

Darkness Becomes Her
Lacey Savage

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Not quite human, with wild powers and hungers she can barely control, Heidi Cole isn't the hunter she used to be. She once swore to destroy every demon who crossed her path. Now she's no longer on the prowl for them -- she's one of them.

But without Luke and Varin by her side, life isn't worth living. The Underworld has claimed her lovers

one too many times, and Heidi's been dying to take a side trip into Hell to rescue her men. Only she doesn't expect the trip to actually kill her...

When she arrives, she quickly learns that even a half-demon fledgling can't outwit the Lord of Hell. Centuries ago, the Devil's best Demon Guardian betrayed him. Two weeks ago, he did it again. Now that Varin's latest plaything has come looking for him, Baal isn't about to let the opportunity to torture Varin further pass him by.

Exquisite temptation, endless hedonistic pleasure, and the promise of more power than she's ever dreamed of lie at Heidi's fingertips. All she has to do is sacrifice her soul... and destroy the two men she loves the most.

Chapter One

Darkness. Pure, blissful darkness.

Heidi Cole stepped into the shadows and pressed her body against the thick trunk of a pine tree, shielding herself from view. The rough edge of coarse bark scraped against her cheek as she peered into the clearing a few feet away.

For the past hour, she'd watched the Scarlet Summoners prepare for the ritual that would ultimately open a two-way portal and send her into the Underworld. Impatience zinged through her veins, filling her with a gnawing fury that tore at her soul.

It wouldn't be much longer now. She'd already waited for what seemed like an eternity -- but in reality had been only two weeks -- for the opportunity to go after her men. If she could have opened the portal on her own, she would have, but her individual efforts had been futile. She needed the combined energy of the Summoners to tear a hole in the fabric of the mortal realm and propel her through to the other side.

Once she arrived in Hell, well... in truth, she wasn't sure what she'd do. She hadn't given a solid plan much thought. The only thing that mattered was reaching the place where no human willingly trespassed. From there, she'd do whatever she had to. She hoped her new demon powers would shield her true nature from the real demons swarming the place while she looked for Luke and Varin. And if that didn't work, she'd kill as many of them as she could and get her men back anyway.

Hell of a plan, Heidi.

She shook her head. Forethought and preparation had never been her strong points. She preferred acting to thinking, and it usually worked out in her favor. Not always, though. The last time she'd

attempted to follow her gut and rescue her lover, she'd somehow managed to hook his cellmate, too.

That's when everything -- including her -- had changed forever.

The hunger that burned low in the pit of her stomach intensified as it always did at the thought of Varin and Luke. Her body blazed with the memory of their hands on her, their mouths against her flesh, their cocks nudging her from every side, demanding entry into her heated cunt, her exposed ass.

They knew her intimately, had possessed her fiercely, and had forever branded her as theirs.

If their connection had been all about sex, forgetting them might have been a simple matter. After a few restless nights, the hunger would have started to dim. Perhaps it might even have faded altogether.

But the bond they shared ran much deeper than any carnal experience could explain. She'd been desperately in love with Luke since the day she met him. How could she not, when he'd sacrificed himself for her? Two years later, despite all logical explanation, Varin had done the same.

Her men had both given their souls to save hers. Right before they'd been torn from her arms and pulled through the jaws of Hell.

A low, throbbing chant echoed from the clearing. Heidi watched as the five women dressed head to toe in red-leather strolled in a tight circle around the stone altar they'd erected in the middle of the forest floor. They lit eight torches and plunged them into the damp earth, forming an octagon of illumination. The torches shone like an oasis of orange light in an otherwise dark, solitary sphere.

Heidi didn't need the added brightness to see the women. Her perfect night vision had already allowed her to watch them clearly as they'd moved around in the near-darkness. They'd worked by the light of the full moon as custom dictated, letting the night seep into their pores as they prepared for the ritual.

Earlier that day, Lillian, the founder of the Scarlet Summoners, had called Heidi to let her know where the gathering would take place. At the time, Lillian had asked for Heidi's help with the task of setting up for the ritual. Heidi had quickly agreed, knowing this could well be her last opportunity to spend time among the women who'd once been as close to her as sisters.

Yet when she'd arrived at the designated meeting point, the invisible forces that were now a permanent part of her had prevented Heidi from joining the others. She'd lurked in the shadows, the carnal hungers that constantly scraped against her soul serving as a potent reminder that she was no longer one of them. Once, she'd taken an oath to hunt demons and destroy every one of the foul creatures she came across. But that seemed like a lifetime ago -- before she'd fallen for one.

Before she'd *become* one.

So now she hung back, content to watch them like a panther stalking its prey through the jungle foliage. Except they weren't in the jungle, and she was no wild animal.

Varin had turned her into a demon-kin to save her life. She was part human and part demon, but as for which part held greater sway over her, she couldn't say.

She'd gone through a multitude of changes over the past twelve days, some tolerable, some shockingly unpleasant. With each moment that passed, she wondered if the darkness wasn't seeping into her heart, turning the once vivid organ black with anger and hate.

All those nebulous emotions were directed toward one place: Hell. The place she intended to infiltrate in order to bring back her men, even if she had to fight every demon in the Underworld to do it.

Even if she had to take on the devil himself.

“I know you’re out there. I can feel you watching us.”

Lillian stepped away from the other women and looked straight at the spot where Heidi hid. Had Lillian been human, there was no way she would have spotted her.

Heidi stepped away from the shelter of the trees. She walked into the clearing with her head held high, the wards barring her entrance gone now. None of the other women would look at her. They kept their heads down, focusing on some unseen spot at their feet.

Merely two weeks earlier, she’d considered these women her best friends. She knew every one of them better than she knew her biological sister, yet now they all avoided her as though she carried the plague.

In a way, she thought bitterly as the ache in her chest intensified, she supposed she did.

“Thank you,” Heidi murmured as she stepped up to the altar, “for doing this.”

Jane Milano, a twenty-four year old former college student, sucked in a breath between clenched teeth. “We’re not doing it for you. If Lillian hadn’t insisted, we wouldn’t be here.” Barely restrained anger made every word sound harsh and unforgiving, yet she still wouldn’t meet Heidi’s gaze. “You betrayed us. You chose one of them over your own sisters.”

Heidi didn’t reply. She’d heard a number of variations of this accusation since her encounter with Luke and Varin. She was tired of defending herself -- of defending her men.

“How could you?” Juliet McCannon asked. Unlike the other women, she was brave enough to look up, blue eyes shining through a haze of watery tears. “We made a pact. You were supposed to help protect us, protect the whole world! Not fuck a damned demon and become one of them!”

“That’s enough. We’re all bound by the decisions we make, regardless of how unwise they may seem.” As always, Lillian’s calm voice carried with it the quiet air of authority.

The women fell silent. Blue fire danced around their fingertips as they prepared their magic.

Heidi’s smile felt fragile as it tilted one side of her mouth. She wasn’t sure why Lillian was helping her. She remembered the husky, masculine gasp of surprise that had slipped from Varin’s throat when he’d recognized Lillian from afar. Those two had a history; that much was clear.

She squelched down a shiver of uneasy jealousy that erupted in her belly. Now wasn’t the time.

In fact, it shouldn’t have mattered why Lillian was suddenly on her side. The only thing of any importance was that she and her fellow Summoners could open a two-way portal that would allow Heidi to slip through. Everything else was irrelevant.

“Strip,” Lillian commanded. “All of you. Midnight is almost upon us. We’ll need to hurry if we’re going to do this tonight. The portal will only be open for a short time. A missed opportunity means we’ll have to

wait another month.”

Heidi yanked her shirt over her head and tugged down her jeans in a mad dash to shed herself of her clothes. She couldn't wait another month. She couldn't wait another moment!

The smell of spilled cum and heavy, feminine cream filled the air when the other women undressed as ordered. Even Lillian peeled off her red leather outfit, revealing a slim body, trimmed bush as blonde as the shimmering hair framing her face, and large, plump breasts. A gold chain hung suspended between the firm globes, attached to each rosy nipple by a small clamp.

Heidi's gaze darted over the other women's bodies. She took in the toned muscles that marked them as dedicated hunters, the narrow hips, the lean waists. And she noticed the tell-tale sign of glistening cream on their folds.

They all smelled of sex. Recent sex. The essence of carnal magic floated around them like a living being, imbuing the air with a blue glow that shone brighter than the flickering orange torches.

“Ground rules.” Lillian lifted her index finger and shook it in front of Heidi's face like an elderly schoolmarm might have done. The comparison between Lillian's timeless beauty and a rigid teacher was so absurd, it almost made Heidi smile. “You go in, find Luke, and get your ass back here. No dawdling. Just straight in and out. Got it?”

Heidi nodded. “Trust me, I have no intention of spending any more time with the denizens of the Underworld than absolutely necessary.”

Lillian lifted a perfectly arched eyebrow. “See to it that's the case. We're putting ourselves at risk for you. Since you can go in, demons can come out.”

Lillian lifted her hand to eye-level and splayed her fingers, then murmured a string of magical words. The blue glow around her intensified. A moment later, Lillian held a flickering sword made of pure magical energy. Heidi's gaze darted at the other Summoners, who tested the weight of identical weapons.

“We'll hold them back as long as we can, but if the situation grows dire, we'll fuse the portal. You understand what that means, don't you?”

“I'll be stranded there,” Heidi said, fighting down a surge of unease. “Don't worry, Lil. I'll be back as soon as I can.”

Lillian's features softened slightly. She shoved her sword into the earth and reached out to tuck a stray curl behind Heidi's ear. “I'm not proud of every decision I've made in my life, but those decisions ultimately led me down the right path. I hope yours do, too.”

Heidi furrowed her brow, unsure how to respond. At last, she settled on a simple whispered, “Thank you.”

Lillian cleared her throat and looked away. “Yeah, well. You'd have done the same. Drink this.”

Before Heidi could even catch the motion of the Summoner's hand, a cup appeared between Lillian's closed fingers.

“What is it?” Heidi asked, seizing it.

The container was simple and unmarked, a transparent cup like those someone would bring on a picnic along with plastic knives and cardboard plates. Inside, green liquid bubbled as though boiling from within.

Heidi lowered her head and sniffed. A strong, heady miasma not unlike the scent of hot chocolate tickled her nostrils. At least the thing smelled a thousand times more inviting than it looked.

“A potion meant to ease your transit into the Underworld. The transfer is extremely painful for a mortal. Most who attempt to slip through unprepared don’t survive. Those who do . . . well, many are never the same again.”

Grimacing, Heidi brought the cup to her mouth and drained the contents. She held her breath as the liquid slipped down her throat, surprised to find it completely tasteless. She swallowed the last of it and tossed the cup aside.

“Good. The potion you drank should ensure you’ll be protected from the foulness of the place -- at least for a little while. You won’t have much time to search, so if you don’t find Luke within an hour or two at the most, don’t get stubborn. You remember the words that will bring you back?”

“*Asidea ramerra va*. Said three times, then twice backward. I remember.”

Lillian grunted. “Fine. And for the love of light, don’t bring anything else back with you. If you do, we’ll be forced to kill it before it can step foot into this world. Got it?”

Heidi didn’t answer. She lifted a shoulder in a half-shrug, letting the Summoners interpret that as they would. She was going back for Luke, but she had no intention of returning without Varin. When she came back, she’d deal with the Summoners as need dictated. Until then, she needed them to open the damn portal and push her through.

Heidi hoisted herself up on the altar. The stone was cold beneath her bare feet. She stood tall and stretched her arms upward, preparing to leap through the magical gate the moment it opened.

Closing her eyes momentarily to block out the judgmental faces of the Summoners, Heidi could feel the weight of shadows pressing down on her. The darkness seemed corporeal, as solid as the damp summer air and the thick mist that drifted through the forest like a ghostly touch.

The women began to chant. Magic rippled, gathering above Heidi’s head. She could feel it sizzling above her as they molded it, channeling it into a ripe cloud of energy. Soon, it would burst and tear a hole in the fabric of time and space.

Soon.

Somewhere in the distance, a wolf howled. Heidi smiled. Wolves didn’t concern her. There were worst things to fear in the dark than savage animals. She knew. She’d stood toe to toe with many of them and had lived to see another sunrise.

Now she was one of them, and sunrises no longer held any appeal. It was the night that called to her, the heavy pull of darkness. It shielded her, allowing her to see things other people couldn’t --*wouldn’t* -- want to see.

“Come to us, baby.”

Heidi's eyes snapped open. She gasped and stumbled forward, catching herself on the tips of her toes before she could plummet off the altar. Her gaze flickered among the trees.

"Get ready!" Lillian shouted, grabbing the sword in both hands. "It won't be long now."

"I heard --"

"I don't care what you heard," Lillian said between gritted teeth. "Focus or we could all die!"

With one last look into the forest, Heidi folded her arms over her breasts and did as Lillian commanded. The Summoners picked up the chant where it had trailed off, their voices melding in a silver stream of magical energy.

"Shhh... Don't provoke her, baby. Stay still. Quiet. That's a good girl."

Heidi's pulse jumped into her throat at the sound of the familiar voice, but she managed to keep her composure this time. She blinked against the shadows and the rising fog of magic, trying to clear the confusion from her mind. Her head spun, distorting her ability to see clearly.

Lips pressed against her right ankle. She glanced down, but there was nothing there. Yet she felt the kiss in vivid detail, right down to the tender scrape of a man's stubbled jaw. The mouth moved up her thigh, leaving a slow, simmering burn in its wake.

And then the lips were everywhere at once: suckling her nipple, pressed against the small hollow at the base of her spine, tickling her mound of pubic hair.

A man's mouth pressed against hers.

She knew, deep in the logical recesses of her mind, that the ghostly touch shouldn't have felt real; but it did. The lips were hot -- oh, so very, very hot. She moaned and opened beneath the firm pressure, allowing a tongue to slip inside.

The heavy weight of two masculine bodies pressed against her from the front and back. Firm erections nudged her belly and spine. They trapped her with a strong warmth, making her feel tenderly vulnerable... and infinitely aroused.

The female voices around her intensified, growing louder. The *whoosh* of magic kindling nearby nearly brought Heidi out of her reverie, but it wasn't enough to break the spell that had been cast over her.

She knew those lips. That tongue.

Varin.

She recognized the broad hands that slipped down the sides of her ribcage to cup her ass and pull her hips forward, closer to his eager, waiting cock. Her palms itched to touch him. She lifted her hands and wrapped them around the space where he should have been, but grabbed nothing but air.

The brief kiss shattered, ending much too soon. Her fantasy lovers' groins moved against her pussy, her ass. They caressed her and teased her, taunted her with infinite patience but made no move to slip inside her body.

Wetness seeped between her legs, adding the intensity of her arousal to the gathering currents of magic growing hot around her. Her nipples pebbled. A flush rose into her cheeks and spread outward, setting her entire body aflame.

