isadura's chest. The world around me speeds up as the adrenaline that flooded my system minutes ago drains out of me, sending me weak and shaky to my knees. The High Priestess's mouth parts, she glances down at the knife and then back at me with surprise and shock as she falls to her knees.

"What have you done? You foolish—" She falls over, her hand clutching at the knife, chest rising and falling slowly until she gasps her last breath. Her head rolls to face me, gray eyes vacant and lifeless.

Stunned silence. No one moves or speaks as the rain begins to slow and then cease all together. I killed her. I should feel horrified by what just happened, but I don't. It was her or me. If she could have bled me out on that stone slab, she would have given my body to the waterfalls and forgotten I existed. I don't feel bad at all.

I want to leave this place and never look back. I stand, swaying on my feet from the amount of power I used but roll my shoulders back for one more fight. These Priestesses were chosen by Isadura to be privy to my murder, they all took part in her ritual. If I had the power to kill them all, I would. They don't speak for the entire Coven, in fact, I am sure no one else knew I was back but these women.

"I want to leave, now," I demand as they all look at me as if they had been possessed by some hive mind. Moving as one, they remove their hoods. Some of them I recognize, some are older, yet all are a part of Isadura's inner circle.

"What makes you think you can leave after what you've done?" One of them steps out of the line, her name slips my mind, so I'll just call her lackey number one. I mean, how dare you look at me in accusation?

"Excuse me? I shouldn't be here. You kidnapped me!" I point at all of them, whether they did the kidnapping

personally or not, they are all guilty by fucking association. “I’ve done nothing but defend myself against a crazy psycho bitch. She banished me, she made me leave my home, sending me from one hell to another. So yeah, I think I can leave, and I want to go, now!” I shout as the Earth beneath our feet starts to shift and crack right up the middle of the circle we are standing in. The fissure widens as the Earth quakes so violently it knocks us all off our feet. I crawl back as more cracks open up, swallowing some of the Priestesses, including the High Priestesses’ body. The sounds of their screams echo from the hole as they plummet to their deaths. The stone slab I was tied to cracks with a resounding boom, sending two large boulders and debris soaring through the air to take out more of the women who were trying and failing to get past the wards that were put in place to keep me in. The irony. They are all dying, and all I can do is scan the darkness while I duck and dodge danger. Is Micah here? Are the guys? Sam? Can they not break down the barrier to get to me?

I get my answer as a brilliant bright blue light appears suddenly and begins to take shape before me and the few Priestesses remaining. The shape grows bigger, wider, forming arms and legs, long silver hands and dark brown skin sparkles with its own ethereal light. The figure steps from the spot where the stone slab once stood. Her feet bare, her delicate hands clasped together in front of her as she studies the scene before her with shrewd scrutiny. She wears a gauzy blue dress that moves unnaturally around her, as it writhes and undulates around her, reminding me of serpents made of fabric. She raises her hands, not regarding any one of us in particular, as she snaps her fingers and the circle around us begins to knit together, as if it hadn’t just swallowed a ton of people, Isadura included.

“That takes care of the non-believers.” She dusts her hands together, as if she’s just taken out the garbage. I guess in a way, she has. With her hands now on her curvaceous hips she turns and gazes around the circle at everyone still on the ground before her, until her eyes stop on me.

“Rise, my new High Priestess. Rise and be claimed.” She smiles warmly, reaching out to me to help me to my feet. My



mouth opens and closes as I stare wide eyed at the Goddess Ourea in the flesh, goddess of the Blue Mountains, well, one of them anyway.

The other Priestesses lay prostrate on the ground as they too come to the same realization as I did. I didn't want to believe she was real but here she is, standing in front of me about to help me stand. My hand touches hers and she frowns, tilting her head as if she's listening to something or someone.

"Oh, I see," she mumbles as she turns both my hands over palms up and studies them. I can feel her power assessing me, surrounding me completely, her fingers trace over the lines on my palms, sending tendrils of power shooting through me. I gasp breathlessly as she drops my hands and takes a step back.

"Esmeralda, daughter of Cashira, you have a choice to make, and not an easy one." She smiles kindly, but it's not as genuine as it was before she touched me. "It appears that Isadura made a grave error. You were banished, taken from us when you had yet to receive your gifts. You were made to feel unworthy, an outcast. For that, I am truly sorry. It's with my solemnest regret I allow you the choice I am offering now," she says sincerely as she beckons me forward.

I step towards her, and a pool of blue light surrounds me. I panic and try to step out of the small circle only to find myself imprisoned within it. Before I start to freak out, she places her hand on the barrier. "Don't be afraid. This is only temporary," she says softly, and I take a deep reassuring breath as I let my anxiety subside.

"I just want to go home," I plead.

"Home. Yes," she says. "Soul Tethered to a Nephilim and a fated Mate. A Wolf. But there's more, Esme. You hold within you a child. Half Wolf, Half Witch. A new tiny light inside of you. So much potential, with access to so much power." She looks at me and I can't help but feel excitement, surprise, and yeah, I am a bit shocked by her confirmation that I am pregnant. "Power that no longer belongs to you."

I startle at her words. "What do you mean?" I ask. I'm a Witch. My power is mine by blood, by right of who and what I

am.

“Oh, so much potential. You’ve only begun to feel the power living inside you. It’s a shame.” She paces then stops. “Yes, the choice,” she says as if someone is talking to her and reminding her to stay on track.

“Come back to us, Esmeralda Blue. Become the High Priestess you were always destined to be. I can remove your bonds and the child. You would be bound no more. Serve me and the Coven with all of your powers intact.” She offers up the alternative like I would fall at her feet and thank her. There is no way I would give up my baby, Sam, or Micah. I mean, the baby is a new revelation, but I’ve been abandoned and left alone in this world. I know my mother didn’t have the option to stay or go, but I would never do that to my own child.

She waits expectantly, but when I don’t answer, I watch her face harden slightly before her smooth calm mask falls back in place. “Or return to your bonds, raise your child with your Mate, but you will do it powerless. I will strip you of your greatest gift, your sight. Your healing and Elemental magic are mundane at best. You will still be a Witch but a Blue Mountain Seer no longer,” she says matter-of-factly, but her words feel more like a slap in the face. This is not a choice. This is a punishment. The rage I’ve felt for months bubbles up inside of me, hot and potent.

“Why?” I shout. “That’s hardly a choice at all. You take the one thing that makes me, me. Cleaving a piece of me away because I won’t serve you. I didn’t ask to be thrown out. I didn’t ask for any of this.”

“You should be grateful. I’ve given you a chance to make the right decision. You will serve me or lose it all. Return to your war, because make no mistake, it’s coming right to your precious Nephilim’s doorstep as we speak.” My heart rate spikes at the thought of Michael attacking Micah again and I beat against the barriers.

“Please, just let me out,” I beg as tears spill from my eyes unchecked. I know she won’t let me leave until I choose. The decision should be easy, but I am no help to anyone without

my Seer abilities. Would I lose Micah because of my weakness? Sam? I don't know the answers, but I know one thing for sure, Sam or no Sam, I am not losing this baby.

“My time is precious, Esmeralda. Your time—”

“Take it,” I say evenly. She steps back as if I've struck her, stunned by my answer. “Take it all and I will never return. I might be mundane, but I am surrounded by extraordinary people that will take me as I am,” I say confidently, as soon as the words leave my mouth, I know it is my truth.

“Then you will die, Esmeralda, and so will they. I see no future for you if you leave here,” she says with finality.

“Then so be it. I will die with the people that mean the most to me in this world.” I hold my head up high as she shrugs and snaps her fingers. A sharp pain takes hold, stabbing, clawing at my brain with such severity, I'm blinded by it. I fall to the ground and scream until my ears ring. I taste blood as I strip my vocal cords. This is Ourea, she is taking my power, taking the very essence of me. The pain feels like death is imminent as the ground gives way, and I am falling through a black abyss, or is it that I am still blind? I cry out, arms flailing as I plunge to my death. She is going to kill me after all. I don't know how long or how far I've fallen until my body crashes down to the ground with a loud thump.

Pain erupts all over my body as I lay there broken, blind, and powerless. I let darkness claim me and hope that wherever I am, that the people I love the most will find me.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

## MICAH



“Rook!” I shout in panic.

“Mi!” my brother shouts my name impatiently. I cut him a glare, narrowing my eyes. I know I have been nothing but demanding for the past few hours, but they won’t let me go after Esme.

“Meus amor, we’ve gone over this. There’s no way we can get into the Blue Mountains without invitation.” Lyrik sighs in frustration as he snatches his flat cap off his head and pinches the bridge of his nose. My poor Mate has been frantically working with the other professors to finally get the wards in place. He looks exhausted and possibly needs to feed.

We’re all in my living room in my tiny house in the Quads, so in two strides I am in front of him, wrapping my arms around his waist.

“Lyrik, are you okay?” I ask knowingly, searching his eyes carefully. In the past few weeks I have learned to watch for signs. His irritation is usually the beginning of his hunger taking hold. Lyrik runs his hands up and down my arms, then pulls me closer and leans into me.

“I’m fine for now,” he whispers, keeping our exchange private. “But I can smell him on you, and I am feeling a little possessive.” His voice deepens and I instinctively clench my thighs together. I am not one to blush but damn I can’t help it. Flashes of Rodyn and I earlier, my legs wrapped around his waist, the delicious stretch of my pussy walls as he claimed me, and the feel of the hot spring on my skin invade my mind.

But then guilt takes hold of me, and I step away from Lyrik. He lets me go sensing my emotions. I was off fucking and Esme was kidnapped. I didn't even feel her distress because I was so consumed with Rodyn. Do I regret it? No, the moment between us was destined to happen, it needed to happen.

I turn as Rook appears right in front of me. I don't even startle, I am so used to him popping in and out. He takes one look at me and opens his arm wide, and I go willingly. I melt into his embrace. Hugging any of my bonded is like coming home, but Rook is peace and safety all wrapped in one.

"You rang, baby girl?" he asks, injecting humor into his voice as he strokes my back. I lean away and gaze up at him. I don't even need to ask the question burning on the tip of my tongue before he answers.

"I have tried. I've gotten as close as the village at the base of the mountains. The Warlocks there keep to themselves according to what Professor Adder told Lyrik. Even they can't wander up without permission. Any attempts to go any further up the mountain is blocked to me," he says as he pulls me closer and tucks my head under his chin.

"I'll keep trying to find any point of weakness—"

"No. Professor Adder is right. We have to wait and see if she returns on her own. But what if she doesn't? Rodyn, Ty, and Trys are out there trying to find Sam. Michael could make his next move at any moment. I feel pulled in so many directions. What if this High Priestess is hurting her? Professor Adder said she would want Esme's power. What does that even mean?" I sigh.

"I feel helpless and I hate it. What the point of having all this power inside of me yet I am powerless." I pull away from Rook and cross over to my couch and sit down next to Marcus, who immediately pulls me in for a hug.

"It's going to be okay. We are going to get her back," he says with conviction, and for a moment, I let my thoughts drift to my mother. Was she still alive? Would we be able to save her too?

“I think it would help everyone’s nerves if we kept ourselves busy,” Lyrik says as he pulls his pocket watch from his maroon vest. The intricate gold timepiece looks old but well cared for. He flips it open and sighs. “It’s getting late. Although there’s nothing out there to harm anyone now that Lucretia’s gone, we should pair up and patrol the grounds. I’m going to check on the few students we do have in our care. Then I will talk with Professor Maverick in regards to checking the stability of the new wards,” he says closing his watch and sliding it back into his pocket.

“I will go back to the village and keep trying for you, baby. Maybe they will let her go and she will come down to the village. If so, I can whisk her away and bring her back here. If you need me, you know what to do.” He blows me a kiss and gives me that damn panty melting smile before he blinks out of the room.

“Come here, Micah.” Lyrik holds out his hand to me and I extricate myself from Marcus’s arms and stand. I close the distance between us but instead of reaching for my hand, he takes my face between his hands and kisses me tenderly. Marcus makes a gagging noise that makes Lyrik smile against my lips.

“You, my darling, will not go out tonight. Promise me,” he says as he holds my head in place, his voice brooking no room for argument.

“I need—”

“No,” he cuts me off. “If Esme does return, and I have faith that she will, she will need you here. We don’t know what state she will be in,” he says with concern in his eyes. I know he’s right, but I hate sitting around and waiting. I’m a woman of action.

“Okay. I promise. Although, I don’t like it,” I reply with a huff.

“I didn’t think you would. But don’t worry, I know exactly who you need to distract you tonight.” He smirks and kisses my lips once more before he slips out of my reach and begins to dissipate.

“Wait, Lyrik. Who?” I call out as he goes. One day soon, I won’t have to worry about them tag teaming in and out of my presence.

“A surprise.” He singsongs. Two words is all I get from the handsome Incubus before he’s gone.

Marcus chuckles and I turn to look at him.

“What?” I say in my stern big sister voice, placing my hands on my hips.

“How do you it? This?” He waves his hands around in a circle, doing a bad charade rendition of juggling and I catch on to what he’s asking.

I tilt my head and think before replying, “I’m still learning. It’s definitely not a cohesive group, they are all different. If they had a choice, they wouldn’t share. Well, Ty and Trys, maybe even Rodyn but Lyrik and Rook not so much. Esme has Sam now so she and I will eventually grow to be besties, I hope.” I shrug. “But I can’t choose between them. I don’t think the bonds and Tethers between us would allow me. I love them all equally.” He rolls his eyes and I laugh. “I do!” I flop down beside him on the couch and sigh.

“Now sex though, my lady parts—”

“No!” Marcus shouts. “I never, never ever, want to hear about your lady parts, ever.” He puts his hands over his ears.

“Well, you asked how I do this? You’re my bestie, we’re supposed to share,” I reply, laughing as he starts to make noises to tune me out.

“Well, I take back my question. I don’t want to know. You just juggle away,” he says as he throws up his hands in surrender.

I lift my eyebrows suggestively. “I can juggle a few things at a time, just fine.”

“Mi!” he shouts, then groans in disgust.

I throw my head back and laugh because damn, I really needed that.



## *Chapter Nineteen*



It's too quiet. There are no screams, no thundering of feet on the pavement, no sense of terror in the air. Part of me, the Demonic side, needed that fear, it needed the panicked cries when I participated in the hunt. Not the innocents though, never them. I never lent a hand to help them personally, so maybe that made me complicit, but every student here knew the score.

No, my bloodlust simmered for the big baddies my mother unleashed on the campus at night. But now, there is just silence. The silence is so unfamiliar it's disorienting. There isn't anything in the woods to fear. Well, there is a Wolf with a broken heart out there, and hell, I know that feeling all too well. When we thought Micah—

No. I don't want to think about the time spent in the Underworld before Micah woke. The darkness inside of me was unbearable, but now, I finally feel in control. But tonight, though, is eerily quiet, it has me on high alert. I almost snort, which is definitely out of character for me. I can't believe I thought something was eerie. I live and breathe for the darkness, I have seen death in all its forms, I am not afraid of anything. Yet tonight, something feels off, and I'm on high alert. Our lives these days seem to hang in the balance on a daily, but now that we are back up top, I'm waiting for that ugly ass shoe to drop right into my kitten's lap so I can burn that motherfucker.

A twig snaps and my head turns towards the noise. All I can see is Marcus's shadow in the moonlight as we patrol the

woods together. Micah's brother is quiet, observant, and a damn good fighter, so being out here with him is almost like having Trys or Rodyn watching my six. Almost.

"You good?" I call out to him. If it wasn't for the snap of the twig, I wouldn't have heard him moving beside me. The ex-Light Guardian is all stealth, moving like a ninja through the trees, I guess you need those attributes to sneak up on the bad guys. Marcus pauses then walks towards me, stepping onto the path out of the trees. The lamps that run along the path glow softly as we continue down the path side by side.

"Is it me or does something feel off tonight? I mean, this is my first night here, but is it always this quiet? Wait, I know that wasn't always the case as Lyrik said there isn't anything bad out here, but it feels—"

"Yeah, it does. I feel it too," I reply, so it's not just me then. Now I really begin to look into the shadows, waiting for something, anything, to jump out at us.

"I'm glad. I'm so used to my tattoos warning me before anything bad happens, but without that, it's going to take some getting used to trusting my gut," he says as he reaches for the sword strapped to his back, exactly like his sister does. He is a male version of Micah; he may as well be her twin. Twinning. I liked him.

My phone pings as Marcus walks on aimlessly but alert all the same. He stops and turns back to wait. "No need, I'll catch up," I say waving him off. No need to stop patrolling for a phone call. I know these woods, I can find him with my eyes closed. I look down at my phone and I smirk.

"Is the big bad Rodyn Larrieux afraid of the dark?" I chuckle, I can be snarky when I want to be.

"So, it's not just me then?" Rodyn replies as Lyrik's deep laugh booms through the phone. "The Incubus thinks I'm paranoid but it's creepy as fuck out here tonight."

"We are used to the carnage the night brings. It's going to take some getting used to," I say, trying to convince him and

myself that this is just a case of strangeness, a reaction to the new normal.

“Well, there is nothing going on here. Lyrik thinks we should give it another hour and call it. I don’t see why we can’t just call it now,” he says with annoyance. I am sure he is rolling his eyes at our fearless Deputy Headmaster.

“You eager to get back to Micah?” I ask knowingly. I knew it the moment I saw the two of them together earlier. Micah is practically spilling magic, there is so much of it. I just hope it’s enough.

“Yes. I won’t deny it,” he says it so easily that he brings a smile to my face. Me, a smile. It is a new day, I mean night, for Ty Larrieux.

“Well, get in line. That’s only if Trys hasn’t fucked her unconscious. How he got the short stick is beyond me. How did he get distraction duty?” I mutter bitterly, walking along the path. Marcus is still in sight, but I’m enjoying the night and the easy conversation with my brother. Another real first for the both of us.

“Well, knowing Trys, he probably has her up on the roof,” Rodyn replies, I can almost see him face palming himself.

“Popcorn.” I chuckle. My stomach grumbles at the mention of food.

“I’ll see you back at the house,” Rodyn says after a minute. “The task master wants to check The Pavilion and the ruins of West Tower.”

“Yep,” I reply before the call goes dead. I slide my phone back in my pocket and call for my knife. The spinning of the blade in my hand is relaxing as I continue to check the trees, wondering if I should find Sam and bring him back to the house.

“Ah...Ty!” Marcus shouts up ahead. He turns and starts running back to me. “Oh fuck, look up!”

My head snaps up as something comes barreling towards the ground. I’m running, knife at the ready as I try to

determine what it could be. Micah got all the Gargoyles so it can't be?

Gravity is a bitch. Whatever it is hits the ground a few feet away from us. I can hear the crunch, crack, and snap of bones. I come to a halt before I trample over—

“What the fuck!” I shout, looking up into the sky for the offender just in case they decide to join us on the ground. But the night is quiet again as I fall to my knees. Lamplight shines down on ice white hair-tinged pink as blood flows freely from a cut on her head. Her legs are twisted awkwardly as well as both her arms. Her breathing is shallow and rapid as she lies there, unconscious, bleeding, and broken.

Esme.

“Esme!” Marcus shouts as he falls to his knee beside me. “Who did this to her? Did her Coven do this?” he asks as if I have all the answers. I don't know how to reply to that. One, I have no clue, and two, why the hell would she be falling from the sky like she's fallen from grace?

“I don't know, but we need to get her to the hospital. I need you to call your sister and see if you can find—”

A Wolf bays in the distance as I gently scoop Esme into my arms, careful not to jostle her. “Never mind, Sam is coming. Get Micah,” I say in a rush. Marcus takes off so fast I'm not so sure if he lost all of his Light Guardian powers after all.

I hold Esme to my chest. I don't think I've ever said a prayer in my life, but I try.

I pray she survives.

“Hang on, little witch. I got you,” I say gently as I let my power take hold, hoping Ms. Bertha and Ms. Margaret can work a miracle with their magic. I can almost feel her life slipping away.

## *Chapter Twenty*

## TRYS



“Oh... Oh...my God...Trys. Please!” My beautiful sunshine begs so prettily. I want to give in and give her what she wants most, but where’s the fun in that? I lean over her naked, bound body, and kiss her lips, she lifts her head, turning left then right. The black satin blindfold keeps me hidden as she searches for my mouth. I had one job tonight, and I am taking one for the entire team. Not that it’s a hardship, my dick is ecstatic, I’m ecstatic, we are both having a fucking blast. Well, Micah might beg to differ, but a little pleasure, pain, and then more glorious pleasure goes hand in hand. Lyrik wants me to keep Micah distracted, and I said aye aye, Captain Incubus Headmaster, sir!

“Now, sunshine. One kiss. I promised one kiss if you took your distraction like a good girl,” I croon as I turn the switch up on the bright yellow vibrator and go to work. But first, I stop and admire her body spread out before me, she is a feast for the eyes, and my cock is screaming, “My turn”, but we both came to an agreement that this isn’t about us. It’s about our sunshine and how long we can edge her before she reaches oblivion. Only then will she be able to cum. I want that pussy drenching my sheets. I want her legs shaking, back arching, chest heaving, and sobs of relief by the time I finish.

“Trys, please,” she begs again as I take the vibrator and tease her pussy lips, running it up and down her folds, then bam, I hit her clit and hold it there and she howls.

“Fuuccck!! Oh shit! Oh shit!!” she chants as her hips buck off the bed. “Don’t stop, please! Don’t you dare fucking stop!”

she shouts as I count to five in my head, her breath hitches and I remove all stimulation.

“Oh, mother of moons, Trys, I am going to murder you. I mean it. I am going to use my knife and cut off your dick. I want to cum. How long have we been doing this? Mercy. Show me, mercy!” she pleads and cries, pulling against the straps, arms over her head lifting her breasts in the air. De-fucking-licious.

Tempting, so tempting. Nope. Not yet. I lift up from my seated position to kneel on my knees and switch off the vibrator. My sunshine stills, chest heaving, trying to figure out where I am and what I’m doing, but I am a master. Everything I need is within my reach. This is me in pleasure mode. Trys in torture mode is another animal, but I would never release that beast on my sunshine. I don’t think we need the dungeon anymore. I control my darkness; it doesn’t control me. I’ll give old Luc Luc some credit, a bit of blood made it all better.

Focus, Trys. I grab what I need and crawl over her body. I make sure I’m close enough for her to feel my body heat, giving her pure sensory overload. I want to laugh, I bet that brilliant mind of hers is thinking, “He’s about to give me the D.” Oh, sunshine. How wrong you are. I drop my head and flick her nipple with the tip of my tongue, and her body jerks in surprise. I give her nipple some love, licking and sucking it tenderly, building up the sensation slowly as she sighs in relief.

“Yes,” my gorgeous bright ray of light says breathlessly. I turn my attention to the hardened peak of her nipple’s twin and pay it the same regard.

“Trys, oh please. I need you. Kiss me, anything,” she begs again, and I concede, I give her a kiss. Latching onto her bottom lip, I suck it between my teeth, biting down gently. Sunshine, moans in relief, practically melting into the kiss. I almost give in, but I reward myself for staying strong by devouring her mouth until she is arching and raising her hips, trying and failing to seek the friction she needs to unleash her soul. I pull away, giving her nipples one last chaste kiss, then snap the nipple clamps in place simultaneously.



“Holy shit!” she screams from the pain, her head thrashes, making her breasts sway and the clamps send painful pleasure with each movement. I almost feel bad, but then I think of the reward.

“Shhh...Shhh...sunshine.” I stroke the underside of her breast. “You are doing so good, baby. I am going to reward the fuck out of you. If you could see what I see. You’re perfection,” I say as I open-mouth kiss her down to her stomach and pelvis.