Heidi gasped and threw her head back. She glanced up toward the fat moon that hung in the strip of sky she could make out through the foliage draping over the clearing. Her vision was clouded with lust. Her breasts heaved and her hips shimmied of their own accord, demanding something only her mystery lovers could give her.

Her head felt weighed down with more pressure than she could handle. A heavy ache pressed in on her temples. She forced herself to swallow but her throat constricted, preventing her from drawing a full breath.

“This is it! The portal’s opening. Heidi, get ready!”

“You’re so ready for us, aren’t you, sweetheart? Touch her there. She wants it -- can’t you tell?”

Heidi whimpered as a pair of hands dipped between her gently parted thighs. A curved finger coiled in the nest of curls covering her mound and then moved a little further down, nudging her opening. Her pussy spasmed, her inner walls clenching and unclenching with the desperate need to be filled.

“Heidi?” Lillian’s voice sounded very far away. “Heidi! Shit! Something’s wrong! She’s not with us!”

The howling sounds of battling demons and Summoners erupted through the clearing. Metal clashed against metal, but the screeching noise seemed to be coming from somewhere else. From another world, maybe. One far away from Heidi’s euphoric ecstasy.

Raw need sizzled in her veins. Pain lit a path through her body, culminating in the thundering ache behind her temples.

Slowly, before she could make sense of it, a man’s face took form. It rippled and burned, etching itself into the empty air right in front of her.

“Varin,” she whispered.

Suddenly, the aches darting through her muscles melded into a familiar gnawing loneliness. Varin smiled at her then -- a real smile, not one of those cocky, arrogant grins he’d tossed her way when they’d first met and had sparred for control of the sexual magic that could have doomed them all.

He gathered her to him, pressing her against his warm body. She could see him now, all lean lines and masculine strength. The sight took her breath away.

His hand joined the finger that still circled her opening and settled against the folds of her pussy, drawing through them as though in slow motion. Every flickering contact sent a shudder of longing through her body. She didn’t know how this was possible. When had he crossed the barrier into her world? To assure herself of his presence, she reached up and slipped her palms along his back.

Oh fuck.

She could touch him. He was solid and real, his muscles as taut and firm as if they’d been masterfully

carved by a sculptor.

The rounded tip of his shaft jerked against her stomach and she sighed softly, letting her forehead settle against his shoulder. She drew in his scent, thick with masculine sweat and heavy with the aroma of lust.

A gasp caught in her throat. Her entire body trembled, swaying on the altar. Her eyelids drifted closed.

“Heidi! Damn! We need you!”

“It’s no use. She’s gone!”

A sharp cry tore through the air. Screams blended into background noise then blissfully faded into oblivion. It was better this way, Heidi told herself as more trickles of awareness slipped from her mind. The only cries she wanted to hear were Luke’s and Varin’s as they filled her. She yearned to listen to them groan their pleasure as their cocks thrust into her needy body.

“Damn it, Heidi! We’re overwhelmed. Too many demons slipped through. It’s too late to stop it! Get your ass through that portal and end it from the other side!”

“She can’t hear you!”

“She’s abandoned us!”

“Like hell she has.”

Something hot snapped against Heidi’s right nipple. She groaned and arched into it, thinking it to be Varin’s teeth nibbling at one of the stiff buds. When the other nipple stung with the same sensation, jolts of awareness shot through Heidi’s veins.

She gasped for breath, the twin weights that had been pressing in on her suddenly gone. Her head spun. She couldn’t concentrate on anything but random fleeting images that slipped out of her grasp as soon as she tried to focus on one.

“Varin,” she murmured, but the word caught in her throat and came out as a strangled croak instead.

She thought she could make out Lillian’s eyes, glowing a fierce blue as bright as the magical energy encircling her in swirling streams. Behind Lillian, blood splattered the clearing. The Summoners were being pushed back by a horde of demons whose deformed bodies were as grotesque as the jagged metal weapons they swung through the air.

Only the altar had been untouched by the crimson spray of blood. It stood apart from the mayhem, protected by a sphere of magic that undulated around the stone slab.

Lillian eyed Heidi with wary suspicion mixed with something that looked like terror. And pity. “You started this. You end it.”

Abruptly, Heidi’s breath was snatched from her lungs. She fought to regain it and clawed at her throat, her eyes widening as fear gripped her tightly in an unforgiving hold.

The portal above her head widened, blocking out the sky. A broad, masculine hand shot out. Perfectly manicured square nails reached for her. Instead of grabbing her and pulling her through, the man’s index

finger twirled, as though struggling to unravel a tangled string.

With a gasp of terror, Heidi looked down to where he pointed just in time to see what looked like a stream of gauzy cloud being tugged through the flesh just above her breast. She barely had time to notice the gold chain that extended from her right nipple to the left before the breath was yanked from her lungs.

A strangled cry died on her lips. Tears spilled unheeded down her cheeks. She pressed her palm over her chest, but it was no use. Her soul continued to slip out, drawn to the creature that commanded it.

A throaty, sexy chuckle was the last sound she heard. It slipped through her mind as she struggled for her last breath.

At long last, just when she thought the comforting shadows had abandoned her, darkness swept in and claimed her.

Chapter Two

Cold seeped into Luke Howard's bones as he huddled against the narrow edge of his cell, lost in a shroud of agony. Today's torture session had been excruciating. Over the long years he'd spent in Hell, he'd had to endure more brutality than he'd ever thought possible, yet nothing had even come close to the excruciating torment his captors had just dispensed.

The wraiths and Demon Guardians who yanked him from his cell twice a day and tossed him back inside when they were finished had left no part of his body untouched. He ached everywhere, though his tormentors had been careful to mend all the broken bones and staunch the bleeding when they were through. What remained was a bone-deep ache that seemed to be everywhere at once, pounding against each nerve ending, terrorizing every pain receptor in his body.

Grimacing against the spasm that rippled through his muscles, Luke drew his knees into his chest and wrapped his arms around his legs, bunching himself up into a ball in an effort to bring some warmth back into his body.

Even though every rock wall in the Underworld seeped with inner heat, Luke was perpetually frozen to the bone. Ever since he'd been sucked back into the gaping maws of Hell, it felt as though an icy chill had gripped his heart, imbuing every part of him with soul-numbing crystals.

The only time the glacial chill abated was when Varin's body was pressed up against him. Unfortunately, those brief moments of comfort were few and far between. They'd become even rarer of late, as with each day that passed, Varin had continued to grow even more quiet and withdrawn than he'd been before meeting Heidi. In the two years Varin had been his cellmate, Luke could count the number of words they'd exchanged on one hand, so the man's sudden sullenness shouldn't have concerned him.

Yet it did. It bothered him even more than the cruelty of the wraiths or the howling laughter of the

Demon Guardians.

He'd seen Varin -- *thereal* Varin -- come to life as Heidi had shared herself with both of them. He'd watched the man embrace her wholly as he fucked her with the kind of intensity Luke had never before witnessed.

He remembered the jealousy burning in his gut as he'd watched the woman he loved being pleased by another man, but he also recalled the all-encompassing arousal that had come with witnessing such a bold, wanton act. It had only ignited his lust further to know that she was doing it for him.

To save him. To redeem him.

It hadn't worked, but that didn't change anything. The more Luke had touched her, the more he'd understood she was *his*. She'd given herself over to him willingly. More importantly, she'd sacrificed her body to the demon who'd sworn to return him to Hell. Yet somewhere along the line, something unexpected had happened.

A connection he couldn't deny had developed between Heidi and Varin. Even more shockingly unanticipated, a tender bond had also grown between Varin and Luke. It was fragile still, like the strand of a spider web that could be broken by a light gust of wind, but it was there. And it was the only thing that kept Luke from giving in to the dark despair that constantly clawed at his soul.

The gate to his cell scraped across the floor. Luke pushed the memories away and lifted his head in time to see one of the Demon Guardians haul Varin off his feet.

Varin wasn't a small man. At over six feet and built like a football player, he struck an imposing figure, even when held a foot off the ground. For a brief moment, orange firelight flickered against the myriad bruises marring Varin's chiseled cheekbones and sculpted jaw. The light caught in the depthless black orbs of his eyes, illuminating the dark glint of fury within.

The Guardian held him in mid-air for a moment, and Luke watched them both, marveling at the difference between the two men. Before he'd fallen from grace, Varin had been a Demon Guardian himself. Now, however, despite his strength and the feral grace apparent in his muscular form, he no longer resembled the fierce creatures that guarded the Underworld's prisoners.

The Demon Guardian's gray armor was more for show than protection. None of the captives could harm their wardens, as the Guardians were protected by their magical nature. The demon's muscles practically rippled in the orange light, and a grin split his face, revealing perfect white teeth. The look on his features was so cruel, it made Luke want to crawl back even farther inside his cell. If his back hadn't already been pressed against the wall, he might have done just that.

The Guardian launched Varin inside the cell with enough force to hurl him against the wall, inches from where Luke sat huddled in his corner. Varin didn't even grunt as he slammed against the solid rock. Luke reached out to steady him as the man stumbled back, clearly dazed, but Varin quickly shrugged off his touch and lurched toward the opposite corner.

The cell gate slammed closed.

"Still won't talk to me, huh?" Luke licked his dry lips, surprised at how gritty his voice sounded.

As expected, Varin ignored him.

Luke sighed. The night they'd spent with Heidi had left its mark on both of them. It had brought Luke more joy than he'd thought possible, and when it was over, it had summoned the soul-numbing chill to take the place of Heidi's all-encompassing warmth.

But it had been much harder on Varin. He'd sacrificed everything he was -- all he'd ever been -- to save her. He'd given up his only chance at redemption in the eyes of Baal, the Lord of the Underworld, for a mortal woman he'd never see again.

In the time the three of them had spent together, Luke had realized there was more to Varin than met the eye. He wasn't human, but neither was he the callous, vicious breed of demon with which Luke had become familiar.

Except down here, in the bowels of the Underworld, Varin *was* human. His demon powers had been stripped from him, leaving him as vulnerable to the cruel whims of Hell's denizens as any other prisoner.

In the past, the Demon Guardians had always tormented Varin with more fury and sadistic vengefulness than they'd shown any other captive. Since he'd returned, their relentless cruelty had increased ten-fold.

Many things had changed since their brief respite in the mortal realm, but Varin's feelings for Heidi had stayed the same. Luke had seen the utter tenderness in his cellmate's gaze as Varin had claimed her. He still heard that same possessive devotion in Varin's voice when the man uttered Heidi's name in his sleep.

And every now and again, when exhaustion overwhelmed him, Varin even murmured Luke's name with the same reverent fervor.

More than anything else, those whispered words gave Luke hope.

"Were you this stubborn as a child?" Luke tilted his head to peer into the opposite corner. Torches lit the outside hallway, but only a flicker of orange light reached inside their cell through the barred gate.

No sound made its way from Varin's corner. Not even the steady rhythm of the man's breathing.

A shiver of apprehension snaked up Luke's spine. What had the wraiths and Demon Guardians been doing to him? What if they'd removed his tongue, robbing him of his ability to speak?

The chill creeping up Luke's body intensified. He shifted forward, scraping his knees across the rough stone. His shoulder throbbed as he propped his weight on an outstretched hand and slid toward the dark, masculine shape that beckoned to him, looking for the slightest reassurance, the smallest sign of life.

Reaching out, he slipped his palm across a muscular calf. Coarse hair slipped between his fingers. Varin's flesh was warm and pulsed beneath his touch, sending an electric jolt of lust into his veins.

That brief contact was enough to rouse a sliver of heat from Luke's groin. It curled up around his balls, stiffening his cock.

A groan caught in his throat.

He slid his hand up farther, infinitely slowly, held back by the burning ache in his muscles and the fear that any moment now, Varin would push him away like he'd done so many times before. Tentatively, he reached out and brushed the tips of his fingers against the man's pubic hair.

Varin's flaccid shaft, silky and soft, caressed the side of Luke's hand, then twitched, stiffening almost instantly. The thick member elongated as a hoarse moan slipped free from Varin's throat.

In a flash of movement, Varin reached down and clamped a broad hand around Luke's wrist, yanking his fingers away from his hard shaft.

"What's the use?" Varin's voice boomed inside the cramped interior of the cell. "Nothing will change if we do this. Nothing!"

The raw agony so apparent in Varin's words tore at Luke's heart even as relief suffused his veins. The man could still speak. He'd just been infinitely hard-headed.

Stubbornness Luke could deal with. He just had to prove to Varin how wrong he'd been.

Instead of pulling away, Luke shifted his weight upward along Varin's long legs and pressed his cheek against the man's firm stomach. "Nothing, huh? You feel the same with me here, lying on you, as you did when you were sulking all by yourself in this corner?"

"No," Varin growled. "Now my legs hurt more."

Luke wasn't buying it. It was clear Varin would fight him with his last breath, despite the fact that intimacy and genuine closeness was what they both needed above all else.

Varin wouldn't listen to reason. Fine. Luke didn't have to talk. He turned his head a fraction of an inch and placed a slow, lingering kiss to Varin's stomach, just above his navel. The man sucked in a breath, his abdomen rippling with the effort of keeping still. Luke's tongue snaked out, slipping over the planes and valleys that made up Varin's perfectly toned stomach.

A groan caught in Luke's throat. He'd never seen anyone as perfectly formed as his cellmate. The man oozed sexuality from every pore. No wonder Heidi hadn't been able to resist him. With his broad, muscular shoulders, chiseled cheekbones and hair the color of black velvet, he was every woman's fantasy.

Until recently, Luke wouldn't have thought it possible to be so aroused by another man. He liked the soft, welcoming warmth of a woman too much to be swayed by a sculpted chest and rock-hard abs. But there was something about Varin that called to every part of him, and it went deeper than the primal hunger for human contact that gnawed at his soul.

He had the desperate, sinking feeling that even if he'd met Varin at the Mall of America, he'd have been just as eager to take the man's cock into his mouth.

Luke reached his free hand down and slipped his fingers into the silky hair at the apex of Varin's thighs. His mouth followed the path laid down by his questing fingertips. He buried his nose in the dark curls, inhaling Varin's potent scent. The faint smell of sweat lingered in the man's groin, but far from being unpleasant, it caused another jolt of sudden lust to clench in Luke's sac, drawing up his balls against the base of his shaft.

Varin released Luke's hand, and Luke dug his fingertips into the man's hip as his lips made contact with the head of Varin's cock. He'd been careful to avoid the raging erection until now, but Varin's rapid, shallow breaths encouraged him to seek the thick, inviting organ.

His tongue slipped over the bulbous head, dipping for a brief moment into the tiny slit to draw out the musky flavor of the man's pre-cum. Sliding his lips down, Luke smoothed his mouth over the full length of Varin's shaft before finally bringing it back up to the top and taking him deep inside.