“I have one more surprise, and I promise, I promise you, you can cum. Do you think you can take some more for me?” My sunshine whimpers, her lips are quivering but she nods her head.

“No...no, sunshine. I need words. Do you want me to stop, or can you take some more?” I ask as I pop the cap of the lube and grab the pretty pink, glass butt plug.

“Yes, yes, Trys,” she finally replies as she gets used to the nipple clamps and begins to calm. I can’t have that. Calm means thinking, and thinking means worrying, and that just won’t do. I squirt lube onto my finger and gently probe her ass. She sucks in a sharp breath, but I kiss her knee in reassurance.

“I got you, sunshine, let me in. You’re going to feel so good...so good,” I say as I push my finger in slowly, working it in and out, stretching her. She groans in satisfaction, raising her hips, needing more.

“Good girl, sunshine,” I praise her as I slip my finger out to her dismay only to replace with the corkscrew bulb of the butt plug. I push it in slowly, watching the plug twist and disappear inside her. My sunshine groans, moans and mewls for me until she takes it all. I’m so hard right now, I’m going to explode. But this is not about me...nope, this is for her.

“Trys. So much...so much...I need...please,” she’s begging, tears rolling down her face from underneath her blindfold. So beautiful...so very distracted.

“Okay, sunshine, I’m going to make it all better. My greedy girl needs to cum, and I am so proud of you.”

I lay between her spread legs and my mouth waters as I take in her gushing pussy. I plant a kiss on her clit and her hips buck. I hold her hips down and lean in to make out with my favorite set of lips. I suck, bite and lap at her clit until the bed shakes. The clinking of the buckles of her bindings sounds like music to my ears as she screams incoherently. I eat her pussy like—

“Oh God!” she screams, body jerking like a woman possessed.

That’s right, baby. What she said, like a God. I pull her clit between my lips and suck, once, twice, thrice and my sunshine supernovas all over my face. She cums, and she cums hard.

“Trys! Trys! Trys!” she chants my name, and the crowd goes wild. I reach for the vibrator and flick it back on and push it into her eager pussy. Now the fun can truly begin.

“Give me one more, sunshine,” I say as I watch her pussy swallow the vibrator over and over again. I feel like a maestro conducting an orchestra, pushing the butt plug in and out, working the vibrator, and licking and sucking her clit, sending my sunshine into overdrive.

“Trys, please!” she cries out, “I can’t!”

“You can. Cum, sunshine, cum now,” I command, and she shatters, sobbing, shaking, writhing as she orgasms once more. I sit back on my haunches and quickly release her leg bindings as she continues to cum. I lean over her to remove the nipple clamps gently, then release her arms, and snatch off her blindfold. I scoop her up in my arms, mindful of the butt plug and hold her close. I kiss her hard, savoring the taste of her tears as she breaks down, purging all the pent-up emotions she’s been holding onto for weeks. This is what she needed, and she didn’t even know it. I let her fall apart in my arms and rebuild her with my touch, my soft kisses, praising her the entire time.

“Let it go, sunshine. Let it go and be free, baby. When you fall, I’ll fall right along with you. When you fly, we fly together. Everything is going to be alright because you have us, we have each other.” I kiss her lips as I slowly remove the plug and toss it on the bed. She clings to me, fisting my shirt as she cries into my chest.

After a few minutes, Micah finally opens her watery eyes and strokes my face. “I love you, Trys. You and all your crazy. I love you so much.” She leans up and kisses my lips. If I could pat myself on the back, I would. I mean, I should receive the Academy Award for best bond in the group.

“I love you too, sunshine. Always.” I press my forehead against hers. “Nothing brings me more pleasure than waking up knowing I get to love you and fall more in love you with you every day.”

I wipe away her tears and stand with her in my arms, her body is exhausted and limp as I walk her to the shower.

“Do you know what we need?” I ask conspiratorially, arching my eyebrow.

Micah rolls her eyes. “I’m afraid to answer,” she whispers.

“Popcorn and rooftop stargazing,” I say as her eyes light up in excitement.

“Oh, that sounds like a plan.” She smiles. Yep, worth it.



I lean back on my elbows with my girl beside me as we stare out into the quiet night around us. It’s strange not watching people run for their lives from up high. But there is peace in the silence. Both of us are sharing popcorn with our matching narwhal slippers. Twinning. I mean, I am killing this distraction thing.

“You can see my house from here.” She nudges me and points. I smile remembering our first date. Yep, the day I fell

in love.

“Stalking since day one,” I say proudly as she leans back and looks up at the sky with me.

Sunshine stays quiet for too long, I can almost hear the wheels turning inside her head.

“Sunshine, do I need to take you back downstairs?” I turn my head towards her, memorizing the outline of her face and the sparkle of her ember eyes. “I know you’re worried. I wish like hell I could walk up that mountain and bring her back to us. I wish we didn’t have to go into battle with Light Guardian robots. What I hate the most is that the weight falls on your shoulders and I feel helpless because I can’t fix this for you,” I say seriously, putting aside my humorous self for some real talk.

“I know. But we will do this together, no matter what happens.” She turns to face me and cups my chin and I lean into her touch.

“Ride or die, sunshine, ride or die,” I say those words with meaning because I will tear this world apart for her. We fall into an easy silence as we watch the sky, occasionally calling out constellations. All my nerd knowledge is finally paying off.

My sunshine yawns and I fall prey to the contagion as well. I’m about to suggest we snuggle up together and wait for Ty to get home, when a shadow streaks across the sky like an ominous comet of doom. We both sit up at the same time, watching whatever it is crash to the ground in the middle of Willow woods.

“That isn’t a Gargoyle, right?” Micah asks, her eyes widening in alarm.

“You killed them all,” I say matter-of-factly. “Plus, I didn’t see any wings. Did you?”

Sunshine shakes her head no as a Wolf bays long and loud, a howl filled with pain and sorrow. Oh, Sammie boy.

I grab Micah’s hand and we vanish to materialize inside our room as my instincts kick in. I can feel my other half’s

panic and don't waste another minute. "Get your shoes, sunshine. That was Sam," I say to her as her phone begins to buzz.

"Put it on speaker," I say as I shove my boots on as quickly as I can. Something is wrong.

Micah nods and answers. "Marcus, what's—"

"Ty took Esme to the hospital. He says to meet him there. I'm running there now. She fell out of the sky, Mi. She just fell," Marcus says in a rush before the phone goes dead.

"Esme," Micah gasps. "I can feel it all. So much pain." She rubs her chest as her knees buckle.

I don't say a word as I catch her, wrapping her in my arms and I whisk us away to Lux Hall.

## *Chapter Twenty-One*

BRYELLE



I step out of the glittery blue portal with a box held in my hands. I feel like I'm dreaming. The kind of dream where you have no control. Like an out of body experience where someone else picks and chooses your moves, what doors you walk through and the paths you take. I'm just a passenger as I put one foot in front of the other. I move quietly through the trees undetected and I come to a halt as I reach a path. I try to resist, but there is no use as I turn toward a towering building at the end of the pavement. I crawl deeper into the recesses of my mind and weep over my lack of control. What I hold in my hands is not a peace offering, but a bomb. Michael wants his war, and he will get it.

What did he make me do? What have I done?

*"You will do this, Bryelle. You belong to me. You are my soldier. Deliver my message and my gift to the Nephilim and your reward will be plentiful." Michael towers over me as he looks down his nose at me. His smile is serene with an evil glint in his cold, blue eyes.*

*He reaches out and strokes my face affectionately, yet I want to recoil away. My feet are spread apart, chest out, chin up with my hands clasped behind my back like a good, robotic soldier.*

*"I need a new General now that your boyfriend is gone. You will be exquisite. Powerful and strong. Only the best will fight at my side," he says as he grips my chin and leans forward to kiss my lips. I want to scream and rage but I just*

*stand there stoically, trapped mentally within impenetrable walls watching on in horror.*

*“Open for me, Bryelle. Accept my kiss,” he purrs softly. Grip tightening to the point of pain. I can’t cry or react. Instead, my lips part and his tongue slips into my mouth as he takes what he wants from me.*

*This is not right. He’s an Archangel, our protector, and his behavior makes my heart break and belief shatter to pieces. How can God allow this flagrant abuse of power? Our will is not our own. This is the ultimate violation.*

*A muffled scream and the rattling of chains interrupts the kiss, and although I know she will be punished, I am grateful. Michael pulls away from me and turns abruptly to face his captive.*

*“I’ve tired of you, Verity. You’re such a waste and a disappointment,” he says as he brushes his hands down his cream linen suit jacket. “But I have one more thing I need from you. Then, and only then, will I allow you to die. Or should I bring her head to you first?” He taps his finger to his lips as if he is thinking about a decision he’s already made. “Yes, I will bring you both their heads.” Verity grunts but her body no longer has the strength to fight him as she hangs from the chains against the wall.*

*“Bryelle, come here,” he commands with a snap of his fingers and I am nothing more than a slave as my feet move my body across the room.*

*“Good girl,” he says as I reach his side. Headmistress Jones looks at me with tears in her eyes and I want to mirror her sentiment. I am so fucking sad, if I’m ever free of this nightmare I will never be whole again.*

*“Take her hand. Use your dagger and make it slow. I want her to feel it. I want her to remember how she violated her body and offered it up to my brother, Azrael, over and over again.” He turns his back to us as I slide my dagger from the sheath at my waist. “I hope he was worth it,” he says as he leaves the room, leaving me to maim Marcus’s mother.*



*Verity sobs, tears spilling down her cheeks. I feel so ashamed of my weakness as I begin to cut into tendons, veins, then bones. The screams, oh God, the screams. I will remember the screams and the blood that splatters my face.*

*It will haunt me forever.*

*What have I done?*

*He made me do it.*

*But it was my hand, my dagger, me.*

I stand at the foot of the steps of the massive, black gothic building. The epicenter of HellNight Academy, and watch Marcus sprint up the steps, but he falters, sensing my presence, he turns. I want to call out to him, to run into his arms, but I just stand there silently with the box in my hands.

“Oh God, Bryelle, not you. Please, not you.” His voice is thick with emotion as he makes his way down the steps tentatively. He glances around on high alert, expecting more of us to step out of the trees. There is no one else here but me. I am the messenger.

“Mar-cus,” I force his name out of my mouth, the sound of my voice is foreign to my ears. I would give anything to say more but Michael only allowed me one word.

“Marcus, I am glad it is you who will receive my gift. Fitting, actually. It is fate that you are here in front of the woman I chose for you. The same woman I have now claimed for myself,” Michael speaks through me, and I want to crumble at the look of devastation on Marcus’s face. We never stood a chance. I thought he was dead. Michael called him a failure and I took his punishment.

“I have no will, Marcus,” I want to shout, but my voice goes unheard.

“I’m going to kill you, Michael! For what you did to her!” Marcus bellows, pulling his sword from his back as he advances down the steps and points the sword at me.

“Kill me, I’d rather die than face you,” I say with shame and humiliation, my voice only a whisper inside my head.

“Yes, I will welcome you to try. Or are you going to kill her instead?” Michael pushes my limbs forward, making me step closer until my chest touches the tip of Marcus’s outreached sword.

I gaze into his eyes and find nothing but sorrow. I was supposed to be his.

Marcus drops the sword and steps away from me. “I will come for you, Bryelle. Do you hear me? I am coming for you!” There is so much determination in his voice that I almost believe him. But he has no idea what awaits them.

“Touching. But enough of that,” Michael says as he raises my hands and I offer the box to Marcus.

“Tell Micah, I’ll be waiting for her.” Michael steps back and I fall apart as I watch us back away from Marcus. I feel my soul snap in two. Broken. Destroyed.

“Enjoy the gift,” Michael says as he summons a portal and we back away into the shimmering light, leaving Marcus behind.



## MARCUS

I let my anger fuel me as I stand and watch him leave with her. Well, I am going to free her from his grasp. There was so much I wanted to say to her, but I didn’t want him to hear. There will be time for that when I get her back. I couldn’t stop him, not with him connected to her, so I let him take her back to the lion’s den. I close my eyes against my spiraling thoughts, memories of him using me to fuck her makes me sick to my stomach. I sheath my sword and tuck the box under my arm. I’m tempted to open it, but I think it’s better if I open it with Micah present. I turn sharply and begin to walk back up the stairs as Rodyn and Lyrik join me. Both of them have a look of alarm as they rush over to me.

“Did I just see a portal?” Rodyn asks in concern as he stops me from walking. I want to lash out and knock his hand away, but he doesn’t deserve my misplaced aggression.

“He must have gotten in when whatever allowed Miss Blu to come crashing in brought our barriers down,” Lyrik says in frustration. “Inform Micah, I need to check the wards with Professor Star. I will come back as soon as I can,” he says as he becomes a puff of purple smoke, then vanishes out of sight.

Rodyn gives me a once over. I can assume he’s checking me for injuries, and normally I would appreciate the concern, but I don’t know how to quell my anger. I want to take the fight to them now. I want to free everyone now. I don’t want to wait another night. I feel ineffective from my lack of control of the situation. I went from taking charge to standing in the back of the line and waiting my turn.

“What happened?” Rodyn asks finally.

“He used my girl, well, she was my girlfriend, to bring Micah a gift. Then he left. But this is no gift, and you know that just as well as I do.” I indicate the box underneath my arm as Rodyn uses a key, an Anchor key is what they call it to open the door. Here I was thinking I could walk into the building. I would have been trapped outside until they arrived if Bryelle hadn’t showed up. I can’t think about how strange this place is with my brain elsewhere.

“Yeah, that’s no gift. If anything, it’s meant to make Micah react. So, for both of your sakes whatever is in that box we need to think rationally about. We are not ready to go marching on Caelum Academy in the middle of the night without back up. I know what you’re feeling, you want to protect her, but you’re no good to her if you’re dead. Think about it,” Rodyn says patiently as I follow him through darkened corridors under construction from the destruction the Light Guardians brought to their doors. We climb up three flights of stairs in a blur as I let his words turn over in my head. My body is on autopilot as Rodyn turns a corner and walks us up to large, glass double doors at the end of the hall. With all the rushing around inside, I can only assume this is the hospital.

“Are you ready for this?” Rodyn says, pointing to the box and then facing the chaos of the room before us.

“No. Are any of us ready for any of this?” I counter as I wave my free arm around in a circle, hoping he understands what I mean by the action. By the nod he’s giving me, he gets it.

“Nope, but if I’ve learned anything from the past few weeks, we don’t control shit. We are all going through the motions and hoping for the best. So, I am hoping for the best in all regards.” He reaches out and pats me on the shoulder. This is not the same angry Warlock I met weeks ago. But I guess clearing the air with my sister helped him to get there. Oh yes, and drinking the Devil’s blood. I mean, you can’t make this shit up. This is our lives.

Rodyn opens the door and I follow him in with the box under my arm, feeling like it weighs a ton. Whatever I am holding is a catalyst, the beginning and the end of a battle that started a millennia ago. It is up to us to finish it. No, Rodyn is right, we aren’t prepared tonight, but we have my sister, and she is enough.

## *Chapter Twenty-Two*

## MICAH



I can't contain my rage any longer. I'm a boiling pot ready to explode. My hands shake, my blood feels like it's on fire as I pace the hallway outside Esme's room. I can't take any more hurt. I've reached my limit and I am tired. I am tired of the people I love the most being dangled on a string, their lives held in the balance because of who and what I am. I want to burn it all down. Maybe God has a point. Blow it up and push reset. There's only so much good one can hold on to, only so much hope, until it all runs out. Well, my well is dry. I want blood. No one knows what happened to Esme but Esme, and she can't tell me. I can't fix this. God, I wish...I wish.

It's a hive of activity all around me as Ms. Bertha, Ms. Margaret, and Professor Adder treat Esme's room like a revolving door. Their faces are lined with concern and worry as they try everything within their power to help Esme. None of them has said a word to us as they converse with each other in private. This has been their routine for the last hour. Still nothing. Sam is the only one inside the room in Wolf form, refusing to shift as he lays at the foot of her bed protectively. I get it. She's his fated Mate, he should be with her. But Sam has the sight, all he needs to do is touch her and get an impression of what happened. Maybe we would know what we were dealing with if he is in there on two legs instead of four. But the stubborn Wolf won't snap out of it.

Ty and Trys sandwich me between them, lending me their comfort and strength, but it's not helping. I need to be actively out there doing something. Anything, because right now, here I am again feeling powerless.

Professor Adder finally comes out of the room and acknowledges us for the first time since he arrived. The poor man looks exhausted and weary as he removes his glasses and rubs his forehead. “Miss Jones, let’s move this conversation up to the nurse’s station please.” He turns and leaves, giving me no room to argue about leaving this spot. Okay, fine. We follow him down the hall, past the medical bays until we reach the front of the nurse’s station.

He turns and leans against the desk as we approach. “What’s going on, Professor? Is she going to be okay?” I ask with a bit too much irritation in my voice. I can feel the heat of Ty and Trys behind me and I give myself a moment to breathe and release. It is not his fault, I remind myself, he doesn’t deserve my ire.

He sighs. “To get straight to the point. Esme is not healing. Ty and Trys can contest to her skill there is no greater healer than Nurse Bertha, and she has given Esme everything. I’m not sure if you know it or if she shared this information with you, but I was born in the Blue Mountains. The Coven doesn’t covet their male offspring like they do the female. The Blue Mountain Witches are a matriarchal Coven, so when males come of age, we are sent packing.” He sighs again. This professor is going to hate me, and I want to say sorry, but my patience is fraying. “From the way you’re looking at me I guess you are wondering why I am telling you this. The Blue Mountain Witches are blessed with their powers by the Goddess Ourea. The Goddess of the Mountain. We worship her via our High Priestess. The High Priestess is always the most powerful Witch in our Coven,” he says as I cross my arms over my chest. I want to yell at the man and tell him to get to the point.

“The little witch didn’t think she had much power. That’s why our mother acquired her,” Ty cuts in, frowning at the mention of his mother. Thank goodness for the break in the conversation though, his voice eases my nerves a bit. “But the day her powers came in, she had a vision about Micah dying \_\_\_”

“Yes, that is when the dam broke, so to speak. I warned Esme, as I told you earlier, that she was holding onto an immense amount of power and the High Priestess would come for her,” Professor Adder continues. “Whether you’re male or female we are all connected to her, because of our psychic abilities, no matter how weak or strong you are. A boost of power like Esme’s wouldn’t go unnoticed.” He looks at us as if we understand what he’s saying, and I lose it.

“No disrespect, professor, please, give me the Cliff’s Notes, tell me what I need to do. I will do it. I just want her to be okay,” I snap at him, shifting from foot to foot as my anxiety takes hold.

He raises his hands in surrender. “I’m sorry, I want you to understand the nature of things, but I will give you the Cliff’s Notes as you requested,” he replies sternly, and now I feel like an asshole.

“Professor Adder, I—”

“No need, Miss Jones, you have a lot on your plate, and I know Miss Blu is your Tether. So, this is what we are looking at. Miss Blu has been stripped of her powers, not all, but what she was left with almost makes her Human. But there’s more, something is blocking her healing, or shall I say our means of healing her. It appears Miss Blu is a mystery, whatever is blocking her is Supernatural.”

“What do you mean?” Ty and Trys ask at the same time.

“I honestly don’t know. Nurse Bertha and Nurse Margaret are still back there working on her. But it does make me question her parentage. Esme’s mother, Cashira, was a powerful seer, but little is known about her father, he is apparently Human, which went against Coven law. But something tells me there is more to the story there. No mere half breed would be able to harness that much power. Esme hadn’t even begun to test what she could do. Now, we will never know. On a more personal note, and sensitive in nature, Esme was pregnant, but no longer. Her body is broken from the fall and there is so much damage. I don’t believe there’s anything else we can do for her.



“Baby? She was pregnant? The baby is gone? Is this what she was hiding? What she couldn’t tell me?” My throat clogs and my eyes burn as I fight back tears. Why didn’t she just say something to me.

“It was very early. Nurse Bertha confirms it. Honestly, I don’t think Esme had any idea,” he says reassuringly, but I am not reassured by the fact. Someone hurt her, and an innocent child. It doesn’t matter how early it was, the baby was hers and Sam’s.

“Fuck,” Trys mutters and bows his head. I reach out and hold his hand, more for my own benefit than his. I don’t know how I feel about children but if it happened with either one of my guys, I would cherish him or her because they are a piece of us. I hurt for her because her baby would have been our baby.

Professor Adder clears his throat, and I focus my attention his way. “But as I was trying to say in a roundabout way, I don’t feel our High Priestess.” He points to his chest and continues. “Whatever happened on the mountain, it involved her. No one has the power to strip you of your magic except the Goddess herself, because as I mentioned, she blesses us with said magic. I almost don’t want to believe it but if the High Priestess died for whatever reason, then Esme would have been next in line. So, putting two and two together, I think Esme might have turned Ourea down to become the next High Priestess. I am going to go out on a limb here and assume she turned the role down, that she chose her bonds, you and Mr. Baker. You have to understand an entity as old as that is not used to being told no. But these are just my assumptions. I am not sure if Miss Blu will ever wake up to tell us the truth of it. As far as Mr. Baker’s concerned, we think his Wolf is sensing her body is failing and he’s already grieving his Mate.”

I feel like the wind has been knocked out of me as Trys wraps his arms around my waist to hold me up. I asked for the professor to give it to me straight, but I wasn’t expecting this. I close my eyes. Come on, Esme...be there...I search for her thread, sifting through the rainbow of colors tying me to them

all, and I finally find it, flickering in and out. The connection is faint, but it's there. I gasp in relief to find it but my heart aches. I can't lose her too, and somehow this all feels like it's my fault. I should have never come here.

"Don't do that, kitten. Don't you dare blame yourself," Ty says to me. I try to hold onto that fact with all that I am because it is so easy to slip into despair. I didn't do this. I didn't do any of this. I'm tired of the higher ups using us as game pieces for their amusement. We are not toys to be played with, we are flesh and blood who deserve to live our lives without manipulation.

"Can I see her?" I ask Professor Adder.

"Of course, you should," he says solemnly. "I'm really sorry. Miss Blu is one of my favorite students and I wish I could help her further."

"What if I can help her? She's my Tether, maybe I can heal her," I say with determination because I have to try. I'm not going to let her die, not on my watch.

Professor Adder opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted as the doors swing open. "Micah!" Marcus shouts my name as he enters through the doors with Rodyn behind him. I stare at my brother, his eyes are wild, his jaw is clenched, his shoulders raised in high alert. Something is wrong.

"Marcus, what happened?" I ask, looking at him and then Rodyn as they approach.

"Michael got in," Marcus replies, and I'm halfway out the door before Rodyn catches me.

"Hold on, Micah. There's more." He pulls me away from the door and back to my brother. I moved instinctively, without even thinking about there being more.

"How did he get in?" I pause. "Wait, it wasn't him, if it was, he would have come for me," I say as I think it through.

"Lyrik thinks that whatever pushed Esme past the barriers gave him enough time to slip in and out. Mi, he sent Bryelle,"

Marcus announces, his face unreadable as he tries to control his anger.

“What did he say?” I ask tentatively, stepping toward my brother slowly as he tenses then brings forward a box he is holding by his side. I didn’t notice he was carrying it.

“He sent you a gift, but, Micah, maybe we should—”

“Give it to me.” I hold out my hands and a sense of foreboding makes my stomach queasy. I know this is nothing good. Maybe Marcus is right to say I shouldn’t open it, but I’m not afraid. Marcus hands me the box slowly, as if it will blow up at any moment. I can almost feel the proverbial clock ticking.

The white box has a black satin bow neatly tied in place. It isn’t a big box, I don’t anticipate something vicious jumping out at us, so I quickly pull it. The lid pops open as if there is a hinge or spring mechanism attached. I gag as the smell assaults me first. Covering my mouth and nose with my hand, I peer inside. I grimace in recognition as all the snacking Trys and I did tonight threatens to show itself on the hospital floor.