Varin slipped his fingers into Luke's hair. "And you called me stubborn."

The soft rumble of Varin's voice sent need quivering low in Luke's belly. A drop of silken liquid dripped from his cock. Finding himself in completely unfamiliar territory, Luke sucked gently at the rounded tip before letting his mouth glide down further, taking more of the man's shaft into his mouth.

Varin's hips pumped upward as though of their own accord. His fingers fisted in Luke's hair, tugging on his scalp. The pain blended with the other myriad aches that sizzled throughout his body, but Luke no longer cared. The pleasure that came from knowing Varin was enjoying this had the unexpected side-effect of banishing the lingering anguish to the back of his brain.

Luke released Varin's cock just long enough to fist his right hand around it and pump fiercely up and down, then his mouth was on his lover's cock again, licking, sucking, demanding. Varin's shaft grew hard as a rock, heavier against Luke's tongue than he'd imagined it would be. He cupped Varin's soft sac in his palm, squeezing his balls gently, eliciting a strangled moan from the man's throat.

In a heartbeat, the dam that had held back all of Varin's pent-up desire seemed to crack and break, unleashing a downpour of pure lust. Varin's entire body writhed, his hips working along with him, fucking Luke's mouth with relentless passion.

Luke dug his fingernails into his palm, while his other hand cradled Varin's vulnerable package. He took as much of Varin's cock into his mouth as he could, forcing his gag reflex to unclench when the tip nudged the back of his throat.

His tongue swirled around the shaft. Varin grunted, deep and low, obviously pleased, so Luke did it again, and again. Varin's thrusts grew more desperate, his fingers yanking Luke's hair harder, urging him on. The tense muscles of the man's thighs rubbed against Luke's shoulders as his hips pumped.

Heat built within Luke, banishing the chill, building into an inferno. It seemed to center in his cock. Unable to hold back any longer, he dislodged his left hand from Varin's hip and brought it down beneath him. Drawing himself up to his knees, he wrapped his fingers around his shaft and stroked.

Once. Twice.

The rhythm of his mouth never slowed. In Luke's other hand, Varin's balls seemed to quiver and separate from one another, lifting to either side of his shaft. A moment later, the first blast of hot cum spilled against the back of Luke's throat.

The heady, intoxicating flavor drenched his senses, setting off his own potent orgasm. His seed spilled between his fingers to splatter onto the floor. Varin's back arched as his cock spasmed, sending another jet of hot cum into Luke's mouth.

He swallowed it down, trembling as his release swept through him. At long last, when he knew he'd lapped up every last drop of cum from Varin's cock, he allowed the spent shaft to slip from his mouth and he collapsed against his lover's legs, his cheek coming to rest on Varin's abdomen.

Neither of them spoke for a long time, but the silence no longer seemed unwelcome. Varin drew small, sensual circles across Luke's cheek with his thumb while his other hand slipped through the tangled locks of Luke's long hair.

"I'm afraid."

The words sounded so foreign, so unguarded, that Luke lifted his head and narrowed his eyes as he glanced up. The darkness made it impossible to make out Varin's face in full detail, but he was able to take in the sharp cheekbones, the slant of his jaw, the way he'd leaned his head back against the rock and closed his eyes.

This was the Varin he knew. Dangerous, silent, rough. Deadly. Yet there was a vulnerability to him that made Luke's heart knock hard against his chest.

"Of what?" he asked at last, when the silence had stretched on for much too long.

Varin sighed and opened his eyes. In the shadows, the black orbs looked shrouded and eerie, without a hint of light to give them the slightest human quality. "Baal isn't going to be satisfied with punishing me this way forever. He'll want more. He'll want..." His voice slipped and fractured, as though he groped for a word he couldn't find.

"Heidi." Luke finished for him.

Varin nodded, swallowing hard. "Tell me she won't do anything foolish, Luke. You know her better than I do. She's not going to try again, is she?"

Luke's thoughts scattered as he tried to come up with the reassuring response Varin longed to hear. In truth, he had no idea what Heidi would or wouldn't do. He didn't really know her any better than Varin did. The first time they'd met had been on stage at Luke's magic show. She'd been an audience volunteer, a woman chosen to be a demon's next victim.

A victim Luke was to provide. Only things hadn't turned out as the demon had expected, and the beast had taken Luke instead.

"I don't know," he answered honestly. "But she should be safe, shouldn't she? You told me you've given her some of your abilities. Won't that protect her from anyone who'd wish to do her harm?"

"Out there, as long as she stays off Baal's radar, perhaps. But in here... not necessarily. She'd be at Baal's mercy, and he could strip her of her powers as quickly as he's taken mine. This is his domain. Demons walk this world only because he allows it."

Luke took a deep breath, pushing down the anxiety that had begun to rise like bile in his throat. His palm swept over Varin's bicep, following the path of a knotted scar that could have been fresh, or might have been there for centuries. Varin's body called to him, inviting him to explore its secrets and discover its mysteries. He only wished he could do it in a warm bed, without the threat of constant pain and terror that accompanied their every moment in the Underworld.

And he wished he could do it with Heidi.

The gate to their cell opened with a screech that jolted Luke upright. Varin's arm closed around his shoulder, pulling him close in a protective gesture that made his throat tighten.

“Get up, scum,” a Demon Guardian said. “Baal has a surprise for you.”

“Tell him to keep it.” Varin’s voice was cold as steel and just as steady. “We’re not interested.”

“Oh, but you will be.” The Demon Guardian reached in and grabbed Varin by the arm, hauling his broad frame out as though he weighed nothing at all. “This surprise is like nothing you’ve ever seen before.”

“What’s he talking about?” Luke murmured as a second Demon Guardian yanked him from Varin’s side.

Varin didn’t reply, but he shot Luke a look meant to silence him. The message was clear. Whatever *surprise* Baal had in store for them couldn’t be pleasant.

The demons half-dragged, half-shoved Luke and Varin down a long, winding tunnel. Torches flickered at regular intervals for a while, then gave way to lava streams that poured across the face of the walls.

They walked past the torture chambers, where the screams of those condemned to suffer for all eternity reached Luke’s ears and faded into oblivion as they passed. With every step, the soul-numbing chill returned, banishing the warmth Varin had provided for such a short time.

Luke glanced at his companion, anxiety knotting tightly in his belly. The muscles in Varin’s arms and legs rippled with tension as he walked. Bruises stood out vividly against his skin, but if he felt the discomfort, he gave no indication.

The demons came to an abrupt stop in front of a streaming wall of flowing lava. The molten liquid poured down the rock face like a waterfall, soundless in its intensity. One of the Guardians reached through the cascading torrent of fire, not flinching when the lava made contact with his flesh and the scent of charred meat filled the air.

Abruptly, the molten downpour ended, revealing a deep, lushly decorated cavern. Luke had only a brief glimpse of sleek black furniture and a real bed before his captor shoved him ruthlessly inside. He was vaguely aware of Varin landing on his knees beside him when a bright flash of blue light made him shut his eyes tightly against the brilliant illumination bursting from the center of the room.

The light died down as quickly as it had flared. In that heartbeat, Luke forgot to breathe. There, in the center of the room, Heidi lay crumpled on her side, her knees drawn up against her stomach, one arm splayed out beside her head.

Only it wasn’t *this* Heidi. This woman was the same height and weight, with the same perfect curves and long legs. A black leather bustier and tiny thong clung to her curvy form. Her skin was still impossibly pale; her red curls still the same wild riot as they framed her face.

But, oh, God, that face. Dusky eyeliner rimmed each eyelid. Lipstick so dark as to be almost black filled in her full lips.

Most astonishing of all were the two demon horns that protruded from just above her hairline. The same color as her lipstick, they were perhaps the length of his pinkie finger and curled downward at the front.

Varin’s howl of fury tore through the chamber, alerting Luke that the man was on his feet and running toward the center of the room. Before Luke could even open his mouth to speak, Heidi’s eyes fluttered

open.

She had perhaps a fraction of a second in which to make sense of her surroundings. Her gaze settled firmly on Varin, who was rushing toward her with a speed borne of pure desperation.

She lifted her hand. "*Lee'raa ti!*"

For the second time that night, Varin's body was hurled through the air and launched at a rock wall.

Chapter Three

Molten lava spilled silently over black rock, casting the cavernous room in shifting golden light. The flickering blaze illuminated a man's broad-shouldered, lean-hipped form as he flew through the air to land halfway between his companion and the door.

Magic swarmed at Heidi's fingertips, tickling her skin. Her entire body thrummed with it, as though she'd become a living conduit for the power that spread through every blood cell traveling through her overheated veins. She rose; her gaze fixed firmly on the man who'd attempted to attack her.

Despite the incessant pounding behind her temples, Heidi's hand remained steady as she raised it and took aim.

"No!"

The savage cry had come from the golden-haired man. From the corner of her eye, Heidi saw him run to her attacker's side, but her focus remained fixed on the man on the floor. Dark hair spilled halfway down his back, framing a slanted nose that looked to have been broken at least once, a firm mouth and chiseled cheekbones. He rolled onto his stomach, lifting himself to his hands and knees. She had a brief glimpse of an erect cock jutting out from between his legs to point forward, thick and long and hard.

He turned his head then, and his gaze locked with hers. The man sucked in a breath between clenched teeth and froze in mid-rise as he took in her battle-ready stance.

Heidi swallowed hard. His eyes were like nothing she'd ever seen before. Midnight black, deeper even than the color of his hair, they looked bottomless in his impossibly handsome face. She could get lost in those eyes. He had the power to hypnotize her, to hold her prisoner for as long as he cared to look at her that way -- as though his entire world had suddenly shattered around him, and she was at the center of the turmoil ravaging his soul.

Heidi's heart thudded a desperate rhythm, beating out of control. A jolt of recognition slammed into her gut, so potent and unexpected that it made the magic wrapped around her index finger flicker and begin to fade.

The tangible thread of power that had wound up tightly within her began to unravel, dissolving into an ethereal fog that dissipated through the room. Her arm fell to her side, the magic lying dormant for the moment.

“Who --”

The sound of applause flooded the room, seeming to come from everywhere and nowhere at once. Thunderous clapping filled the air and thrummed against the pounding that had already settled behind her brows to turn the ache in her head to sheer agony.

She dropped to her knees and pressed the heels of her palms against her temples in a feeble attempt to drown out the noise. The faint light in the room intensified, turning a deep crimson red. Brightness flooded Heidi’s vision, adding to the agony assaulting her senses.

“Wonderful! For a moment there, I thought you were actually going to kill him. Although that is the point, isn’t it? In any case, it’s rather more fun if you take your time to play with your toys before destroying them, don’t you think?”

That had apparently been a rhetorical question, as the masculine voice continued to boom through the room. “I gave no orders that they should be released. Grab them both and gag them.”

The clapping had stopped. Heidi dropped her hands to her lap and lifted her head, squinting through wary eyes against the harsh red glow. To her surprise, the light had dimmed as well, leaving the orange diffusion of lava to imbue the room with a soft incandescent flush.

A few feet away from her stood a man who looked wholly unfamiliar to her. Shadows shrouded him, despite the fact that he stood in the brightest spot in the room. The light from the flowing lava seemed to stop just short of the edge of his shoes, unable to penetrate the near proximity of his personal space.

Heidi could barely make out his features, but she had the impression of a lean, almost gaunt face, black hair tied low at the nape of his neck and strong jaw. He seemed to be wearing a stylish suit that encased his broad frame to perfection.

Most stunning of all, though, were his eyes. While the dark-haired man’s black orbs had drawn her into their forbidden depths, this man’s fiery red eyes had the opposite effect. They repelled her the longer she looked directly at them. A feeling of despair washed over Heidi as she tried to hold his gaze. Bile rose in the back of her throat.

At last, she lowered her head. The feeling of hopelessness lifted, leaving behind the same deep sense of confusion and unease.

“Who are you?” Heidi asked when she could trust her voice.

The apparition waved a hand through the air. “That’s irrelevant at this point. The question you really should be asking is... Who are *you* ?”

Heidi shook her head. “I know who I --”

The words halted in her throat, along with her breath. She groped for the answer she knew to be lying on the tip of her tongue. Finding an empty, gaping space where her sense of identity should have been, she frowned, adding to the throbbing ache behind her temples.

“Silina vi.”

Squeezing her eyes tightly shut, Heidi gathered the magic drifting around her and used it to delve into the deepest, most intimate parts of her mind. She had to find an answer there. She obviously knew who she was. How else could she remember the words of power that brought order to the chaotic energy floating through the room?

And how else could she remember her name?

“Heidi Cole,” she said, relief suffusing every word. “I’m Heidi Cole.”

“So you are.” The dark man took a step toward her. “Traveling to the mortal realm always leaves you a little addled when you return. Thankfully, any lingering memory loss is only temporary. And this time, you still seem to have full control of your abilities, which is another positive sign.”

She glanced up only as far as the space where his mouth would have been, trying to avoid gazing into his daunting fiery eyes. “I -- I do this often?”

“Every decade or so. I can’t seem to stop you.” A flicker of a smile beamed from within the darkness, sending a skitter of fear to shiver up her spine. “You’re absolutely stubborn when you want to be, my love.”

Heidi took a deep, trembling breath. The way this man addressed her, with so much familiarity, made her slightly queasy. “I don’t think I should be here. This doesn’t feel right.”

The shadowed figure shrugged. “Here we go again. We’ve been through this a dozen times, sweetheart. Reach within yourself and feel the truth of what I’m telling you.”

She narrowed her eyes. “That’s what I’m trying to do. It’s not working. There’s something... wrong about all this.”

“I knew you’d say that. So in the interest of saving time...” He threw up his hand and swirled a few strands of magic around his thumb. As he did so, Heidi had a clear view of long tapered fingers, square nails and a perfect masculine manicure. Another jolt of recognition slid through her, bringing with it the remnants of a brief recollection. That same hand, slipping through a patch of midnight to reach for her -- and then nothing.

She sighed, aggravated by her inability to remember key pertinent things about herself and what had happened before she awoke.

“Here.” The man handed her a bronze mirror he’d conjured out of thin air.

Heidi grabbed the handle and raised a quizzical eyebrow. “I know what I look like.” At least, she thought she did. She raised the mirror slowly, remembering her pale skin, her unruly red curls, her deep blue eyes, her black horns --

What the fuck?

“Horns?! I have horns?!”

“Every royal demon has horns, princess. I guess I’ll have no choice but to do what I should have done from the beginning, but I’d hoped you’d remember everything on your own this time.” The man bowed low at the waist, though the gesture seemed stiff and mocking. “My name is Baal. I’m the ruler of the Underworld. And you, my blood goddess, are my mate.”