I take a deep breath. “No,” I say as I drop the box and turn away to put some space between me and it.

“What’s in the box, Mi? What’s in the box?” Marcus asks, but I can’t reply. A few seconds later I hear him retching behind me.

“What the fuck?!” Rodyn shouts.

I can hear my brother yelling in anger, but it all becomes background noise. I knew the minute I saw the wedding ring. Michael sent me my mother’s hand. We might not be on the best of terms; I may have wanted her to suffer, I was angry and hurt by her actions. Both God and my dad told me on the day of his memorial, she is a victim of Michael’s, just like the other Guardians. Yes, I want to know why she thought my death was better than me living my life. I want to demand answers, but she doesn’t deserve this. Torture, maiming, mutilation. What else has he done to her? If Bishop was here,

there would be no talking him down from the retribution he would want to exact.

No, this is between Michael and me. He had my dad killed, and now who knows what state my mother is in. Death might be a mercy if her hand being delivered on a silver platter is any indication of her treatment. He wants to draw me out— he's done it. It's time to end this. He is a tyrant. God's General needs to be knocked down a peg. No, not knocked down. No, this is a good old-fashioned blood for blood. He owes me his life, and I'm coming for payment.

“What are we going to do, Mi? Marcus demands. “He left a note inside. He's going to keep cutting pieces of her off until you surrender yourself.”

I don't reply and I straighten and turn. All of them are watching me warily. If I wasn't so damn sad on the inside, I may have rolled my eyes and told them to stop looking at me as if I am going to fall to pieces. I don't have time for that.

Instead, I focus on the now. “I am going to see Esme and see if I can help her first. Then tomorrow, we take the fight to Michael.” I walk past them all and they let me go. But I don't get far as Ms. Bertha is running down the hallway, wringing her hands nervously.

“Ms. Bertha, what's wrong?” Ty, Trys and Rodyn speak together, the concern in their voices for the woman who took care of them when their crazy ass mother didn't warm my heart.

“They're gone,” she says.

“What do you mean, Bertha?” Professor Adder asks as he takes off in a jog down the hall and I follow.

“Ms. Margaret had a theory a few minutes ago and we tested Miss Blu's blood. Now, I know you all test your blood in Professor Star's class, but she doesn't test for all the species markers. Hence why Miss Jones's was missed.” I stop as we reach the open door of Esme's room to find it empty. I turn my attention to Ms. Bertha.

“What are you saying?” I ask her calmly.

“I’m saying, Miss Jones, that Miss Blu is not just a Blue Mountain Witch,” she says with a warm smile. I promise the triplets melt for this woman as they all gravitate to her side.

“So, my theory is correct,” Professor Adder says excitedly.

“I thought it was a little far-fetched, but the markers don’t lie, and Ms. Margaret has always been a little suspicious since Miss Blu arrived,” Ms. Bertha says conversationally. We all stand there in the hallway watching them talk eagerly, while the rest of us are left in the dark. Again, for the second time tonight.

“Please! Can you tell me where she is? What she is?” I shout as Ms. Bertha gives me some serious stink-eye.

“When her markers indicated she is part Fae, Ms. Margaret took her and Sam immediately to *Vanir*.” Ms. Bertha claps in excitement, looking pleased with their discovery.

“The land of the Fae,” Ty says in awe. “I know Ms. Margaret is Fae, but I never thought that—”

“So that means, our little witch’s father is probably there,” Trys says.

“And they can heal her?” I ask. Because what else is there for me to say. I can still feel her Tethered to me, even with her on another plane of existence. But I didn’t get to say goodbye. Will she return? Or will I be left with a hollow feeling in my chest for the rest of my life?

“Exactly,” Ms. Bertha says proudly.

“Well, it seems fate has decided to put Esme on her own path,” I say as I turn away from them all and walk away from the empty room. I came here for Esme, and she is gone. I’m not okay, but I will be.

“Wait, Mi,” Marcus calls after me and I know he is wondering why I don’t want to know more. Ask more questions. Make demands. He knows me so well because I do want to know more and ask questions. I really do. But I have my own path to walk down, and now Esme has hers.

“I’m going home,” I say, refusing to turn around. I need to be strong. No one will be picking me up off the floor tonight.

I have Light Guardians to liberate, a mother to save, and an Archangel to kill.

## *Chapter Twenty-Three*

## LYRIK



“Do you want to talk about it?” I push her braids away from her forehead and kiss her temple. Micah’s chest heaves, still coming down from her orgasm, my cock still buried inside of her.

“There’s nothing to talk about. I’m fine, Lyrik,” she says, laying her ear against my chest and turning her head away from me. I know she is hurting. I can feel it. We all can. I have no doubt she cares for Esme and that’s why I know this is bothering her. You can’t be Tethered to someone and not be affected by almost losing them to death and then distance, time, and space in one night.

Vanir exists in another realm that runs parallel to our own. Do I believe the little witch will return? Of course. In time. I think learning the truth about the other half of her heritage will set her on a journey of her own.

Tracing my fingers down the side of her body, she sighs and my dick twitches inside of her. It won’t take much to fuck her once more tonight. I can never get enough of her.

Sensing the rise in my desire, she shifts and goes to sit up, but I wrap my arms around her tight, holding her to me. “Lies,” I reply, clicking my tongue. “Talk to me,” I say as she rolls her hips and my cock wakes up, eager and waiting. I hold her tighter with one arm and smack her ass, making her yelp in surprise.

She groans in frustration. “Please, Lyrik. I don’t know what you want me to say. All of you are glancing at me as if



I'm going to break. But I won't break. I won't bend. I am unfucking-broken." I can hear the faux bravado in her voice, and I want to call her out on it, but I don't have the heart to. She needs to feel like she has control over her emotions. I get it. But if you're going to show weakness, expose it to the ones who love you so when you stand in front of your enemies, there will be no doubt about your strength.

"You can break for me, meus amor." I kiss her head again. "I don't think any one of us would hesitate to piece you back together. I love you. They love you. Esme loves you, too." Her breath catches and I feel her shudder. I can feel her tears hitting my chest as I hold her, stroking her back. When she begins to sob, I know this is about more than losing Esme. It's about the loss of her father, the mixed emotions about her mother, and the perils we are about to face in only a few hours. If I could stop her from marching into Caelum Academy, I would, but this is her task. I have to helplessly watch my Mate sacrifice herself for Humanity, and I hate it. Life is fleeting, even for a Demon, anything that breathes can die. Immortality means nothing if you're dead and heartless. I can't lose her; she can't lose me or any one of us. What matters is what we do with right now.

"You know I love you, always."

She tilts her head up to look at me, her ember eyes watery and shining in the darkness. In this moment, she is my sad, savage queen, and I bend to her will, ready to lay my life on the line for her. My true Mate. I've waited a lifetime for her and if this is the last night of my life, then I will go to my eternal sleep with a smile on my face.

"I love you too, Lyrik." She stretches forward and kisses my lips. I moan, needing one more taste of her before dawn. I grab her hips between my hands and deepen our kiss while I grind her on my cock.

"Lyrik," she moans my name, and I flip our bodies to lie on top of her. I gaze down at my beautiful treasure, lifting her leg over my shoulder and leisurely slide my cock in and out of her warmth.

“I need you, Lyrik,” she says, her tears still glistening in her eyes. I snap my hips hard, making her cry out as I lean down and kiss away her tears.

“You have me, meus amor. You have all of me,” I say as my thoughts turn to Miss Blu and the last conversation I had with her in the Underworld.

*“Lyrik, Professor Bodin.” I stop in the hallway outside Micah’s room and turn to see Esme peeking out of her doorway. I forgot the little witch is only across the hall.*

*“Just Lyrik, Esme. We can forgo with the formalities,” I tease. She closes her door behind her with a soft click. It’s early and I need to get back to HellNight for another boring-ass Council meeting.*

*“I...I...I had a vision that woke me. I am glad I caught you. I can’t trouble Micah, you know,” she says hesitantly as I really get a look at her. Esme’s face is the picture of exhaustion, dark circles are under her reddened eyes.*

*“Esme, are you okay? Are you sleeping? I know it’s sometimes hard to acclimatize to the Underworld. Hopefully, it won’t be long before you all can come back home,” I say reassuringly. Lucifer is dragging his feet with the triplets’ Blood Ceremony, and I can only imagine the spectacle he is conjuring up.*

*“Just tired. I have a lot of work to do, to control these turbo powered visions.” She waves it off like it’s nothing, so I make a mental note of bringing it up with Professor Adder.*

*“So, you had a vision?” I ask to get her back on track as I quickly check my pocket watch that’s magically spelled to work down here.*

*“Yes, I keep seeing the same battle over and over again. Somehow, I never see myself there, but I assume I am seeing the vision not through my eyes. But Lyrik, Micah dies. This time, there is no getting back up. There is a moment when Micah falters in the fight, each time she is trying to get to one of you. It’s never someone specific, once it was Rodyn, then Ty, Trys, even Rook. It’s never clear. It only takes a second, but the*

*distraction costs her. Michael takes advantage and stabs her in the heart with his flaming sword. I know I need to study the vision further for loopholes, but I thought if I tell someone else, then there's two of us to watch her back." She smiles and pats my arm. "We have to keep her safe, Lyrik. If she falls, we all fall. If Michael kills her, the sky turns blood red and fire destroys us all." I can see the terror in her eyes as she wraps her arms around her waist.*

*"Thank you for telling me. We will protect her together."*

"Lyrik!" Micah's shout brings me back to the present, back to her. I take my time and make love to her slowly, reverently, letting her essence fill me up for the battle to come.

"Cum for me, meus amor." I reach down and stroke her clit in quick circles, feeling her pussy clamp down as her body stills then erupts.

"I love you, Lyrik." Micah reaches up and our lips collide in a soul shattering kiss as I spill my seed inside of her.

"Always, meus amor."



## ROOK

"What do you mean, he's not helping?" I bite back my anger and pace in front of Bishop's throne. I'm here to deliver Micah's message when all I really want to do is be with her. Tomorrow, we fight, and with Esme gone, we are a woman down. She is the eyes of this little ragtag bunch. Micah filled me in on what I missed while I was failing to infiltrate the Blue Mountains. I'm going to miss her. The Wolf too, I guess.

Bishop stands, his shoulders back, posture ramrod straight, dark energy radiates off him. He's furious and barely containing his rage after I relayed what Michael has done and threatens to do to Verity.

“He thinks Micah can’t win and he’s still sulking over his sons snubbing him. You know Luc is vain. Honestly, I think after we gave him the bit of information about God promising to destroy the world if she fails, he believes he’s safer down here. He’s a fool,” Bishop states with irritation as he matches my pacing stride.

“I never thought I would ever see the day when Lucifer himself bows out of a fight.” I shake my head in disbelief. I’ve got concerns about our numbers. Micah can use all the help she can get with more feet on the ground. Demons helped before; they will help again. My intel on the current activities at Caelum Academy is a literal dead zone. I can’t get close enough to spy but I have seen Light Guardians arriving by portal in and around the surrounding forest, so who knows how many of them will be there when we arrive.

“I won’t count him out just yet. He has a flare for the dramatics. I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s waiting in the wings when shit gets bad.” He sighs and stops. “We will have Demons at our backs, it will be enough. I believe that Micah can do this. She’s been practicing. It’s Michael I’m concerned about,” he says as he takes two steps towards me and stops right in front of me.

“Rook, I promised Micah that I would go for Verity. I guess my daughter thinks if I stay by her side I will fight Michael for her.” He smiles with pride.

I arch a brow. “She’s not wrong.”

He chuckles. “She is not. So, she’s given me a job. Me.” He laughs, then sobers. “I need you to protect her—”

“With my life, my last breath, with all my strength,” I say cutting him off. It goes without saying. She is mine to protect, to love and cherish. She is my Mate. I will remain by her side for as long as I can.