A muffled cry came from somewhere behind Baal, shifting Heidi’s attention from the mirror to the two men who were struggling in the death grip of two tall guards. At least, she assumed they were guards, judging by the charcoal metal armor they wore. Their faces sported twin snarls. They held each man’s hands bound behind his back, their palms pressed against the men’s mouths to stifle any sound they might make.

Apprehension swirled in Heidi’s stomach as she returned her attention to the mirror and tried to make sense of what she’d learned. Even her face looked different. She’d always been pale, but now she looked positively ghostly, as though she’d lived without the touch of the sun on her skin for an eternity. Her eyes were rimmed with black makeup, her lashes impossibly long, her full lips the same shade of dark crimson that had almost blinded her when Baal had appeared.

Something wasn’t right. She didn’t feel like the mate of the ruler of the Underworld. The only thing she felt for this dark creature was dread and mistrust. But her appearance and the power she wielded as easily as breathing told a different story.

“Why do I put myself through this?” she asked.

Baal looked her up and down. “Women are difficult to understand, my love. Who am I to begin to speculate on the whims and fancies of the female mind?”

A surge of anger rose to the back of Heidi’s throat. “Female whims, huh? I don’t buy it. Why would I leave all this without a good reason?”

“You have a reason.” Baal spoke slowly, as though trying to reason with a child. “Or at least, you think you do. Don’t you get it yet, sweetheart? You’re in Hell. That means you’re dead. D-E-A-D.” He spelled out the word, as though that would make it easier for her brain to grasp. It didn’t help.

Heidi gaped at him and pinched her arm. “That’s not possible. I can feel everything. I have a real body! I’m not dead!”

“The Underworld doesn’t work the same way as the mortal realm. Here, you can be as ethereal or corporeal as you wish to be. It doesn’t make a bit of difference. On the other side, however, you don’t exist. Not in your current form, anyway.”

Heidi’s head felt like it was preparing to split in two. “So how can I travel to the mortal realm, then?”

“You find a temporary host. You use her body for the duration of your stay. Normally, you return to me on your own. This time, you required a little extra incentive.”

She grimaced. “What kind of incentive?”

“I had to get you myself. Trust me, that wasn’t something I enjoyed doing. I put myself at risk every time even a small part of me slips through to the mortal realm.” He waved a hand in the air. “No matter. I needed you back here, and I did what I had to do.”

“Why would I refuse to return?” She narrowed her gaze. “What happened up there?”

“Like I said, I don’t understand women. I do know that, usually, mortal ties are easy to break. Not so for someone as...*sentimental* as you. Something happens when you visit the mortal realm. It calls to you, lulls you into believing you can wreak more havoc up there than you can here. Although that may be true, I need you at my side.”

She rubbed the bridge of her nose. What Baal said made a strange kind of sense, yet she couldn’t help but feel she was missing a part of the story. The truth of that knowledge burrowed all the way into the marrow of her bones. Somehow, the secret to the mystery of who she really was tied in to the dark-haired man and his golden companion.

She looked past Baal again, taking in the formidable physique of the man who’d lunged at her. He’d been the first image to flicker across her field of vision when she’d awakened. At the time, every instinct in her body had screamed at her to protect herself. So she’d done the only thing she could, but he seemed to hold no malice toward her. Instead, every tense muscle in his body was angled toward Baal, and the fury evident on his features had only one target.

“I get you,” Heidi said, pointing at Baal. “And I sort of get me. What I really don’t understand is who they are.”

“Ah!” Baal spun around, leaving shimmering trails of shadow in his wake. “I’d almost forgotten the best part of your recovery after your trips above ground. What do you think?”

He marched toward the two captives and swept out a hand as though presenting prized possessions to be admired. Despite herself, Heidi couldn’t help doing just that.

Both men were naked, their toned bodies displaying myriad bruises that did nothing to mar the perfection of their rippling physiques. Their bodies trembled with barely contained rage and their thick, eager cocks twitched as though hungry for the opportunity to strike.

The sight of those solid erections sent heat to pool between Heidi’s legs. For the first time, she became aware that she wore precious little to hide her body from the prying eyes of all the men in the room. A tight leather bustier and matching thong were her only garments, clinging to her curves and leaving nothing to the imagination. Her breasts were pushed up and forward in the tight constraints of the leather, forming two perfect spheres and a deep valley of cleavage in between.

“They’re... umm... fine.”

She cringed at how hollow her words sounded. The men were more than *fine*. They were spectacular. But who were they? And what was she expected to do with them?

“Of course they are,” Baal said, a note of pride and affection in his tone. “You picked them yourself. They’re your favorite playthings. You’ve been grooming them for months in preparation for your return.”

Heidi shook her head. The throbbing in her cunt had intensified the longer she gazed upon the physical perfection of the two captives. Lust swirled in her veins, making it hard to focus.

“I don’t understand. What have I been preparing them to do?”

Baal heaved an exaggerated sigh. “The mortal realm takes its toll on you. I beg you not to go every time

you choose to make the trek up there, but you refuse. It used to take you years to recover after a trip, but ever since you discovered the release, your recovery time has been remarkable.”

“The release?” Heidi echoed, growing more confused by the moment.

Baal reached down and touched his index finger to the tip of the dark-haired man’s cock. The man jerked back like he’d been burned, his black eyes darkening even further with turbulent rage. Beside him, his golden companion’s eyelashes drifted down, hiding the turmoil in his own gaze.

“It’s quite simple, really.” Baal stepped between them and spread his hands out to either side of his body. “Just don’t ask me to explain how it works. This is your magical concoction. I only know that when you’re through with them, you return back to me as wholesomely evil as you’ve always been. Truly, one hundred percent yourself.”

The pounding in Heidi’s temples had grown to unbearable proportions. Only the hungry ache between her legs matched the thudding pain, each sensation vying for her attention. She rubbed her index and middle finger across her right temple, trying to keep her focus on the issue at hand.

“And just what, exactly, is it that these men do for me?”

“It’s not what they do for you, princess. It’s what you do for them. *To* them.”

Having grown tired of playing games, Heidi placed the hand mirror on the ground and lifted herself to her full height. “I’m listening.”

“As I said before, it’s simple.” He paused, letting the tension build until Heidi was ready to scream. She’d opened her mouth to do just that when he continued. “You fuck them. Then you kill them.”

* * *

Varin stood perfectly still in the Demon Guardian’s grip, his body held rigid as slow burning hatred simmered in his veins. He’d served Baal for centuries before his initial fall from his Lord’s grace. In all that time, he’d learned what the ruler of the Underworld was capable of. Deceit was among Baal’s favorite weapons. It left no scars -- no visible ones, anyway -- and allowed him to use as much or as little pressure as he wished to achieve the desired results. It was also the most effective method he’d discovered to turn friends, siblings and lovers against each other.

Judging by the look of horror and fascination on Heidi’s beautiful features as she glanced first at Luke, then at Varin, Baal’s plan was working. Without a touch of physical torture, he’d managed to get Heidi exactly where he needed her: willing to believe that she was a divine princess of the Underworld and able to destroy the men she’d come here to save.

Before his trip to the mortal realm, Varin would have considered Baal’s plan a magnificent display of his Lord’s dark villainy. Now, the only emotions that churned in his gut were contempt and fear. Not for himself, but for Luke. And for Heidi, who had no idea what she’d gotten herself into.

Damn it, Heidi! Why did you have to be so fucking determined to rescue us?

He darted a glance at Luke from the corner of his eye and felt the anger he’d directed at Heidi begin to dissipate. Looking at Luke, he knew exactly why Heidi had returned. She’d sworn to retrieve him from the depths of Hell if it was the last thing she ever did. This time, Varin thought, it just might be.

“I’ll leave you to it, then,” Baal said, his voice booming against the cavern walls.

Heidi gave no indication she heard him. The only evidence of her awareness came from the way her chest rose and fell with the force of her shallow breathing, lifting her breasts upward with each ragged sigh.

“I want you back to your old self as soon as you can manage it.” Baal strode toward the lava-drenched exit, not bothering to spare Varin and Luke a second glance. “Enjoy yourself, but do be quick about it. Fuck them senseless first if you must. It doesn’t matter to me. Just be certain they’re dead before you leave this room. You’ll know it when their souls have expired, as they’ll rise from their bodies and travel to the depths of the Underworld to join the billions of other damned souls.”

“So these men... they’re not dead?” She hesitated, drawing her lower lip between her teeth. “Like I am?”

“No, princess. They’re still human. That’s what makes this so much fun.”

Not waiting for Heidi to reply, Baal snapped his fingers. The Demon Guardians released their captives and fell back a few steps to stand guard on either side of the cascading lava door.

Baal waved his right hand, pausing the flow of molten rock while he stood inside the curve of the threshold, then turned back to Heidi. “Oh, one last thing you should remember as you play. Your toys will lie. They’ll do everything in their power to avoid their fate. In your natural capacity as my Queen, you’d remain unmoved by their pleas and no doubt quite persuasive arguments. In your current state, however, I’m not so sure they won’t get to you. So I’m telling you now, I’ll be watching you. If you give me any reason to believe they’ve convinced you of some lunacy or other, I am going to come in here and kill them myself. If that happens, though, I can’t guarantee what kind of effect it will have on you. Understood?”

Heidi shifted on the balls of her bare feet and shook her head as though clearing it after a momentary daze. “Got it. Sex and death. It doesn’t sound too complicated.”

Baal laughed. The rock amplified the horrid deafening sound until it echoed back in rippling cackles. Unmistakable evil rolled through the chamber, accompanying Baal and his cronies as they all left the room.

The torrent of liquid rock resumed its abundant gushing flow, cutting off any avenue of escape Varin, Luke or Heidi might have had. Not that it would have helped if he’d left the door unblocked. The three of them could have run through every winding tunnel in the Underworld for an eternity and they still wouldn’t have managed to find a way out, because there simply wasn’t one. Opening a portal through the fabric of space and time was the only method of transportation between the mortal realm and the dark recesses of Hell.

If Varin still had his powers, he’d waste no time tearing a hole into thin air and shoving Heidi and Luke through it. As it was, he had nothing but his body and the truth of his words, neither of which were a match for Baal’s convincing display of mastery.

“So...” Heidi lifted a supple arm, which undulated as she twirled blue strands of magic around her wrist. “I guess you have no say in any of this, huh?”

Varin opened his mouth to answer, but Luke was faster. He moved toward Heidi with the speed of a predator, his golden hair flowing behind him like an abundant lion's mane.

"That's not exactly true. We volunteered for this duty. It's an honor to lay down our lives in sacrifice so that you might once again rise from the ashes of your mortal self and become the great deity you've always been."

Varin knew his jaw hung open, but he couldn't get words out. He'd expected Luke to fight Baal's villainy with every bone in his body. Instead, he was calmly playing along.

Too calmly.

Pride and unmistakable affection swelled up within Varin's chest as he stepped forward and stood beside the younger man. "He's right," Varin said, pleased with the thundering confidence in his tone. "We're... *honored* to assist you in any way we can."

Assist you to remember who you are. And get you the fuck out of here as soon as your memory returns.

He left the words unspoken, knowing she wouldn't understand. Clearly, though Baal had stripped her of her memories, he'd left her in full possession of her magical abilities. The Lord of the Underworld had needed those to prove to her that she was who he said she was.

That mistake would have to be enough for Varin to use against him and send Heidi back to the mortal realm, where she belonged. If it wasn't, they were all doomed, as it was the only miscalculation Baal was likely to make.

Heidi furrowed her brows. She glanced from Luke to Varin, then back again, confusion and a hint of skepticism playing across her face. Loosening some of the magical tendrils and letting them dissipate into thin air, she pointed a slender finger at Luke's chest. "Did I do that to you?"

Luke glanced down to the spot she indicated. A smile curved one side of his mouth. "As much as I'd like to say those are love marks bestowed upon me, I'm afraid the truth isn't nearly as seductive."

"The guards." Heidi pressed her lips together, her mouth thinning into a flat, bloodless line. "They looked like the type of men who'd enjoy hitting first and asking questions later."

"You're not like that." Varin moved close enough to touch her, but stopped just short of reaching out. He didn't want to frighten her and experience a repeat of what had happened earlier.

It was clear to him she had no idea who either of them were. She'd reacted out of instinct alone, using the demon powers Varin had given her, which were now as much a part of her as her curls or her blue eyes.

The longer Varin thought about it, the more devious Baal's plan turned out to be. He'd allowed Heidi to keep all her magic, even though he could have yanked it from her in a heartbeat as he'd done to Varin. Ah, but it was so much sweeter to watch her struggle with the overwhelming energy at her fingertips as she grappled with the magical power that she still hadn't learned to fully control.

With the snap of her fingers and a few well-timed words, Heidi could snuff out both of their mortal souls. He couldn't let that happen. *He wouldn't* let that happen.

Heidi ran her fingers through her hair, grimacing when her thumb nudged her horns. "What am I like, then? I can't seem to remember much about my life before..." She waved a hand through the air, the gesture encompassing the chamber and perhaps the rest of the Underworld. "Before all this."

Luke moved to stand behind her, his slate-gray eyes sparkling with genuine affection. From her vantage point, Heidi couldn't see him, which was a shame, Varin thought. If she could get a glimpse of the tenderness and unmistakable ardor in Luke's gaze, perhaps she'd begin to understand that their relationship ran much deeper than Baal had let on.

"You're unlike anyone I've ever met," Luke whispered, trailing his fingertips across the nape of her neck.

Heidi shuddered visibly under his touch, her eyelids drooping slightly as he continued the gentle caress.

Emboldened by the knowledge that she wasn't going to strike out at either of them again, Varin closed the remaining distance and pressed his body against hers. He lowered his head, pleased when she didn't flinch or attempt to move away. Her breathing grew shallower and her warm breath tickled his lips.

"You're bold and daring, courageous and unafraid. You don't take orders from anyone, and you don't back down in the face of adversity, no matter how bad the odds may seem."

She smiled then, a genuine, lopsided smile that made his heart clench. Unable to hold back any longer, Varin swept the tip of his tongue into the crevice of her closed mouth. She tasted the same as he remembered, sweet and feminine, with a hint of something spicy, like cinnamon or clove.

His tongue traced her silky lips until she opened them and allowed him to delve into the warm, wet cavern of her mouth. Varin's cock jolted with a fierce ache as he thrust inside her, remembering what it had felt like to slip his shaft in her mouth, to have her suck him deep between those full lips and moan around his throbbing rod.

He didn't know what kind of response to expect from this woman who didn't remember him. He'd have understood if she'd shied away or tried to push his aggression aside, but she did neither. Instead, she groaned softly, the sound of her willingness to give herself to him drifting into his mouth and lingering there like a whispered promise.

At last, Varin pulled away, driven by the need to see and touch and taste all of her. He trailed kisses over the side of her jaw and down the column of her throat, then dipped inside her cleavage and slipped his tongue into the luscious valley of her full breasts.

Heidi's magic bounced out of control around them. It fluttered wildly, writhing in the air, binding them in a cocoon of euphoria. Varin's heart skipped a beat as he wondered whether she'd learned to control her abilities. He'd had no time to train her, but he hoped her previous knowledge of all things magical would at least keep her from sending the currents of power spinning out of control as he brought her over the edge into the ecstasy of orgasm.

If she lost her grip on the fragile strands, she'd kill them all, whether she meant to or not. Varin's only hope was to somehow remind her of who she really was. If he could do that without drawing Baal's suspicion, she might have a chance to get out of this alive.

Banishing the dark thoughts from his mind, Varin dropped to his knees in front of Heidi and slipped his

fingertips beneath the stretchy band of her leather panties. The exotic, heady scent of her arousal drifted to his nostrils. His cock responded instantly by growing fiercely erect, turgid with the need to sink inside her wet heat and lose himself in the tight grip of her cunt.

He'd never experienced the moist, intimate secrets of her pussy. That delight had gone to Luke the last time they'd been together, while Varin had contented himself with her mouth and ass. Taking her any way he could had been sheer heaven, yet now he craved more. He wanted to slide his cock between her slick folds and plunge into her tight channel in one smooth thrust, then fuck her until she screamed his name.

His fingers had never, in his centuries of being alive, trembled when he'd peeled off a woman's panties, but they quivered now as he slipped Heidi's thong down her thighs. He let them fall around her ankles and gripped her hips, yanking her closer to him, inhaling the scent of her cream.

Until that very moment, a part of him had refused to believe she was real. Yet kneeling at her feet, with his nails sinking into her flesh and her smell drawn deep into his lungs, he had no doubt that the woman who'd reminded him what it meant to be truly intimate with another person stood before him.

Suddenly, any lingering anger he'd harbored disappeared as though it had never existed. Heidi's soft cunt hovered before his mouth. A thatch of hair as red as the curls on her head covered the silky mound, and delicate pink lips peeked from beneath the furry patch.

A moan tore from Varin's throat. It might even have been a growl or perhaps a scream -- he couldn't tell. The aroma of her arousal tangled in his senses and yanked him forward, until he pressed his open lips to the gleaming folds between Heidi's parted thighs.

"Oh!"

Her sharp gasp of surprise excited him further. He slid his tongue into her velvet depths and parted the slick lips of her sex to nudge the opening to her channel. Heidi shifted her hips rhythmically and tightened her fingers in his hair, pulling him closer to the moist folds of her pussy.

Something nudged his jaw, flicked against his lips. Lost in Heidi's sweet cunt, Varin ignored it, until it prodded at him again and he swirled his tongue over the intrusion. It was a finger, he realized through a heavy fog of lust and delight. A masculine finger.

He drew back just long enough to take in Luke's position. The man lay on the ground in a semi-circle, tucked around Heidi's legs. His lips slid up the outside of her thigh while his hand delved into the tight crevice of her ass and slipped lower, where his fingers had met Varin's mouth.

He offered a shaky smile when he noticed Varin watching him. His free hand slipped over Varin's groin to clamp around the root of his shaft. Varin sucked in a breath between his teeth as Luke stroked the delicate flesh over his straining erection, pumping his fist up and down the thick length.

"Together," Luke murmured. "We'll help her remember who she is. *Together*."

The last word held a hint of a threat. If there was one thing Varin had learned about Luke in the past two weeks, it was that although he looked easy-going and eager to please, he was relentless when it came to protecting Heidi. Her safety was his first priority, and he was willing to do whatever it took to ensure she got out of here alive.

Varin nodded and slipped his fingers between Heidi's glistening nether lips, gathering some of her natural

liquid. He backed off a little, giving Luke room to play with her cunt. Reaching up, he smeared some of the heavy-scented cream over the top of her breasts. Her nipples pebbled, darting out stiffly to prod against her tight leather bustier.

Glittering beads of sweat had gathered between Heidi's breasts. A drop trickled down into the shadows inside the deep valley, where he couldn't follow. Varin pulled down the edge of her bustier, revealing a darkened areola.

"Wow," Heidi murmured. "Oh... Wow."

Luke thrust two fingers inside her eager cunt. Heidi's thighs trembled and her breathing grew frantic as a flush crept up the column of her throat to highlight her high, pale cheekbones. Intoxicated by her eager response to their ministrations, Varin nudged the top of her mound with his lips.

She quivered, hovering on the edge of release. As Luke thrust harder, Varin pulled up the tender hood covering her clit with one hand, while tugging down her bustier with the other.

Her breast popped free. Varin swirled his tongue around the engorged nub of her clit, drawing a shuddering cry from Heidi's throat. With his other hand, he cupped her plump breast and sought out her nipple, which he pinched between thumb and forefinger.

The pulsing waves of Heidi's orgasm rippled through Varin's lips as her cunt fluttered and her body trembled with the intensity of her release. He squeezed her nipple harder, plucking at it, stiffening the tight bud. Each time, his fingers met with hard resistance. He tried to swipe it away, taking it for part of the bustier, but the hard casing around her nipple didn't budge.

When he was certain her climax had peaked, Varin pulled away and looked up at the fleshy globe he'd revealed by yanking off part of the bustier.

Her breasts were as perfect as he remembered. So white he could see the faint blue veins beneath the surface of her skin, with dark, large areolas and nipples so stiff and elongated they begged to be sucked, Heidi's breasts were easily the most magnificent he'd ever seen.

The golden chain that bound her nipples between two narrow clamps also looked just like he remembered. Except that the last time he'd seen it, it had adorned another set of breasts... the breasts of a woman who'd betrayed him and had caused his downfall in the eyes of his Lord.

He should have learned from his mistakes. He was here because he'd fallen for a mortal -- a woman who'd ultimately been the cause of centuries of torment.

Varin tugged and rolled the delicate chain between his thumb and forefinger, watching Heidi flinch at the pain.

Now, it was happening again. And this time, Varin doubted he'd survive the fall.

Chapter Four

Now *this* she remembered.

A spear of sensation lanced from her nipples straight down to her cunt as the dark-haired man tugged at the chain binding her breasts. She moaned, relishing the sharp stab of pleasure/pain that stirred a fresh wave of almost unbearable arousal to coil in her cunt.

“Your names. Tell me your names.” She’d meant to sound demanding, but the words came out on a plea.

A fragile smile touched the corners of the younger man’s mouth. He opened his mouth to answer, but the other man was faster. “We have no names. We’ll answer to whatever you choose to call us.”

Heidi tilted her head and watched him from beneath lowered lashes. Her body still buzzed with the afterglow of release, and her limbs quivered slightly. She needed to lie down, but she didn’t dare show weakness in front of these men who knew her as their mistress.

She still held a fistful of dark hair gripped tightly in her hand. Releasing it, she slipped her fingers through the man’s silky locks and traced the angry purple mark of a livid bruise on his temple. The wound stood out in sharp contrast to the suppleness of his naturally tanned skin. She took in the angular line of his jaw and midnight-black eyes, the long lashes that framed them and the high cheekbones that give him a haughty, stubborn look.

This wasn’t a man used to taking orders. Not from Baal, and certainly not from her.

Heidi frowned. His striking appearance and smoldering, defiant confidence seemed to touch a part of her that had been hidden away, locked behind a solid façade she couldn’t seem to penetrate on her own. She’d need his help if she was to learn more about herself.

And judging by his earlier display, penetrating was definitely one of his strong suits.

“What should I call you?” she mused aloud, caressing the side of that chiseled face. “Nero? Adam? Seth?”

The dark orbs grew blacker yet, sending a chill down her spine. He palmed her breast, swirling the tip of his index finger around her areola. From her vantage point, she could see the dusky tips of her nipple lengthening and hardening beneath his ministrations. It poked out from the stiff golden clamp that bound it, engorged and eager for more of his touch.

“None of those sound right,” he said. “Try again. You’ll find one that fits.”

“You know us,” his companion said. “Think of what you’ve called us in the past. It will come to you, if you let it.”

She shook her head. “I’m afraid nothing’s coming to me. Not your names. Not my past. Nothing.”

“Don’t force it. There’s no rush.”

But there was a rush. An urgency to --

What? She didn't know. The thought that she was needed somewhere fluttered like the ethereal wings of a butterfly through her mind and disappeared just as quickly as it came, leaving nothing in its wake but the lingering sensations of pure bliss that still thrummed deep in her pussy.

The golden-haired man pressed a soft kiss to the back of her thigh. He swirled his tongue downward, behind her knee, where it sent a swift ticklish sensation to flutter up her leg. She laughed aloud, the sound peeling off the cavern walls, startlingly intense in the confines of the dark room.

"It's good to hear you laugh."

She couldn't see the younger man as his head was ducked behind her, but she could picture the smile on his face as he spoke.

Heidi frowned. This entire experience was getting stranger by the moment. As a demon princess, she would have been cruel and vicious, eager to deliver torture and torment to anyone in her path. Yet these men acted as though they were glad to see her. Pleasuring her didn't seem to be much of a hardship for them, either, even with the threat of rapidly approaching death looming overhead.

Her throat constricted with uncertainty. She needed to know for sure whether what Baal had told her was true. If these men truly were her slaves to do with as she wished, then by all rights they should have been terrified of her.

Closing her eyes against the storm in the dark-haired man's black gaze, Heidi pulled her hand from his hair and turned her palm upright. Joining the tip of her thumb to her index finger, she uttered a rapid-fire barrage of words of power.

For a moment, nothing happened.

Heidi opened her eyes. Slowly, as she watched, the lava trickling down the walls separated from the phosphoric rock and gathered in a ball of liquid fire. It hovered in mid-air for only a moment, just long enough for the scorching sphere to reflect in the dark man's eyes.

After that, everything seemed to happen at once. The ball of lava exploded in a flurry of sparks that flew at them in a shower of fury. Both men leapt from the ground and tackled Heidi with identical guttural cries of fear and rage, shoving her down onto the rock floor and covering her body with theirs.

One -- or perhaps both -- of them screamed as the first drops of liquid fire charred their flesh. Their howls of pain echoed in her ears, pummeling the part of her brain that refused to awaken. Still, she lay protected beneath them, sheltered by their strong bodies even as they took the brunt of the punishment.

Varin. Luke. Oh, God.

For a moment, Heidi's world stood still as comprehension dawned in a flash as hot as the lava she'd hurled at them. Heidi wasn't sure when she'd started shouting, but the words that would reverse the spell tumbled from her mouth at a frantic pace.

And then the brief shot of clarity vanished, leaving her struggling to breathe. She heaved deep, hollow gasps of air, laboring to fill her lungs. Tears flowed down her face. She felt the dark makeup begin to drip and knew her cheeks had to be smeared with the stuff, but she didn't care. She thought of nothing but the

men lying on top of her, groaning in agony, yet unwilling to move from their spot as her protectors.

“I’m sorry. So, so sorry.” Tears flowed into her mouth, but whether they were hers or theirs, she couldn’t tell. She tasted salt on the tip of her tongue. Closing her eyes, she summoned forth a healing spell. Most of the brilliant blue trickles of carnal energy that had gathered from the force of her orgasm had been used in the last spell and its reversal.

She’d need more to heal them completely. Steeling her nerves, she put what little magic she had to good use, gathering the frayed threads and guiding the ethereal gauze along the tender, scorched skin of both men’s backs.

“Luke.” The name fit the golden-haired man perfectly. Her brief brush with lucidity had given her that much, at least. A name to put with the face and body that had captivated her since she’d awakened in this chamber.

She paid close attention to closing the lesions on his flesh before moving on to his companion’s skin. His wounds went deeper, and she realized he’d somehow managed to throw himself atop both of them while angling his body to take the brunt of the liquid flames. He’d covered part of Luke’s ribcage, ass and upper thigh with his own body in an effort to shelter both Luke and Heidi from the fiery storm.

As she worked, the men’s breathing returned to normal. She closed her eyes and smoothed the last of the magical energy over their skin, ensuring she’d fused the worst of the wounds she’d inflicted.

“So much for not hurting you.” She sighed, suddenly feeling foolish and vulnerable. She didn’t fully comprehend what had just happened, but she knew she was in way over her head. Without understanding who or what she really was, she didn’t stand a chance of outwitting Baal and figuring out why these men were so protective of her.

The rough scrape of stubble caressed her chin. She shifted her head slightly, her lips brushing against a warm, soft mouth.

“Varin.” She rolled his name on her tongue, savoring the feel of it as it slid from her lips.

He sucked in a harsh breath between clenched teeth and lifted himself up slightly, just enough to angle his mouth over hers. His hot tongue probed her lips, demanding entry. She gave it willingly as Luke nuzzled her neck, leaving a trail of soft, delicious kisses in his wake.

“I knew you’d remember,” Luke whispered in her ear.

She squeezed her eyes shut against the sting of tears. How could she tell them she didn’t remember a thing beyond their names? They certainly remembered her, and whatever was going on ran much deeper than Baal had led her to believe.

There was simply no way she could have been training these men to give their lives for her. Could she?

Icy tendrils scraped down her spine. No... not unless she was so cruel and heartless that she could trick them into caring for her, perhaps even loving her, before killing them anyway.

She clung to Varin fiercely, slipping her tongue against his. No. She refused to believe she was capable of doing something so diabolical.

Every royal demon has horns, princess.

She shuddered at the memory of Baal's words. As the mate of the ruler to the Underworld, she would have had to be capable of doing horrible things. Baal wouldn't have chosen her to be his queen because of her warm and fuzzy demeanor.

"So sweet," Varin murmured against her lips.

"Like soft, velvety chocolate. She melts in your mouth."

Their words so sharply contrasted with her thoughts that she stiffened, painfully aware of the confusion swirling within her. Demons weren't sweet. They were bitter and acidic all the way down to their black little hearts.

So if these men thought she was as saccharine as a piece of hot fudge... who was she -- really?

Heidi turned her head away from Varin's and pressed her mouth to Luke's. The sensation of her soft, silky lips against his caused a jolt of heat to slam into Luke's cock. It hardened instantly, painfully erect against the softness of her thigh.

Prickles of stinging pain still traveled up and down his back, marking every spot where the lava had scorched his skin. Heidi had done a remarkable job of mending the torn flesh, but the ghostly awareness of the wounds continued to flare, like an unseen menace just beneath the top layer of his skin.

At least he was no longer chilled to the bone.

The memory of flaming agony zinging down his back melded with the sensual ecstasy of Heidi's tongue prodding his, drenching him in overwhelming lust. It was so easy to lose himself in her, to give in to the elation flaring to life within him.

He'd dreamed of this every day since being ripped from her side. She'd been his lifeline, his reason for holding on through endless hours of unspeakable torture. Over the past two weeks, he'd had Varin, and the man had managed to ease the gnawing loneliness Heidi's absence had left behind in Luke's soul. But nothing compared to having her in his arms.