“I know you will. I don’t want to lose her...I never thought I would ever be whole again after I fell. I never thought I would ever admit something so sentimental, but she and Verity are my everything. I wish I hadn’t been too stubborn to see the

truth before...then maybe. Maybe I would have had more time,” he says sincerely.

“You have plenty of times to come. Don’t be going all mushy on me on the eve of battle.” I bow to him, and he arches a brow in surprise. I haven’t bowed in a very long time.

“I’m excusing myself politely because I am about to go to my Mate and ravage her.” I take a step away from him, laughing the entire time as his eyes begin to glow white.

“Leave now,” he says menacingly.

I hold up my hands in surrender and let my shadows carry me to my girl.

I touch down inside her room just as the sun begins to rise. She’s lying naked in Lyrik’s arms, face relaxed in sleep. I stand there and watch them for a moment. I know he senses me by the twitch of his lips, but he doesn’t open his eyes. I thought it would take longer for my possessiveness to go away when it came to another Demon being with her, but Lyrik and I have come to an understanding. Maybe one day we can actually share her bed. Only time will tell.

“Grab her now before the twins arrive. They get extra clingy when they don’t wake up with her.” He leans over her and kisses her shoulder, then her temple and she moans in her sleep and turns over. “I will meet you at the assembly point at the designated time.” He nods his head and dissipates, leaving traces of his purple essence floating through the air.

“Well, someone is well fed.” I snort as I bend down and scoop my baby girl in my arms.

Cradling her to my chest, I head to her bathroom and turn on the shower. It’s one of my favorite places, full of memories of my body pressing against hers as she cums all over my cock. Yep, just thinking about it makes my dick strain again my pants. As the steam begins to fill the room, Micah opens her eyes and gazes up at me.

“Rook,” she says sleepily. I almost want to take her back to bed, wrap her in my arms, and refuse to allow her to participate in this day.

“Good morning, sleepy head. Did you fuck all night?” I smile as she weakly slaps my arm.

“He needed to feed,” she replies.

“Baby, I think he fed and then some.” I smirk as she raises her hand to my face.

“You know.” She yawns. “It would be easier if we all slept in the same bed.” She smirks back, giving me the yeah this is not a suggestion face.

“I can’t, baby. I cannot share a bed with the triplets, especially not Trys. Have you seen his pajamas?” I say with a horrified look on my face that makes her laugh out loud. I close my eyes at the sound of her laughter, allowing it to calm my dead heart. I know she is weary and anxious. I can feel her nerves down my bond but right now, all I want is to hear her joy.

“You’ll cave eventually,” she says as she wiggles out of my arms, and I place her on her feet. I watch her grab her shower cap and get in the shower, putting a little more sway in her hips, ass on display, just asking for my teeth.

“Keep swinging your hips like that and, baby girl, I will share a bed and wear matching Batman pajamas,” I say teasingly. I am not wearing comic book characters to sleep in. It’s sacrilege.

“I’m going to hold you to that,” she says as her voice drops, husky and needy. “Now, get in here and show me how much you missed me.” She blows me a kiss as she stands underneath the spray, and I make quick work of shedding my clothes.

“You’re beautiful like this, baby girl. All glistening and wet for me.” I step in behind her and drop to my knees. “Hold the wall and spread your legs,” I command, barely containing my need for her. Grasping my dick in my fist, I squeeze it hard to stop myself from cumming at the sight of her pussy on show for me.

“Rook.” She breaths out my name as her head drops down to watch me. I lean forward and spread her ass cheeks and lick

my tongue along her pucker hole, until she presses her ass in my face for me. “Oh yes, Rook, please,” she mewls as I press my tongue past the tight ring of muscle as her knees begin to buckle.

“Keep those legs locked for me, baby girl. Don’t move,” I mutter as I begin to work my tongue in and out of her ass. Micah cries out as I slide my fingers through her slick folds, circling her clit in time with my licks.

“Oh fuck! Rook!” she screams as she creams my finger. I pull back and lick my glistening digits, relishing the taste of her on my tongue. I stand, unable to hold back, and my baby is ready for me. She bends forward and I grab her hips and slam into her, fucking her hard and fast against the wall.

“Fuck. You feel so good, baby, like coming home.” I lean forward and grab her around the throat and pull her up, her back to my chest, needing to hold her close. I thrust up, hitting her sweet spot as she chants my name. I love it when she does that. With my free hand, I slap her clit hard.

“Cum,” I command, and she howls, she throws her head back, I turn it to capture her lips in a brutal kiss.

“Rook! Rook, I love you!” she says before I drop my hand from her throat and bend her over again.

“Touch your toes.” She bends quickly at my command, and I lose myself in the feel of her, slamming into her until I’m groaning as I reach my release. She straightens as I pull out of her and she walks into my waiting arms. Backing us into the water, I kiss her lips gently, rubbing my nose against hers. “I love you too, baby.

I grab her vanilla scented soap and wash every inch of her. Memorizing each dip and plane.

If we survive the day...yeah, I’ll share a bed and do whatever she asks. As long as we are alive together.

## *Chapter Twenty-Four*



## MICAH



We all move quietly through the trees as we follow Marcus, who decided to take point. He knows the woods better than any of us, so I am not complaining. I stick close to his back just in case, but I promised him earlier I wouldn't be overprotective today. I know he can handle himself, but it's hard. I would wrap him up in bubble wrap and lock him away from harm if I could. But he would probably get mad and attempt to kick my ass for even suggesting he sits out today. We all have a lot to lose today. I know Marcus wants to get his fellow Light Guardians to safety, and more importantly, he wants to get Bryelle away from Michael. I just hope he doesn't go rogue and put himself in unnecessary danger.

Marcus holds up his fist to halt us. He points left with his finger and changes directions. We all follow him down a slope for a few more minutes until he halts us once more. This is the spot we all agreed upon when we talked through the plan in the Underworld. Bishop will be able to portal to this spot without detection as I throw up a shield around us. Now, we wait. I take a moment to listen to the early morning bird song and enjoy the slight breeze blowing through the trees.

There's a chill in the air, and I am grateful that I can push a little fire in my veins to warm myself up. I watch my guys, dressed in all black, cargo pants, long sleeve t-shirts, strategically strapped weapons, and combat boots. All business, and damn if they don't look good. I am dressed the same, so I am definitely twinning, as Ty and Trys like to say. My father's sword is strapped to my back, my twin dagger

holster strapped to my thighs, power thrumming through my limbs. I am as ready as I'll ever be.

Red haze begins to crawl along the forest floor, the only warning before a massive oval-shaped portal opens in front of us. Bishop steps out first, white wings flexing behind him clad in a shiny metal breast plate with a silver gleaming scythe on the front. I almost snort. Death. He wears a long-sleeved black shirt under his armor and cargo pants to match. Behind Bishop is Asher, the sight of the massive Demon in the daylight makes my mouth drop in surprise. His bare chest reveals leathery brown skin, that I'm sure is just as tough as armor, his green horns are sharpened to points as his fangs peek out from underneath his top lip.

“Scary much?” I jokingly ask as he approaches, tilting my head back with a toothy grin. He tilts his head to the side and grunts. Yep, I am going to take that as maybe a smile.

“Daughter,” Bishop says as he inclines his head in greeting. There is no softness in his eyes today, no, my father is all rage and chaos. I can feel his power radiating off him in waves.

Demons pour out of the portal, some in their mist forms and others more Humanoid, with an array of colorful skin; reds, greens, and blues. Imps with sick looking pocket-sized scimitars hanging from their belts line up in a row, glancing up at me expectantly. For a moment, I'm wondering why we aren't moving. My eyes shift to my guys and Trys gives me two thumbs up while Rodyn raises his hand, opening it and closing it, with a bemused look on his face.

“Oh shit,” I groan. They are expecting a speech. I gaze around the group, and yep, they are waiting for me to speak. I blow out a breath. “This is not my *Braveheart* moment. You don't need me to tell you all what's at stake here. The world as we know it can be destroyed with a snap of God's fingers if I don't stop his General from being the biggest dick to ever walk the Earth. None of you owe me your allegiance, you don't need to be here, but you chose to be. I am grateful to have you watching my back, our backs. I know we won't all make it today. That's the nature of battle, of war. So, I say to

you all, move swiftly, think decisively, stick to the plan, and try not to die. I really would like to see you all back here when the day is won.” I close my mouth, second guessing how lame that came out, when Asher of all Demons, begins to applaud. Soon the entire group erupts in cheers and whoops of excitement.

Bishop leans in. “Not your *Braveheart* moment, huh? Seems like you did okay to me.” He squeezes my shoulder. “Whatever happens today, I’m proud of you. Now, let’s get this shit over with.”

“Are you ready for what you will you see?” I ask in concern for what he may do when he sees whatever state my mother is in.

“I won’t kill my brother, if that’s what you mean. I may take a few arms and legs, but I won’t kill.” He frowns and walks over to where the Demons are standing by.

“Kitten. Kiss me now.” Ty stands behind me, his tattooed arms wrap around my waist as he turns me around to face him.

“Yes, sir,” I say as I wrap my hands around his neck and let him claim my mouth. I try not to think about anything else but his lips against mine. It’s just us and the Tether between us pulsing strong with anticipation. He pulls away and runs his finger over my bottom lips and sticks it in his mouth. Oh, goodness. This man. *Later.*

“I’ll be watching you.” He winks and walks away.

“Sunshine.” Trys smiles and holds out his arms to me. I bury my nose in his chest and take a deep breath of his cedar and vanilla scent. Yep, he used my body wash this morning. I raise up on my tiptoes and he meets me halfway to share a sweet chaste kiss.

“I love you, sunshine.” He releases me as Marcus begins to line everyone up.

“Micah,” Rodyn calls my name as he saunters over, his hands shoved in his pockets. A clear indication that my newly formed Tether is nervous.

“Yes.” I lift my chin, readying myself.

“You told me to save it for the right moment.” His lips turn up in a delicious smirk that makes me want to forget myself.

“I did, didn’t I,” I reply knowingly as he grabs my hips and pulls me close. My chest collides with his as he gazes down at me. His eyes fall to my lips then up to meet my eyes.

“I’m in love with you, Micah Jones.” He kisses me softly, making my stomach flip, and I have to pull away.

“I love you more, Rodyn Larrieux.” I wink as Marcus rolls his eyes a few feet away. Rodyn takes my hand and pulls me behind him as we join the line.

Rook and Lyrik arrive with Professor Maverick and a few more Professors who want to fight today. After what happened at HellNight Academy a lot of them want to help see this through to the end.

I clear my throat and address everyone. “Remember that the Light Guardians are not themselves. I will do my damndest to break the connection between them and Michael. Until then, please try not to kill them. They have no free will.” I crack my neck to the side and roll my shoulders and I walk forward with my little army at my back.



I cut through the trees alone, walking up to the cloaking barrier at the back of the Academy like I’m on a leisurely stroll. I whistle to myself as my hands reach out to press against the wards, only for them to fall away before I can touch them. They fall away like an invisible curtain. There in the field in front of me is row upon row of Light Guardians. All of them stand at attention with their Enochian tattoos glowing bright blue, leather armor strapped to their chests on top of their standard white tank tops and black cargo pants. Knives, daggers, swords, and naginatas at the ready as they all stare blankly ahead. Of course Michael had them out here waiting, but I anticipated this as well. Above them, floating

high in the sky are the Archangels, their white and gold breastplates are similar to Bishop's, with cream and white clothing underneath.

The middle lines of Light Guardians part and the asshole himself walks down the center. His face a mask of calm, arms clasped in front of him like some deranged priest, in a long white tunic, the hem brushing against his bare feet. Brown leather straps crisscross over his chest holding a long sword holstered to his back. I guess someone decided to go old school, keeping it authentic. Well, that's fine with me. The better to stab you with, Big Bad Wolf.