He'd forgotten the soft, breathy moans she emitted when he kissed her, and the way her hips thrust upward of their own accord, seeking his cock, his fingers, the heel of his hand.

When he skimmed his fingertips across her lower belly to give her what she craved, he found that Varin had beaten him to the ultimate prize. He'd been quicker, having already nestled his fingers in the warm, moist heat of Heidi's cunt.

Luke cupped Varin's hand with his own, guiding his lover's fingers inside the woman who'd changed them both. She'd rescued them already, whether she knew it or not. She'd been Luke's redemption, offering him salvation from his sins.

She'd done something to Varin, too. Ever since meeting her, there was a fire burning in Varin's dark eyes that stole the breath from Luke's lungs every time he glimpsed it. Varin might not have wanted to admit it, but it was clear that Heidi had given him a reason to live.

Luke couldn't fault Varin for falling for her. Hell, she'd completely sucked Luke into her sensual web as well. She'd won his heart from the first moment he'd laid eyes on her. He had no right to lay any claim to her, but more than that, he *enjoyed* sharing her with Varin.

Now, he'd do it again. And together, they'd evoke memories of what they'd shared. He only prayed it wasn't too late to remind her of who she was.

A long, breathy sigh of ecstasy escaped Heidi's lips. She ground her mound against Varin and Luke's joined hands, grinding her clit into Varin's palm. Luke dipped his fingers lower, pushing his way between the lips of her sex. Her labia was soaked, dripping wet with her arousal.

"I don't understand any of this," she said when Luke pulled back, freeing her lips.

"Right now, you don't need to." Luke swirled his tongue around her earlobe, then nibbled on the tender flesh. "Just feel."

"But why --"

"Because we want to," Varin growled. "That will have to be enough."

She opened her mouth, looking like she was about to protest. Then her head rolled back against the floor and her spine arched, her body shuddering delicately as a tremor ran through her.

"I can't do this." Her head thrashed from side to side, her bare nipple scraping Luke's chest as she struggled.

Varin growled low in his throat. They both held her pressed down, trapped beneath their bodies.

Heidi fought them only with her hands, not resorting to the magic that danced faintly across her fingertips.

At last, Varin pushed himself off her. His handsome face remained expressionless, but Luke could clearly make out the turmoil rolling in the depths of his black gaze.

Varin didn't want to let Heidi go. Hell, Luke couldn't blame him. For his part, Luke refused to move, relishing the feel of Heidi's soft curves against his chest, the warmth of her thigh pressed to his aching groin.

She squirmed and pushed him aside. Groaning, Luke rolled onto his back.

"You heard Baal." Heidi sat up and shook out her mane of red curls. She tossed a haughty, arrogant glare at each man, but her lashes fluttered and her tone hadn't been nearly as confident as she'd clearly hoped. "You're here to please me. You have to do as I say."

Luke sat up and propped himself on his outstretched arms. He quirked an eyebrow, but didn't fail to notice the way Varin's lip curled.

"What would you have us do, Mistress?" Luke asked, imbuing the question with as much genuine reverence as he could muster. It wasn't a difficult task, considering he'd have done anything to have her luscious body crammed up closely against his again.

A slow smile spread across Heidi's face. Some of her composure had returned but she looked gorgeously disheveled with her curls tousled around her face, her eyes wide and glistening, a streak of black makeup running down one cheek. Her leather bustier was askew, covering only one breast. The other perfect globe was bare, the nipple stiff and elongated. A gold chain shimmied from the hard bud to disappear beneath the fabric obscuring her right breast.

"Stand," she commanded, tucking her legs beneath her and lifting herself to a kneeling position. "Right here, before me."

Luke shot a furtive glance in Varin's direction. The feral glint in the man's eyes had dimmed somewhat, and after only a moment's hesitation, he moved to the spot Heidi indicated. Luke wasted no time getting to his feet to stand beside him, close enough that their outer thighs touched.

A quick downward peek had a groan catching in Luke's throat. Varin had gripped his firm cock in his right hand, stroking the solid erection from root to tip. His long, masculine fingers were wrapped around the delicate skin sheathing his rock-hard cock.

Without considering his actions, Luke grabbed his own shaft, mirroring Varin's pose. A tingle of awareness shot up Luke's cock to angle straight into his groin, causing his balls to draw up tightly in their sac.

"You're magnificent." Heidi drew up closer, kneeling between them. She raised her hands and skimmed her fingertips down the side of their hips, drawing twin moans from Luke and Varin. "It'll be such a shame to waste these perfect bodies."

Varin's cock pulsed in his hand. He thrust his groin forward a fraction of an inch, bringing the swollen head of his rod into contact with Heidi's lips. "No one wastes anything around here. Every cry is treasured. Every scream is admired. Even death has a purpose." He swallowed visibly before continuing. "Yours brought you back to us."

Heidi frowned, her brows drawing down over the bridge of her nose. She slipped the tip of her pink tongue between her lips and swiped at the bead of wetness seeping from the slit in Varin's cock. "What about cum? Is that treasured, too?"

Varin slid his fingers in her curls and tugged her mouth forward. She opened to him while overlapping Luke's hand with her much smaller one and stroking his throbbing shaft. Varin pushed his cock inside the willing cavern of her mouth, sending a jolt of envy to slither down Luke's spine.

"No, sweetheart," Varin said. "Cum is swallowed."

The sound of Heidi's throaty laugh reached Luke through a haze of sheer lust. Even muffled by Varin's cock, it still desperately made Luke want to come. He watched her through narrowed eyelids as her mouth flew up and down the length of Varin's thick shaft, her lips pursed in concentration as she sucked, nibbled and kissed her way along the tender skin.

She'd tightened her grip on Luke's cock, stroking him with the same rhythm she applied to Varin's rod. Her hand moved in unison with her mouth, smearing a drop of Luke's pre-cum down his shaft all the way to his balls, slicking the surface of his cock.

He shuddered beneath her touch and closed his eyes, wishing it was the wet, warm heat of her mouth enveloping him, her tongue tingling against his shaft, her teeth just barely making contact with the

hypersensitive skin of his cock head.

And then, it was.

He gasped and blinked his eyes open in time to see her take the entire length of his cock between her lips. He felt the tip of his rod nudge the back of her throat and his entire shaft spasmed in an uncontrollable twitch. The familiar sweep of impending orgasm traveled through him at lightning-speed and then he was lost, tumbling over the edge, spilling his seed in spurts down her throat.

The steady sucking of her mouth never faltered. She siphoned his cum as though she'd been hungrily waiting for it her entire life, sipping at the tip of his cock, wrapping those full, luscious lips around the crown and catching every last drop of liquid on her tongue.

The touch of Heidi's soft lips on his soaked flesh grounded him, bringing him back to reality as the last remnants of his climax seeped from his cock. Breathless, Luke gripped her shoulders with both hands and used her steadying presence to hold himself upright.

He barely noticed Varin's hand cupping Heidi's head, or his fingers fisting in her hair, but he caught the exact moment the other man yanked on her curls, forcing her head back. Luke's cock slid out of Heidi's mouth to hang quiescently against his inner thigh as Varin pulled her to her feet.

She gave an indignant squeal. "What do you think you're doing?"

"What I should have done from the first moment you appeared in this room." Varin shouldered Luke out of his way. Too stunned to stop him, Luke stepped aside.

"And what's --"

Varin silenced her by lifting her to her feet and tossing her over his shoulder without so much as a grunt of effort. He strode the ten steps it took to reach the bed, then threw her down on the soft mattress. She landed with another squeak, her body bouncing lightly on the bed.

"I'm going to give you what you want." He darted a look over his shoulder at Luke, who crossed the distance to the bed to once again stand at Varin's side.

Heidi's gaze darted from Luke to Varin and she scooted up to the head of the bed. Lava streams dripped down the surface of the phosphorous wall that served as a headboard. Her curls nearly brushed the molten rock. "You're going to fuck me, and then let me kill you both so I can figure out if I am who Baal says I am?"

Varin's grin looked absolutely predatory as he climbed onto the mattress beside Heidi. He grabbed her ankles and yanked until she slid down the surface of the red silk sheets, her thighs parted, her pussy wet and gaping for their inspection. "Well, at least you got the first part right." He looked up and met Luke's gaze, his features turning serious once again. "We're going to need rope."

"R-rope?" Heidi's voice trembled as she echoed Varin. "What for?"

Something heavy lodged in Varin's chest. It felt a lot like fear, anger and unbridled lust rolled into one, only more potent and much more terrifying.

Damn it! Why couldn't she have just stayed home, tucked into her own warm bed, completely safe from the perils she'd invited upon herself by following them to this forsaken place?

He forced a chuckle to glide through his dry throat. "For your own safety, of course."

She squirmed beneath him, causing the scent of her musky arousal to waft up to his nose. He inhaled deeply, waiting for Luke to return. The man had wasted no time doing as Varin asked, and that knowledge also added another level of unease to the uncomfortable sensations coursing through him.

He was in love with Heidi, that much was clear even to him. But the emotions that Luke kindled in him were just as terrifying. He wanted to protect them both and ensure their safety. Down here, in the bowels of the Underworld, no one would look out for them. They were at Baal's mercy, unless he put a stop to the madness threatening to erupt around them at any moment now.

He had no doubt that Baal was watching. The Lord of the Underworld was keenly aware of everything that went on in his kingdom, and he'd taken a particular interest in Heidi. Baal's well-executed plan wouldn't mean a thing if he wasn't around to enjoy the fruits of his labor. So he'd be watching, assessing every one of Heidi's moves.

Which left Varin with only one option. He had to win Heidi's trust in the quickest amount of time and then convince her of her true identity. There was only one way he could think of achieving that within the constraints provided.

"Will this do?" Luke asked, handing him a strip of red silk he'd torn from a matching pillowcase.

Varin nodded. Before Heidi could react, he grabbed both her ankles and slipped the fabric around them, binding them tightly together. Her chest heaved, her full breasts bouncing with each strenuous breath.

"I thought I was the one giving orders." She flicked her fingertips, sending a shower of sparks to careen over the bed.

The threat in the gesture was clear, but Varin only shrugged. "Playtime's over. Death is serious business."

She licked her lips as he tied a firm knot around her ankles, securing them tightly. "And sex? Is that serious business, too?"

Luke climbed on the bed. His cock had hardened again after spending its seed, and now it looked flushed and ready for more. "More serious for some of us than for others." Luke looked up at Varin and winked.

Varin's breath caught in his throat. The sight of the man's easy smile sent a jolt of arousal spearing straight into his groin, jerking his shaft. Only Luke could still tease at a time like this. Even Hell's torment hadn't been able to strip him of his ability to find a touch of amusement in every situation.

"Extremely," Varin murmured. He gripped Heidi's waist firmly between his broad hands, then lifted her and swung her over his lap so she lay face down splayed across his knees.

She writhed, smearing some of her cream across his skin. The intoxicating scent of her arousal betrayed her desperate need. "You wouldn't dare! I can still fry you with a flick of my fingertips."

Varin raised his palm and dropped it like a heavy weight to land across the perfect round globe of her right cheek. She yelped, sending a bolt of lightning to scatter across the floor, where it harmlessly fizzled out in the middle of the room.

“You could,” Varin acknowledged, “but you won’t.”

She swore at him then, using some of the most inventive streams of profanity he’d ever heard. While she ranted, he continued to slap her ass, leaving red streaks in the wake of his palm across her pale flesh.

Luke’s fingers skimmed across the back of Heidi’s legs, past her knees to burrow into the crevice at the apex of her thighs. His thumb slipped easily between her labia, spreading the sticky nether lips open and burrowing into her wet channel.

She gasped, arching her back as Varin landed another hard smack to her delectable ass. Luke smeared some of her cream across her folds and down her inner thigh. Then he scooped out a little more and used it to slick the surface of Varin’s shaft with the moisture, sending a shudder to travel from Varin’s cock throughout every other extremity.

“You don’t have to do this,” Varin said between gritted teeth.

Luke blinked at him, all blue-eyed innocence. “Do what?” He stroked Varin’s shaft, while the fingers of his other hand delved back into Heidi’s cunt. His middle and index fingers pumped in and out of her, eliciting small moans and gasps of pleasure from her throat.

Her ass burned bright red, tempting Varin to strike her again. His cock twitched against Luke’s hand. The man’s palm glided easily down his shaft now, slick with Heidi’s cream and Varin’s pre-cum, which dripped from the slit in the flushed head of his rod.

“Entice me. Pretend this is okay.” He spoke in a whisper, hoping neither Heidi nor Baal through his infernal eavesdropping could hear.

“I wouldn’t. Except for the fact that *it* is okay. We need to show her who she is... and for that, she needs to know who *you* are. And what you can do.”

Varin grunted an acknowledgement through gritted teeth. “Do you trust me, Heidi? Do you believe that I would never hurt you, just like I know you’d never hurt us?” He closed his eyes for only a moment, realizing he’d gone past the point of no return. Baal would be able to hear this. Any moment now, he could decide his plan had failed and storm through the door, ruining every last chance they had of reawakening Heidi to her true identity. “Do you know, in your heart, that I wouldn’t be doing this if I didn’t believe you’d enjoy it?”

Her answer was muffled by another moan as he caressed her backside with the heel of his palm, soothing the hurt. Parting her ass cheeks, he circled the tight rosebud of her anus with his fingertip.

“Do. You. Trust. Me.” It wasn’t a question so much as a statement of intent. With each word, he slipped the tip of his finger farther inside her tight hole. She jerked her hips and arched her back, pushing harder against his hand and Luke’s, whose fingers still thrust in and out of her pussy.

“I --”

Varin's finger slipped into her ass past the knuckle. "Say no and this all stops."

Say yes, baby. Oh, please say yes.

"N -- Yes! Damn you. Yes!"

He could have sworn the sigh of relief that escaped his throat thundered off the walls and echoed through the room. He slipped his finger out of her tight hole, leaving her back entrance gaping slightly. The secrets of that mysterious orifice were well known to him. This time, he wanted more.

This time, he wanted her pussy.

"Good." He smacked her ass one last time. "On your knees."

Luke and Varin both rose from the bed and watched as Heidi struggled to rise. Her limbs shook with the effort, but she managed to get herself into a kneeling position on all fours, arms stretched out, fists gripping handfuls of sheet fabric.

"Hold on, baby," Varin whispered as he indicated to Luke using hand gestures exactly what he wanted him to do. "You're in for the ride of your life."

Chapter Five

Heidi braced her outstretched hands against the mattress and clenched her jaw, forcing her breathing to return to normal. Her entire body burned from the inside, trembling with the onslaught of sensations streaming through her.