He spreads his arms wide like a gracious host and stops beside a petite Guardian with light brown skin and brown doe eyes, her hair is braided down in cornrows and her hand and fingers are tattooed, glowing blue. This must be Bryelle, and hey, if we weren't about to possibly kill each other, I would approve.

"Micah Jones, have you come to surrender? I know you wouldn't make it that easy, would you?" He snaps his fingers as more Light Guardians come marching out of the trees from left to right, almost boxing me in. We are definitely outnumbered, and if I want to pull this off, I will have to focus and move quickly from one squadron to another.

"Well, where would be the fun in that." My smirk grows as my army of Supernatural beings comes marching from the trees at my back. Bishop lands beside me, all formidable and fatherly, trying to protect me by standing slightly in front of me.

"Azrael, you wound me. Or is it, Bishop?" Michael steps forward and so does Bishop.

"You can skip the pleasantries, Brother. You forget I know you." Bishop tenses, his wings stretching out wide in preparation.

Michael's hard green eyes catch mine and then shift back to Bishop's, he smiles and shrugs. "Yes, I guess there's no need, as you say, Brother, you know me." He claps his hands, and the entire unit of Light Guardians begins to move as one.

Michael allows them to take six steps to close us in, then he raises his hand and forms a fist, and they halt. Like puppets on a string, he commands them against their will, and it makes my blood simmer in indignation.

“So, I guess you’re here for Verity. Well, Brother, you can have what’s left of her.” He holds up one finger in Bishop’s face. “If you can reach her,” Michael says confidently. I can’t see Bishop’s expression in response to Michael’s threat, but by the absolute stillness of his body I can see he’s about to strike.

I slowly reach for my daggers, the cool metal handle touches my skin in greeting and I feel complete. I have my magic, yes, but nothing compares to the focus of a physical fight. I have my dad to thank for that. I am not dependent on just one means of defense. Michael turns his back on Bishop as a blur of black wings shoots up out of the trees and into the sky. The figure arches, then flies like a torpedo towards the ground, only to stop short dramatically.

Bishop groans so low that I almost don’t hear him. If we weren’t about to fight for our lives I would double over in laughter. Yep, he’s dramatic alright. Lucifer hovers, black wings spread wide, in gold sparkling armor with a helmet and bright red plumes sticking out of it, like a Roman General. He lands in front of Michael, stopping his progress, his back to the Light Guardians without a care if they attack or not.

“Well, I can’t let you all have fun without me, now, can I? Honestly, I can’t stand to hear another word out of your mouth.” Lucifer pulls his sword from his back and points it at Michael. If there is anyone who would set Michael off, it is the sight of his greatest adversary and the very reason we are all here.

“Kill them all! Bring the Nephilim to me! Fight for Heaven!” Michael roars and charges Lucifer, his sword appearing from out of nowhere as they both launch themselves high in the sky. The Light Guardians charge and I don’t spare a glance at my own people at my back. They know what needs to be done today and so do I. Bishop turns to me and inclines his head, the gesture full of so many things we can’t say to each other, but I hear him loud and clear. Be safe, stay alive.

Then he spreads his wings wide and shoots straight into the sky as the other Archangels converge on him in an aerial battle of swords and staffs. The roar of the Demons behind me has my eyes snapping forward as the first wave of Guardians hit me.

“Remember to hold them back,” I shout as I throw my hands out and sweep a group of them aside with my telekinesis. I watch them fly through the air across the field, only to catch them safely on a pocket of Air Elemental magic. But there’s no time to celebrate my magical win. Even though I want to do a happy dance. The Light Guardians just keep coming, wave after wave. Demons and Guardians are battling all around me. I duck, parry, and fight with my daggers as I fight off two Guardians at a time. They are relentless in their pursuit to harm me. I take hit after hit, blocking the two females, whose faces remain blank and expressionless.

Suddenly, they vanish, and I spin in a circle searching for them in time to see black and white mist roll over the mass of fighters, disabling them, snatching them up and incapacitating them. I turn as I catch sight of Ty and Trys side by side, levitating in the air above the fight, as they use their Necromantic power to put as many of the Light Guardians to sleep as possible.

Trys has the nerve to blow me a kiss across the field, but I don’t have time to respond as a beast of a Guardian towers over me. He brings his naginata down so fast, I twist out of the way before he strikes true. The Guardian twirls his weapon through the air and the sharp blade grazes the ground, sending grass and dirt into the sky. Well, thanks for that. I use the dirt and grass, controlling it with my Earth Elemental power and smash it into his face. The big guy flails wildly as his weapon falls to the ground and he wipes furiously at his face. With a flick of my wrist, I send him flying away from me as Rook materializes out of the shadows of the trees, catching the Guardian in mid-air.

We fight like this until my limbs ache, and I know we all can’t keep playing catch, hold, and contain much longer. There’s too many of them. Rodyn and Marcus are fighting

back-to-back, swords clashing, fists flying, it's an all-out melee as Demons begin to fall under the attack. I gave an impassioned speech about not losing anyone today, and although it's the cost of war, I still feel as if I am failing.

I spot Lyrik's purple essence flowing in the center of the fight, holding Guardians at bay as Professor Maverick fights in Wolf form beside him. Everyone is tiring and that's when mistakes are made, and people die unnecessarily. I need to act.

"Mi, it's time! We are trying not to hurt them, but it's damn near impossible. I'll hold them off and give you the space you need!" Marcus shouts, suddenly beside me, his leather armor is slashed but I don't have time to check him over. He stands in front of me, sword at the ready and pushes back the Guardians as I close my eyes.

"I'm here, baby girl. Do it," Rook says beside me, and I don't have to open my eyes to know he is protecting me along with my brother. I focus my power, feeling it burn white hot inside of me. I channel my rage and I give it intention. I want to break Michael's control. He doesn't have the right to use God's creations as cannon fodder. We have a right to choose what side we want to fight on. He never gave any of these Guardians a choice. He has hidden behind his hate and self-righteousness for far too long.

The fire builds, spreading like a slowly inflating balloon as I feed it more and more power until it's too much to hold on to. My body begins to levitate, my feet leave the ground, until I am hovering over the battlefield. Instead of freaking out, I let the power flow through me and let my will be done. My chest feels like it's about to explode as my head falls back and I scream into the sky. Bright white Angel Fire shoots out of my chest, rolling out of my hands, aiming for each and every Light Guardian before me. I can't see what's happening, my eyes are unseeing, but I can feel it. I can feel them all as the ground below me goes quiet and still. Then, I fall.



## *Chapter Twenty-Five*

## LYRIK



I stare up in wonder as Micah hovers over the ground, her eyes are two orange flames, as six sets of golden wings burst from her back. I stumble at the sight; I thought I would never marvel at the sight of a Seraph ever again. Not since the fall. The highest of the high. My Mate is God blessed, only he can give her the wings of his most high.

“Holy shit, a Nephilim with Seraphim wings!” Rook shouts so loud I can hear him over the high-pitched buzz in the air, the sound almost like rolling thunder. With a great boom, Micah screams as Angel Fire erupts from her chest and hands. Ripping a hole in her tank top, her smooth, perfect skin untouched by the blaze. The stream of fire acts with a mind of its own, searching and seeking out each Light Guardian and wrapping them in white light. Not an uncontrollable blast like the day in Headmistress Larrieux’s office or the chest shot like Marcus received. No, my Mate has found a way to do it without harming them. They all drop like flies, collapsing to the ground, as the blue light of their Enochian tattoos blink out, glowing no more. It happens so fast that I don’t register the silence. Wind whips up around us as Micah’s wings pull back into her body and she falls out of the sky.

I’m running, not thinking about anything but the need to get to her. Rook catches her out of the sky, cradling her against his chest. Dropping to his knees, he immediately takes care of our Mate. Rook sees her tattered clothes and quickly pulls his shirt off to cover the top half of her body. I roll my eyes, of course he’s shirtless again, it’s as if the Demon needs to always have his sculpted chest on display. I breathe a sigh of

relief as all of us, Ty, Trys, and Rodyn make a bee-line straight for her.

Michael bellows in outrage, and it feels as if the ground shakes beneath our feet. I glance up. All around us Archangels begin to screech in an eerie chorus, some still fight Lucifer, while others retreat, popping out of existence. I stop and watch. It's as if they are answering a call, stopping to listen, then vanishing, like God himself is calling them home.

“You!” Michael shouts as time seems to stand still. He moves in slow motion while I watch in terror as he aims his flaming twin swords at Rook. Micah shouts Rook's name, jumping out of his arms and pushing him out of the way. I see the outcome clearly. Esme's vision. I don't think, I react. Closing my eyes, I pull my essence around me and reappear in front of Micah, shielding her as two flaming swords impale me through the chest. Michael screams in anger at the miss of his target, kicking me in the chest, he dislodges his swords. The force of Michael's blow sends me crashing into Micah. She catches me, wrapping me in her embrace as we tumble to the ground.

I can feel fire spread, eating away at my life force as magical blasts from Ty, Trys, and Rodyn keep Michael away from Micah. Marcus surrounds us in fire as Micah cradles me in her lap. Pain begins to spread, and I let go. I know there is no coming back from this. If this is what my Demonic life is meant for, then it is worth the sacrifice. I stroke her cheek as my lips part to tell her that I love her as she screams my name over and over again. But I never get the chance to reply. My last thoughts are that I wish I had found her sooner, held her closer, loved her more, but our time together is brief and cut short too soon. But it was enough.

Then, I explode.



MICAH

I hold Lyrik in my arms, screaming and rocking him as the Angel Fire from Michael's blades devours his body. My tears fall unchecked, my anger a burning fire in my veins. Those blades were meant for me. I saved Rook and Lyrik saved me. Oh God. His lips part, his eyes, his beautiful hazel eyes swirl with pain as he gasps.

"Lyrik! Hold on! Lyrik, please. Lyrik, don't you dare leave me!" I shout. In a blink, through my blurry eyes, I see his body explode, leaving nothing but wisps of his purple essence behind.

I scream, my body shakes as I stare at my hands in disbelief as the last of what remains of my Mate floats away from me. I feel the cool relief of numbness as it washes over me. My thoughts are singular as I call on my power once more. I didn't feel the wings before, but I cry out in pain, while more tears stream down my face as they rip out of my back. Sets of golden wings on both sides unfurl from my back, they flex and flap, ready for me to use. I pull my father's sword from my back, and I let my wings carry me into the air.

Rook is in shadow form, battling Michael in the air, while Ty, Trys, Rodyn, and now Marcus, fight him from the ground.

No more.

No more sacrifices for me. If I die. I die on my own terms, fighting with my last breath. I let loose a battle cry and fly towards Michael. I call on my Angel Fire and ignite my father's sword as we collide in the air. Flames fly and fall to the ground as we spin and block each other's blows. I am pure fury as I grip my sword with both hands, slamming my blade against his in pain and outrage.

"Do you see how they follow you blindly? He gave his life for yours. It was easy. Love brings nothing but torment in the end. But that's one less Demon to plague the world," he taunts, swinging both his swords over his head, striking lightning fast towards me as I dive out of the way. My wings pulling me back as the sizzle of his fire cuts across my abdomen. I hiss in pain, but I let the pain fuel me.

“You took him away from me. You took my father from me! I going to kill you!” I scream as I put all my strength into every blow.

Michael laughs. “I am going to enjoy removing your head. You don’t deserve those wings, and I am going to enjoy plucking them from your back.”

I’m not only a Nephilim, I am also a Witch, and it’s with that thought I grab hold of Michael with my Telekinesis and pull with all my might. My teeth clench, muscles strain as he tries to resist my hold. His eyes widen in shock as he thrashes in the air, his wings beating wildly as he attempts to get away from me. I swing my sword in the air and yank hard on the invisible binding holding him in place.

“You lose, Michael,” I say as I plunge my flaming sword straight through his heart. “This is for the world. For my father. And for my Mate,” I say, my voice trembling as his swords fall from his hands. Michael’s mouth parts as he glances down at my sword and then at me with a look of disbelief.

“I believe you’ve been bested, motherfucker. Checkmate.” I yank out my sword and kick his ass out of the sky. I watch him fall but he doesn’t land as his body explodes in a searing white light; I flinch away to protect my eyes. When I remove my hands, the world around us is quiet. The only sound is the shouts coming from my bonded below me. I look down and only then do I realize how high up I am. I panic as my wings pick that moment to abandon me and I begin to fall. Again.

Strong arms catch me around the waist, scooping me up into his arms and holding me tight. “Well, well, Miss Jones. I am astounded by you.” Lucifer looks at me like I’m the greatest of all mysteries with a frown on his face that he soon replaces with a smile. “The world survives to turn for another day.” He floats down and places me on my feet as my guys come running.

“Sunshine,” Trys says, reaching me first, pulling me into his arms.

“Sons,” Lucifer says in greeting. “I hope this helps bridge the gap between us. I’ll be seeing you around.” He nods as a portal opens up before us, it’s wide, arching up into the sky. He turns. “I’ll leave this open so the Demons can get home. I am sure Bishop will be with you shortly,” Lucifer says as he walks into the portal and leaves us there.

As if summoned, Bishop flies over a tall, white stone building aiming straight for us. As he gets closer, I notice a small bundle in his arms, and I know it’s my mother. I pat Trys’s arm, and he releases me as Bishop lands.

Light Guardians begin to wake up all around us, blinking and disorientated, as they try to process what happened to them. I cross over to Bishop, the expression on his face is one of sorrow. I stop and look up into his pain filled eyes. He shakes his head and I make no move to get closer. She’s gone.

“Mom,” Marcus says as he rushes past me, and Bishop lets him take her as he lays her on the ground. “Fuck! Mom!” My brother shouts to the Heavens, his voice heavy with grief and pain, making my knees buckle from the weight of it all.

I fall to my knees, my hand clutches the Earth between my fingers, and I let go. I scream and cry, clawing at the ground. I did what was asked of me. I won the day, but what did I win? I’ve been given so much in such a short period of time. Maybe, I had too much, but it is mine. Mine!

“Lyrik,” I whisper. My heart broken.

I don’t know what happens after that as I retreat into the safe recess of my mind. All I remember is strong arms holding me. Words of love and reassurance as everything becomes a blur of activity all around me.

“We are taking her home,” I hear Rodyn say to someone, but my eyes won’t stop leaking as I purge my sorrow. My father, mother, Lyrik, Esme and her baby, it’s all too much to bear.

“Heaven thanks you, Micah Jones. You have done what we could not. God smiles down on you. You’ve been God blessed; your Seraph wings were a gift from him.” I hear a soft

feminine voice say in the background, but I don't turn to acknowledge her. "We will fix what Michael has broken and help where we can, until we are called home."

"Archangel Uriel," I hear my brother say, the sound of awe in his voice makes my stomach turn. I know I shouldn't harbor resentment but at this point I can't help it. Part of me is yelling to acknowledge her, to show deference but I can't. I did what was asked of me, now I just want to be left alone.

"Take me home," I croak out, barely able to put the sentence together.

I never asked to be a hero. I didn't want it; I didn't need it. Glory is fleeting, and so is winning. The history pages turn, and you just become a footnote. That's what people will deem me as in the future, just a story. The events of today will go unheard. No one will hear of the trials and tribulations that led me here. I saved Humanity but the cost and sacrifice was too great. I never believed in fairy tales and for me this is not my happily ever after.

# *Epilogue*



MICAH



*One year later*

*Dear Micah,*

*I'm alive. It took me a while to heal both mentally and physically, but you have never been too far from my thoughts. I wish I had been able to see you before I was so abruptly taken away. But fate decided for the both of us it seems. I regret walking away from you that day in Willow woods. If I had turned around and told you everything, then maybe I would still be by your side. I would have found out I was pregnant naturally like any other woman and my child would be toddling around living with us all. But I can't change what's happened. I can only step into my future one day at a time.*

I am sure you found out the night I left that my father isn't human, he is Fae. Talk about a mind-blowing culture shock, my Father is King of the Light Court. Let's just say that he was adrift and suffering from amnesia when he met my mother down in the village at the base of the Blue Mountains.

Well, the rest, as they say, is history. I'm a long-lost princess. Me. A princess. I can almost hear Tups and Ty making fun of me. I wish I could tell you more but I'm afraid it would take a lot more paper and a much longer letter to tell you about my journey since I arrived here.

Ms. Margaret has been a big help in aiding Sam and I with navigating this new world and the politics of being Fae. Especially a royal. Let's just say that me being a hybrid ex-seer, with a fated shifter Mate and a Tether in the Earth Realm has made me almost an outcast, but I'm adjusting. I'm just happy that I can reach out to you with this letter

and hopefully more in the future. Ms. Margaret won't be coming back here for a while, she has a duty to Hell Night Academy. Again, another long story. I wanted to return but I can't leave the Realm now that I know who I am. Please, write back to me. I miss you. I love you.

I carry you with me every day, the Tether between us gives me comfort, knowing you are out there living your life. Live it, Micah. Put the past behind you and be the badass woman who crash landed into my life and into my heart.

Until we meet again,

Esme

“Kitten. We are going to be late,” I hear Ty yell up the stairs for the third time already. I’m surprised he hasn’t come to see what’s taking me so long. Or maybe he has and is giving me space.

“Coming,” I yell back as I fold the letter gently before sliding it back into its envelope. I have read her letter so many times, I don’t need to read it anymore. It’s memorized. But seeing the words written on the page makes me feel closer to her.

Like Esme, it has taken me months to get back to myself after the events of that day. Days turned into months and healing mentally takes time. I wear the scars of my loss on the

inside; a hole remains in my heart where my Mate once was. We were over before we began, and the pain is still too raw. But it gets easier every day.

“Sunshine. Where are you, gorgeous? They aren’t going to start without you,” Trys says as I put the letter away in the desk in our room.

Marcus and his girlfriend Bryelle now live in my old house in the Quads. Bryelle, like a few other Light Guardians, have had it hard these past few months. The things Michael made them do or did to them left a stain on their souls that will remain with them for life. But Marcus, like my guys, have been nothing but patient. I hope in time Bryelle will heal.

I moved in with Ty, Trys, and Rodyn. There were no doubts about my decision. I refused to be without any of them in the first few months. Rook still travels between here and the Underworld, and yes, he now shares a bed with the rest of us. I knew I would wear him down eventually, but I don’t think my Shadow Demon has the heart to refuse me anything.

Trys hasn’t stopped asking me to marry him. Of course, he is right, our lives are always going to be hanging in the balance. With what I am, I know that I will be called upon to protect Humanity again, because evil never sleeps. It will only be a matter of time. We haven’t heard from the Archangels since they helped with the cleanup at Caelum Academy. But I have a feeling they won’t stay away for long. So, maybe when he asks me tomorrow morning, like he does every morning, my eyes will part to meet his smiling face and I will say yes. Yes, to all of them.

Bishop...my father, drops in from time to time. He and Lucifer actually helped rebuild HellNight Academy and negotiated the changes that Lyrik wanted to implement as the new Headmaster. Now, Professor Maverick fills that role. Everything has changed; no more Anchor keys, no more separation due to magical strengths, and definitely no more death. I never want to see this place return to what it was. Now, the Light Guardians are arriving today to start school along with the rest of us. Professor Maverick even convinced the board to allow Demons to attend. It’s taken months of

planning but the day has finally arrived. So, we are off to a ribbon cutting ceremony in honor of new beginnings. No more division, no good or bad, we are all in this together. Life is not black and white, right or wrong, we will learn and find a happy medium to exist in.

I make my way downstairs, wearing my new HellNight Academy uniform, and it feels strange to be wearing it after all this time. Smoothing my fingers over the golden emblem on my blazer, I grab my bag and hang it over my shoulders. Ty, Trys and Rodyn wait for me by the door, and I step out into the morning light with them at my back. The world outside feels brand new, full of possibilities and a promise for a greater future.

Esme is right. I need to live my life and forget the past as best as I can. I've paid the price for it in blood, and I deserve nothing but goodness for the rest of my days.

-The End-

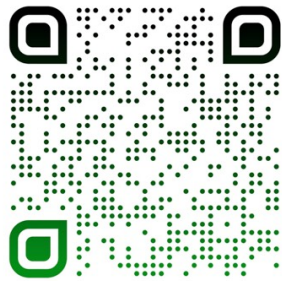
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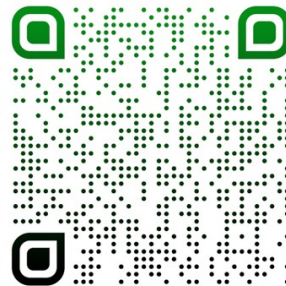
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## *Acknowledgments*

This book was hard. It was a mountain to climb. The struggle is real. I've been suffering from writer's fatigue... I won't call it burnout but definitely fatigue. I have written a heck of a lot of books in a short period of time and I've been fighting to get to this point. All I could think about was you all. Your response to this series has been life changing. So, I pushed through for you. I cried, I screamed, and I paced the floor most nights without sleep, but I got there in the end. This book is a rollercoaster ride full of emotions. I know some of you are cursing me out right now, there may even be a few tears from some of you or are you staring blankly at your e-reader in shock. Either way, I hope you enjoyed HellNight Academy as much as I did. No, I didn't wrap the story up in a pretty little bow like most books do. No, I wanted to show that the hero might win, but winning comes with a cost. Phew. I will miss these characters, but I will say this. This is not the last time you will see them. There is a method to my madness. Esme... my poor sweet Esme demanded more. She was calling out for her own story arc, and I said fine, but it's going to hurt, and my gosh, it did. So, Esme will get her own book so that you can find out exactly what's going on in her new world. She is still Tethered to Micah so... there will definitely be a crossover for all of them. I am not sure if it will be a stand-alone or a new series all together. I will see what the crazy voices in my head decide.

Oh goodness!! Let's get to the Thank-yous!!

My hubby!! HellNight Academy would have never happened if it wasn't for you saying those two beautiful words to me almost a year ago. Hell Night. From there my muses took flight and here I am 210,000 + words later. I love you for having my back, always.

To my family: Sometimes your voice is all I need to hear, and it gives me the strength to keep going.

I know I always say this, but it is true. It takes a village to write a book. This book passes through a lot of hands to get to you in the end. So, to my writing squad!!! You all are amazing!! Thank you for sticking with my tired nonsense for these past few months.

To my writing team: Lin, Toni, Erin, and Stacie thank you all for editing, proofreading, and beta reading this book. Thank you for being my second set of eyes, catching my crazy and making sense of it all. Without you guys none of this would work and I appreciate your time and your effort.

To my Author buddies/PA: Laura, you keep me going. When I forget, you remind me and keep things running smoothly. To my people: Jade, Lawrence, and YD. My motivators, my kindreds. You guys make it easier to get up in the morning and get to work. Finally. Maya Nicole. You're a gem and I appreciate every piece of advice you've given me. Your words mean the world because I know you will give it to me straight.

To all my Readers!! Here's to another complete series!! YOU make it all worth it. Your reviews and reactions to the words I write mean the world to me. Thank you for your support! Thank you for remaining on the Dreia Wells crazy train. I cannot wait to bring you more.

Until the next tale

Dreia Wells



## About the Author

Undreia Capewell (**Dreia Wells, D. Sparks**) was born and raised in Houston, Texas, but lives with her husband and son in England. When she's not writing she is reading everything under the sun. Her love of books inspired her to follow her dreams and here we are. Undreia desires to explore different genres, mainly Paranormal Romance/Urban Fantasy but as D. Sparks she will write Contemporary and Dark Romance. She has so much more she wants to share and lots of stories floating around in her head. So, follow her down the rabbit hole, who knows where it all may lead?

Check me out on social media...go ahead, stalk away.

Join my Facebook readers group! [Dreia Wells and All her Crazy](#).

Sign up to my Newsletter:

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For more of my books and social presence check out my webpage: [www.dreiwells.com](http://www.dreiwells.com)

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