Magic tickled her fingertips. A crackle of blue energy zinged up her arm, reminding her that she was the one in control here. She repeated that comforting thought to herself, pleased when her hammering heartbeat smoothed to a more normal rhythm.

"If I'm dead..." Her voice faltered. She cleared her throat and tried again. "If I'm dead, how is it that I can still breathe? Or feel my heart race? Or... get wet?"

And so amazingly aroused that I could come again and again and again and still not feel like I've had enough?

Someone shifted behind her. She refused to turn her head for a better look, knowing that if she caught even a slight glimpse of either man, she wouldn't be able to hold herself upright any longer. Her limbs would quiver like a gelatinous ball, and she'd end up sprawled face-first on the bed, completely at Luke and Varin's mercy.

Not that her current position was much better, but it allowed her a small measure of control -- or at least

the illusion of it.

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned since being brought here, it’s that life and death are not the fluid concepts we’ve been led to believe they are.” Luke tucked a loose curl behind Heidi’s ear, clearing her field of vision. From the corner of her eye, Heidi could make out the powerful muscles of his thighs as he moved. His cock had hardened again. It stood proudly rigid against his flat abs, curving inward slightly at the tip. A drop of wetness smeared the tiny slit, drawing her gaze to the thick, bulbous head.

Heidi’s mouth went dry. She tried to come up with some clever retort, but she couldn’t muster anything more than a guttural groan.

A stack of pillows slid beneath Heidi’s stomach. She collapsed gratefully against them, glad to relieve the pressure coiled in her tense muscles.

“As for the arousal,” Varin said, slipping a finger between her soaked folds, “that’s all our doing.”

She released the breath she’d been holding on an indignant huff. “Of all the arrogant, conceited --”

Varin parted the lips of her sex with his thumbs and positioned the head of his cock at the entrance to her pussy. Her channel instantly clenched in eager anticipation.

“You might not know us, Heidi, but your body does. This fragrant, sexy cunt knows everything about us.”

Heidi’s face heated. She wondered how many times they’d played this game, how often she took them both to her chamber and allowed them to entertain her in sensual, delectably carnal ways.

Before she could respond, Varin thrust the fat tip of his cock into her channel. It slipped in easily, stretching her cunt to accommodate his thick girth.

The relief and sheer pleasure that swept through her was almost more than she could bear. If the pillows hadn’t been supporting her weight, she’d certainly have collapsed against the bed from the potent rush of ecstasy flooding her core.

A harsh moan caught in Heidi’s throat, though it still seemed to echo impossibly loud through the cavernous room. “I know *this*,” she acknowledged, blinking back the sting of tears that pricked her eyes.

“Then trust what you feel. Don’t think. Don’t analyze.” Luke moved to kneel in front of the bed. His face was even with hers. She met his gaze and was instantly taken aback by the force of the raw emotion she saw there.

He cupped her cheeks in his broad, masculine palms. His hands were warm, as were his lips when he leaned in and brushed her mouth with his. “And for God’s sake,” he whispered, “don’t fry us with that carnal magic of yours.”

Heidi wanted to protest, to tell him she couldn’t make any promises until her memory returned, but her lips refused to form the words. They refused to do anything, in fact, but tilt a fraction of an inch forward until they locked with his.

At the same time, Varin plunged the length of his thick shaft deep within her pussy. Luke’s mouth trapped her ecstatic moan.

The two men held her firmly between them, Luke's tongue plundering her mouth with the same slow, torturous speed as Varin's cock stroked her inner walls. Heidi's pussy squeezed down with pure delight, her inner walls trembling in sheer rapture.

Varin's coarse pubic curls tickled her tender ass, reawakening shivers of pleasure and pain in the nerve endings bundled throughout her sensitive flesh. She squirmed as he quickened his movements, ramming his shaft deeper, spearing her core with streams of molten heat.

Her toes dug into the bed. The silk tie the men had used to bind her ankles chafed her skin, adding another level of intense sensation to the flashes of raw energy already pouring through her.

The sexual magic she generated flickered upward to gather in a low-hanging blue cloud just above her head. Using it on her lovers was the farthest thing from Heidi's mind as her hips jerked backward, seeking even more of the potent pleasure Varin offered with every stroke.

The men were relentless, refusing to grant her even a moment's reprieve to gather her thoughts. Varin fucked her passionately while Luke devoured her mouth. Slammed up between the two of them, she felt vulnerable and intensely aware of their mastery over her body.

A shiver of uncertainty snaked up her spine. Surely the Queen of the Underworld wouldn't allow herself to be taken in such a subservient manner... would she?

Heat continued to build between her legs, igniting a deep, sensual flame low in her belly. It spread outward, flooding her cunt, nuzzling her clit, drenching her folds in cream. The scent of her arousal was everywhere, clogging her throat with every breath she took.

Luke intensified his assault on her mouth, grazing her tongue with his teeth, causing a shiver of delight to wash over her skin. And then, just when Heidi was beginning to think this experience couldn't get any more fevered, Luke reached behind her and unlaced her bustier. The garment fell off her body to rest on the pillows. Luke's hand followed the curve of her right breast, caressing the highly sensitized flesh with the flat of his palm.

Heidi gasped and lifted herself from the pillows just high enough to give him greater access to her nipples. Luke didn't hesitate. He tweaked one of the stiff buds between thumb and forefinger, then yanked on the golden chain as he thrust his tongue deep inside her mouth.

In a heartbeat, the onslaught of ecstasy became too much to bear. Heidi's muscles tensed as her climax burst forth, flooding her cunt with throbbing, desperate need. Burst after burst of flawless euphoria followed, drenching her nerve endings in hedonistic pleasure.

She cried out, and the sound streamed through the room unheeded. Heidi blinked her eyes open. Panic set in for a brief moment when she realized Luke had freed her mouth and had disappeared from her field of vision.

She hadn't even felt him move.

"Luke?" Her voice was hoarse, imbuing his name with a decidedly needy tone. She'd have hated it if she wasn't so hopelessly desperate for more of him.

Varin's cock pushed in deeper. Heidi's inner muscles continued to spasm, causing deep, primal

shudders to slide up her spine. The man's shaft felt impossibly thick inside her, the tip reaching deep into her cunt with every thrust.

"You're a stubborn woman, Heidi Cole." Luke's silky voice reached her ears and she sighed with unrestrained delight.

She needed him. Wanted him. Desperately, eagerly craved him alongside Varin. One man at a time wasn't enough. She hungered for more. She wanted them both.

At once.

She shook her head. "I don't understand. I've done everything you've asked of me."

And more. I've given you all of me without even knowing who I am.

"You shouldn't have come here." Varin's voice this time, deep and insistent.

The hint of reproach in his tone wasn't lost on her, but instead of causing her to shrink back from his disapproval, it made her want to lift her head and tilt her chin up another notch. "I did what I had to."

Heidi narrowed her eyes as confusion streamed through her mind. She meant what she'd said. She'd been compelled to come to the Underworld, and not just by Baal.

But why?

Something firm and warm scraped across Heidi's hip to rest on the right side of the bed, flush with her outer thigh. Luke's leg, she assumed as an identical pressure trapped her from the other side.

She allowed her eyes to close fully and pictured him squatting above her, his cock gripped firmly in one hand, angled toward the crevice of her ass. A shudder of delight soared over her skin. It tightened her nipples and made her clit throb eagerly.

Luke straddled her without applying any of his body weight, but he was there -- a hot, solid presence hovering above her, promising her even more bliss than she'd already experienced at the expert hands of these two gorgeous men.

Luke's inquisitive fingers parted her ass cheeks. She knew they were Luke's because they felt leaner, longer than Varin's. More tapered. Like a piano player's fingers, skillful and precise. One of them -- his index finger, perhaps -- circled the tight hole of her anus, drawing a ragged moan from her throat.

Heidi trembled, not with fear or apprehension but with savage arousal. The need to be taken, possessed, *fucked* in such a dominant manner shook her to the core.

She wondered what her base, depraved desires said about who she was. Would a normal woman crave such rough treatment? Would the Queen of the Underworld, for that matter?

Luke positioned the head of his cock in the cleft of her ass and pressed the moist tip to her anus.

"Help me out here, baby," he whispered.

Varin withdrew from Heidi's pussy entirely, leaving it gaping and desolately open. A drop of fluid

dripped from her cunt down her inner thigh.

Instinctively, Heidi knew exactly what Luke had asked for, and she was wretchedly desperate to give it to him. The void in her cunt seemed to reach all the way into her soul, leaving a cavernous space where her heart should have been.

She needed to be filled. Completely.

“*She’la.*”

The words of power slipped easily off her tongue. They seemed to hover in the energy-laden air for a moment before a radiant burst of magic uncoiled from the cloud drifting above their heads.

No sound or aroma accompanied the spell, but when Luke pushed his cock into her supple hole, the firm shaft was coated in moist lubrication. Her back passage had also been smeared with the gel-like substance, allowing him to glide effortlessly into her body.

“I’ve done this before.” Heidi arched her back in an attempt to take all of Luke’s cock in her tight sphincter. “The spell, too. I’ve done all of it.”

“That’s right,” Varin said. “Only it was my cock inside your perfect ass, and Luke’s shaft in your soaking wet pussy. Remember?”

Heidi squeezed her eyes shut. She *didn’t* remember. The memories should have been right there, within her reach, but they were dark and meaningless. She couldn’t make sense of the incandescent shadows playing behind her closed eyelids. It felt as though a black veil had been drawn across her recollection, obscuring --

They thrust into her at once, two firm cocks plunging into her ass and pussy with rough determination. Luke’s thighs quivered against her body. She pictured him straining to keep his balance, his ass slamming against Varin’s abdomen as both men fucked her with firm, eager strokes.

Stars burst across Heidi’s darkened field of vision. Pleasure streamed through her veins. Her flesh still ached where Varin had smacked her, and any contact with the tenderness caused tremors of pain to seep into her body and blend with the torrent of ecstasy.

The men fucked her hard and fast, intent on complete domination over her soaked sex and anus. They gave her no time to react before varying their intensity. She had no ability to control the pace.

She was completely, utterly helpless. And entirely at their mercy.

Blue sparkles danced across her nails, reminding her that she wasn’t as bound to their will as they’d have her believe. She pushed the magic aside, ridding herself of it completely.

Goddess help her, but trapped between her two men’s cocks was exactly where she wanted to be. She trusted them. She --

I --

“Love them.”

A blast of bone-shattering pain careened through Heidi's head, unlocking a lifetime of memories. They poured out in a deluge of emotion, making individual events almost impossible to discern.

And yet, two masculine faces broke apart from the cascading images and with them, the memory of the brief time the three of them had shared. For a split second, it was as though she'd been brought back to the dungeon room where she'd summoned Luke and Varin the first time. She was there again, encased in male heat, being penetrated by both men.

Only as Varin had said, it was his cock in her ass. She straddled Luke's hips as he plunged into her, while Varin spread her legs wide open from behind and shoved his cock deep into her back passage.

When the whirlwind of memories stopped, she found the present to be no less overwhelming.

Heidi held the bed sheets gripped firmly in her hands as Luke and Varin thrust in and out of her, fucking her with deep, even strokes. The sensation of being filled and stretched to capacity had her crying out, lost in the mad fury of sexual delight.

Time seemed to crawl to a stop as Varin's cock pulsed. He stilled his movements, embedding his shaft deep in her cunt. Luke followed suit. Together, they gripped her body and kept her pressed firmly to them, trapped in a moment's worth of sheer carnal ecstasy.

A heartbeat later, their mutual climax gushed inside her, triggering her own.

In the grip of mind blowing pleasure, Heidi screamed their names, heedless of anyone who might be listening. Her mind spun in a million directions at once, fighting to hold on to the identity she'd discovered even as her cunt clenched and unclenched furiously around Varin's cock and her ass trembled while her inner muscles gripped and milked Luke's throbbing shaft.

As their orgasms subsided, the men withdrew from her. Their touch lingered, comforting and blissfully familiar, but Heidi couldn't allow herself to indulge in the thrill of post-orgasm afterglow, no matter how much she craved their sweaty, sated bodies pressed against hers.

She rolled off the pillows and flipped on to her back. Allowing herself one last lingering look at her lovers' unrivaled physiques, she reached down to unbind her ankles.

"We have to get out of here." She tugged on the strip of fabric and yanked it off her feet. "There should be enough energy to open a portal. Once we're safely on the other side, we'll formulate a plan. Baal will send demons after us, but we can fight them. Together."

While she spoke, she watched Luke's face brighten. Varin's dark eyes glimmered with something akin to hope, but he didn't allow his optimism to show on his handsome features.

"Heidi?" Luke asked, drawing her name out as though savoring it on his tongue. "It's you, isn't it? It's really you."

A small smile curved her lips. His boyish enthusiasm was contagious. She ran a hand through her hair, cringing when the tips of her horns scraped against her palm. "In the flesh. Err... sort of."

Luke gave a yelping cowboy cry and leapt onto the bed, knocking her on her back. He kissed her soundly, not erotically as he'd done earlier, but with sheer relief. She giggled against his mouth and clutched him to her for a moment before another recollection slammed into her mind.

Heidi sat up abruptly, pushing Luke off her. Varin rushed to her side, grabbing her upper arm to steady her.

“The Summoners! We have to help them!”

“Oh, I’m afraid it’s much too late for that.”

Heidi shook herself out of Varin’s grip and stumbled off the mattress, gathering a snowball’s worth of magical energy in her palm as she landed on her feet. “Take one more step and I’ll fry you where you stand.”

Baal tossed his head back and laughed, emitting that same screeching, horrid sound she’d heard earlier. “That would be quite a feat... since you have no powers.”

For the second time in as many minutes, the world seemed to stand still around Heidi. Her heart pumped savagely against her chest. Baal’s hand came up and his index finger shot out, pointing straight at her. He thumb was bent at the knuckle, as though he was cocking a gun.

Two thoughts flashed through Heidi’s mind before she was forced to react: if she was going down, she’d go down fighting. And she’d protect her men with her last breath, if that’s what it took.

“Vivindar’e esssimo-e ka!”

Thunder boomed along the walls of the cavern. Lightning struck, sizzling the black rock, causing the stone to crack along the middle. The room rolled beneath Heidi’s feet, sending Baal stumbling backward. His hand fell back to his side.

She caught a glimpse of his features, twisted with outrage. She’d been just a fraction of a second too fast and had gotten in a spell before he could strip her of her powers. His intent was clear as he raised his hand for a second time.

He wouldn’t let it happen again.

The air sizzled with the scent of demon a moment before all Hell broke loose. Thousands of grotesque beasts poured into the room, plunging through open portals that erupted out of thin air, pouring through the cascading lava that still blocked the front door.

Heidi lifted her arms, calling them to her side. They pressed in around her, drawn by the vivid demon magic streaming up and down the lines of her body.

A laugh bubbled from her throat. She’d done it!

She’d used her inherent demon power to conduct a summoning -- all on her own. Since becoming one of them, she’d felt the presence of her demonic kin like a lingering force that bound her to them.

Now it was the demons who’d been drawn to her. Unable to resist her magical call, every fiend within ten miles of her location in Hell, and all demons in the mortal realm, had been summoned by her call. The allure wouldn’t last, not with Baal hollering at the top of his lungs, but it gave her what she needed the most.

A distraction. So she could get her men out of this place forever.

“Asidea ramerra va!”

The portal closest to her shimmered, transforming into the gateway that would take her back to the clearing where the Summoners awaited her return.

“Asidea ramerra va.”

She needed to utter the words once more, then twice backward and she’d be free. They all would be.

“Asidea ram--”

“You’re dead, bitch! Get used to it! Nothing you can do from here can affect the living. Nothing!”

Baal’s thunderous voice boomed off the cavern walls, sending another tremor through the room. Heidi lost her footing, tilting backward against the sharp claws of a demon who was reaching for her in abject reverence.

A shiver of trepidation swept up her spine. Luke and Varin pressed up against her from both sides, protecting her with their outstretched arms and their bodies while shouting frantic words in her ears. She couldn’t hear them. Her focus was entirely on Baal.

A tremor crept upward from her belly. It traveled down her middle and spread outward. Demons pushed against her, clogging her throat with their stench.

She lost sight of Baal. Fear raked at her soul. She had to get her men out of here. Now!

Asidea ramerra va.

She mouthed the words, but no sound came out. The portal light dimmed, flickering wildly.

Frantic, Heidi glanced around her. She reached out to grab Varin, who was slipping away, swept by a sea of demons toward the center of the room.

She touched nothing but air. The shape of her outstretched hand shimmered, dimming away into nothingness with each moment that passed.

Her body was unraveling. The pull of the portal tugged at her, beckoning for her to go through. Scalding tears fell from invisible eyes to wash over her cheeks. Only the golden chain remained, bound to indiscernible nipples, floating in empty space.

“--an anchor!”

Varin’s voice reached her ears, though she had to strain to hear him over the howls of a thousand demons and a furious Lord of the Underworld, all of whom had just turned hate-filled gazes upon her.

The spell had broken. The portal was within reach, but she couldn’t grab on to Luke, and Varin was too far away.

Panic washed over her in waves.

“It’s an anchor!” Varin shouted over the buzz of the crowd. “The chain! It binds you to the mortal world, whether or not your body came with you when you plunged through. Use it to get Luke out of here!”

Baal’s angry howl drowned out all other noise in the cavern. It also momentarily made every creature freeze in abject terror as they all turned toward their furious Lord.

Baal parted a clean path through the mass of demons and gathered a ball of magical energy from thin air. Wasting no time, he hurled it at Varin. Heidi could only watch, horrified, as the turbulent sphere found its mark.

It slammed into Varin’s gut, lifting him off his feet and plastering him against the roof of the cavern. Varin’s eyes rolled back in his head and his neck hung limply at an odd angle.

“No!”

Heidi’s scream made no sound, but Luke’s cry crashed like an exploding roar through the chamber.

“I promised myself I’d kill your little slut in front of you,” Baal said to Varin, advancing so he stood beneath the man’s limp body. “So you’ll live, until she draws her last breath. When that happens, her soul will burn for all eternity in the darkest pit of Hell, alongside yours. What you’ve experienced so far over the centuries has been nothing compared to the eternal darkness that awaits you both.” Baal’s cackle sent a chill of pure ice down Heidi’s spine. “I hope mortal passion was worth it, because you’re about to pay the ultimate price.”

Varin’s lips moved as though in slow motion. Heidi didn’t dare breathe. She watched him mouth only one word.

Anchor.

Blood roared in Heidi’s head. Her fingers shook. She couldn’t make out much through tear-filled eyes. Desperately, she grabbed on to the chain binding her nipples. Shock careened through her at the realization that she could grasp it between her ethereal fingers.

She wasted no time unclasping it away from her breast. In a mad dash of fury, her hand shot out. She attached the clamp to Luke’s left nipple, murmuring the magical words Lillian had taught her all the while.

The portal blazed with a blinding white light. Heidi closed her eyes, lurched sideways, then hurled herself through the portal.

This time, there was no comforting darkness. Just pure, white, judgmental light to guide her home.

Heidi's soul landed back into her body with a thump that knocked the air from her lungs. Pain blossomed through her back and slithered down her spine, into her legs. Her right nipple burned with an intense pain that made her cry out.

The pressure subsided a split second before a heavy weight dropped down on top of her. She blinked her eyes open, squinting against the light flooding the clearing.

Golden hair, tangled and matted, slid against her chest. A pair of piercing blue eyes gazed at her from beneath thick bangs that fell over a broad forehead.

"Luke. Oh, Goddess. Luke!"

She clutched him to her savagely, protectively, as though afraid he'd disappear if she loosened her ferocious grip. For his part, he grabbed her just as ruthlessly and they clung on to one another as seconds stretched into minutes.

Heidi buried her nose in his hair and inhaled deeply. Not a shred of demon scent on him. Luke smelled as deliciously male as he'd had the first time she'd been with him, trapped inside a dark coffin. She remembered his scent, slightly spicy and infinitely arousing. She thought it was perhaps the most wonderful aroma in the entire world.

Second perhaps only to the musky smell of reformed demon. A pang of sorrow pierced her heart as an image of Varin's body slammed against the ceiling flickered through her mind.

Sometimes, it was better not to remember, she thought as she pressed a soft kiss to Luke's temple. And other times, memories were the best recourse for revenge.

"He's gone, isn't he?" Luke whispered. His voice reverberated against Heidi's chest. He'd dropped his head to nestle on her breasts, unwilling to meet her eyes.

"If he's survived all these centuries, Varin's tougher than you think."

Heidi gasped at the sound of Lillian's voice and struggled to sit up. Luke obliged her, drawing her beside him on the stone altar into a sitting position, one leg draped across his lap. He held on to her waist and her knee, pulling her body flush with his.

"He gave me this, you know." Lillian ran the tip of her index finger around Heidi's nipple, scraping the golden clamp that bound the tight nub.

Heidi winced as a flicker of pain shot into her breast. She followed the motion of Lillian's fingers, watching her trail them between Heidi and Luke. The chain bound them physically, but the ties that truly chained them together ran much deeper than that.

"Centuries ago," Lillian continued, "when I was captured and brought to the Underworld. It had belonged to my mother. Varin thought it would brighten my sprits to have it, even though mortal objects were forbidden in the Underworld. To be honest, I think he just liked the way it looked." A ghost of a smile touched her bloodless lips.

It was then that Heidi noticed how exhausted Lillian appeared. Dark circles plumped the delicate skin

beneath her eyes and her finely sculpted features looked haggard and drawn. She was still naked, but blood ran down from a gash in her side to pool in the grass at her feet.

“You knew him, then,” Heidi said. She grabbed Luke’s hand, tightening her fingers around his.

Lillian nodded. “I hated him. More than you can ever imagine.”

“Why?” The word was a mere whisper as it slipped from Heidi’s lips.

“I needed someone to hate. He was the only one who spent any time with me, and all my anger at being ripped away from my family’s arms was channeled into him. I would have destroyed him, killed him with my bare hands if I could have.”

“You did worse than that,” Luke said. “You condemned him to a life of torture.”

A glimmer of anger flashed in Lillian’s blue eyes. “It was no less than the life he’d condemned me to lead.”

“Maybe so, but he’s no longer the demon you once knew. Varin sacrificed himself for me.” Heidi swallowed past the lump in her throat and blinked back the sting of tears. “For us. And he’s done it twice now.”

Lillian’s square-tipped nail skimmed the surface of the gold chain one more time before her hand fell away. She stepped back, letting Heidi get a good look at the clearing for the first time since she’d tumbled back into the mortal realm.

“Was it worth it?” Lillian asked, sweeping her hand to indicate the blood that glistened wetly in the sunlight. “Two of our sisters died because of you.” There was no accusation in her tone, no hatred. Just sheer exhaustion.

Heidi squeezed Luke’s hand so tightly her knuckles turned white. “I never meant for anyone to get hurt.”

“You’ll go after him again, won’t you?” Lillian asked as though Heidi hadn’t spoken.

“Yes,” Luke answered without a moment’s hesitation. “He belongs here. With us.”

“When the demons fell back through the portal, I knew you’d done something,” Lillian said, her gaze fixed firmly on Heidi. “I asked the Summoners to take their fallen and injured sisters and get out of here as quickly as possible, before the horde returned.”

Heidi opened her mouth to protest, but Lillian stopped her with a sweep of her hand. “Make no mistake about it. What you’ve unleashed is personal. Baal will never stop until he has you both back in his grip. And he’s not going to care how many people he kills in the process. You’ve unsettled the balance between good and evil. You’ve given darkness a way into our world and a reason to be here.”

Heidi clamped a hand over her mouth to prevent a sob from escaping. She scraped her fingers through her hair, briefly taking note of the fact that the horns had disappeared.

“I can’t risk any more of my girls for your whims.” Lillian darted a glance from Heidi to Luke, then back again. “You have him. Take him and go. Hide him as best you can. Live out the rest of your days as peacefully as possible, and if you know what’s good for you, you’ll forget about rescuing demons,

redeemed or not.”

Luke’s eyes narrowed. He looked ready to argue, but Heidi sank her nails into the flesh of his wrist, silencing him.

“Thank you,” Heidi said, meaning it. “For everything.”

She unsnapped the clamp from her breast, ignoring the blazing trail of heat that burrowed deep in her belly as the metal disengaged, then did the same to the clamp binding Luke’s nipple. She offered the chain to Lillian, but the woman closed her hand over Heidi’s outstretched palm, folding her fingers over the trinket.

“I knew Varin would recognize this and know what it meant. He was the only one who could get you out of there if things went bad. When bad turned to worse, Varin did for you what he couldn’t do for me. He released you.”

“He didn’t know you were miserable,” Luke said. “He loved you.”

Hearing the words sent a spear of jealousy to lance through Heidi’s heart. She struggled to push it aside, knowing whatever had been between Varin and Lillian was over centuries ago.

“Maybe,” Lillian said. “But holding me prisoner in Hell wasn’t the way to prove it.”

“He paid for his mistakes repeatedly since then. Isn’t that enough?”

Lillian’s sad smile broadened. “Perhaps it is. For you. My duty is to destroy every demon who crosses into our world.”

“Even redeemed demons?” Luke asked, his voice catching on the last word.

“We’ll see,” Lillian said, turning away. “We’ll see.”

Heidi watched her disappear into the trees. Sunlight streamed down through the vivid green foliage, glistening grotesquely off the crimson blood that stained the grass and seeped into the dew-moistened earth.

Heidi turned away. She refused to wonder which of her friends had died that night because of her. It would be hard enough to live with the knowledge that she’d been responsible for two deaths. She didn’t think she could cope if she knew who’d been among the fallen.

Luke dropped down from the altar. He held Heidi’s hand and waited until she was ready to join him. With one last glance at the spot where the portal had shimmered earlier that night, Heidi sank her toes into the pristine grass that bordered the altar. It had been protected from the battle by a sphere of defensive magic, which had guarded her inert body as she’d slipped into Hell.

They left the clearing hand in hand, heading in the direction of the parking lot. The farther away from the clearing they got, the more Heidi’s tense muscles relaxed. She paused for a moment and drew a deep breath into her lungs. It smelled of fresh air and sexy male spice, with only a hint of coppery blood to spoil the heady miasma.

“Baal’s keeping him alive,” Heidi said as they walked toward her red Acura.

The car was parked at the far edge of the lot. To get to it, they had to stroll past half a dozen other vehicles, including one whose owner -- an elderly lady with snow-white hair -- gaped and crossed herself from the safety of her station wagon as they passed.

“How do you know?”

She touched the faint scar on her shoulder. It shimmered and churned, sending a rivulet of sultry agitation to coil into her stomach. “I can feel him. Baal intends to keep the promise he made.”

“To kill you in front of Varin.” Luke tightened his grip on her hand. “That doesn’t make me feel any better.”

“Nor me,” she assured him. “But it’s our only guarantee that Varin will be alive when we go back for him.”

“You said Baal would send demons after us, and your friend seemed to confirm that. Think we can handle them on our own?”

Heidi sighed. “With any luck, we won’t have to.”

She clicked the latch of her trunk open, thankful she’d had the presence of mind to leave the doors unlocked. She’d been in such a hurry the night before that she’d only bothered to turn the key to the off position in the ignition before bolting for the clearing where the Summoners were preparing to open a portal to Luke and Varin.

She pulled two blankets from among a stack of boxes that contained everything she owned. She’d emptied out her apartment earlier that week, knowing she probably wouldn’t be coming back.

Unfolding one of the blankets, she shook it out and draped it over Luke’s shoulders, then pulled him to her. He wrapped his arms around her waist, enveloping them both in the warmth of the blanket and his body heat.

“Thank you,” he murmured against her mouth.

“For what?”

“For being as damned stubborn as you are beautiful. For coming back for us.” He swept the tip of his tongue between her lips. She sighed and opened to him, sliding her tongue against his.

The kiss was slow and sensual, yet filled with an abundance of frustration and worry. It sizzled just beneath the surface, reminding them that although they had each other, Varin was alone.

Luke’s cock hardened, nudging her lower belly. “What do we do now?”

Heidi frowned, leaning her forehead against Luke’s. The blend of loving acceptance she found in Luke’s arms and the lingering misery she felt at being separated from Varin seemed to tear her heart in two.

“We find a way to save him.”

“No doubt,” Luke said. His stiff shaft pulsed against her skin. “And until then?”

A void as black as tar flashed across the sky in the direction of the clearing. It hovered against the pale blue, darkening the sun's rays for only a moment before fizzling out.

Heidi's blood ran cold. A moment was plenty of time for a couple of demons, maybe even more, to pour through.

She pulled herself away from Luke's comforting embrace. Tossing the other blanket over her own shoulders, Heidi climbed in behind the wheel of her car. After murmuring a word of gratitude at finding the key still in the ignition where she'd left it, she revved up the engine.

Luke got in beside her and slammed the door closed. Heidi floored the gas.

"We run."

Lacey Savage

Award-winning author Lacey Savage loves to write about her dreams -- or more specifically, she loves to breathe life into her steamy fantasies (and she's got plenty!). She pens erotic tales of true love and mythical destiny, peopled with strong alpha heroes and feisty heroines. A hopeless romantic, Lacey loves writing about the intimate, sensual side of relationships. She currently resides in Ottawa, Canada, with her loving husband and their mischievous cat. You can learn more about Lacey by visiting her website at <http://www.laceysavage.com>, and can reach her at laceysavage@rogers.com.