



His perfect mate
doesn't care what he
is...

...but his father does.

A
**Demon
Found**

A SONS OF GULIELMUS NOVELLA

HOLLEY TRENT

A Demon Found

Sons of Gulielmus 2.5

By Holley Trent

The Sons of Gulielmus Series

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SUMMARY

Half-demon psychic Jason Deiulio has desired grocery store cashier Cam Evans for two years. Normally, he's got swagger in spades, but Cam makes him clam up. No way would a good girl like her crawl into bed with an abomination like him.

Stidious Cam is chock-full of surprises, though. She sees supernatural beings few other humans know exist and pegged Jason as a demon from the moment she first saw him. She wants him anyway, and decides it's up to her to make the first move. She does, and not a moment too soon.

Jason's long-absent incubus father pops in to make Jason an offer he can't refuse, and the duo will have to test the mettle of their budding relationship. Cam has no reservations about being the girlfriend of a cambion, but she didn't expect that taking the gig would put her on the supernatural hit list!

CHAPTER ONE

Jason Deiulio watched his mother tap her tarot cards into a tidy stack. Saying nothing, she bound the cards with a fluorescent scrunchie and set them aside.

He drummed his fingers on the scarred, wooden tabletop, and waited.

And waited.

Civilizations could have risen and fell in the time it took her to consult her spirit guide. Or maybe she was making a grocery list in her head. It wouldn't be unlike her. Her brain was like Swiss cheese on the best of days. Fortunately, that wasn't a common psychic trait. It was just Ma.

"All right, then," he muttered and pulled his smartphone from his shirt pocket. He'd been in the middle of testing an app he'd coded when Ma called and insisted he come over for a reading. As always, he'd tried to beg off because there was no such thing as a quick visit to Angie Deiulio's house. She'd go into a trance and have him waiting for hours for the answer to a simple question.

God forbid that someone should need a roll of toilet paper while she was zoned out.

He brought up the app's menu and was just about to input his user data when Ma finally piped up. "What are you doing here?" she asked.

He put his phone to sleep and counted down backward from five in his head. She couldn't help her mental disorganization, just like *he* couldn't when his brain picked up people's scattered thoughts. Living with voices in one's head got to be a fucking drag really fast.

"You called me, Ma."

She blinked. "I did?"

"You did. You said you had a vision."

"Oh, yeah." She snapped her fingers and pointed at him. "That's right, I did. There was something else I needed to tell you, too. Which do you want to hear first?"

He twirled his thumbs under the table and counted again. "Since I don't know what either thing is, I can't say which I'd rather hear about."

"Yeah, yeah. That's right. Don't know where my head is."

"In the clouds, Ma."

“Watch your tone. Okay. First thing is that I think your father will be popping in soon. Usually, we don’t get any warning, but...you know. *Psychic.*”

Jason twirled his thumbs some more, but now ground his teeth. Counting wouldn’t help him now. He’d never even met his father, but he had pretty low expectations. The man was a sex demon, for fuck’s sake. He hadn’t stuck around after conception. Hadn’t sent money. Hadn’t checked in.

“What the hell does he want?” he asked under his breath.

“Watch your mouth.” She muttered something in Italian and rolled her eyes at the ceiling.

Before she looked down, he rolled his eyes, too.

“I imagine he wants to mark you,” she said.

“Claim me and brand me, you mean. No fucking thanks!” He knew he was more or less running at half capacity as far as his paranormal abilities went, and he was fine with keeping them that way.

In fact, he’d like to get rid of them altogether.

“Language, Jase.” Hey, I knew what I was getting into when I slept with him. I was young and stupid, and well, he has a silver tongue and a – ”

“Yo!” Jason cut her off. “Let’s leave it there before we descend into the realm of too much information, okay?”

Ma shrugged. “Even before he knocked me up, I knew he’d eventually come back around to fetch you.”

Jason’s gut lurched as if a heavy stone had been dropped into it. “Fetch me? You mean, like, press me into demonic service?”

“Yeah, look. I was seventeen and he made me lots of promises. After I had you, I figured I shouldn’t stay put. That’s why I left Jersey and cut off contact with my folks. They had no idea where I went. And I took precautions, you know, to keep him from finding us.”

“So how’s he finding me now?”

“I dunno. I just know he will, and I don’t know what he wants you for. Sorry.”

He blew out a breath and raked his hands through his hair. He’d always known what his father was, even if Jason didn’t seem to have any overt sex demon proclivities himself. He liked sex and was pretty good at it in his opinion, but it wasn’t his whole life. Well. He’d have to find out what Ma’s so-called precautions were and take some of his own.

“I don’t know if I want to hear it, but tell me anyway, I guess. What’s the other thing?”

“Oh. Well, you know I try to stay out of your love life, right?” All of a sudden, her voice had taken on a singsong quality that set off Jason’s spidey-sense. When Ma took on that lilting voice, the best thing he could do was plug his fingers into his ears and back away slowly.

Maybe he was feeling masochistic today, because he stayed. “You try and you fail. What about it?”

She narrowed her dark eyes at him and wagged a scolding finger. “You have no respect for me whatsoever.”

He did, but being reverent was difficult when the forty-five-year-old sat in front of him in a Daisy Duck sweatshirt and had her salt-and-pepper hair divided into two ponytails. “I’ll do better. I swear.” He crossed his fingers under the table.

“Don’t pee on my leg and tell me it’s raining. I’m a psychic, huh? I don’t know why I even bother to—”

He groaned and held up his phone. “Ma, come on. I’m on deadline. This program is buggier than the zucchinis in your garden and I need to go home and fix it and also figure out how to keep a demon from dropping in on me. What did you want to tell me?”

She threw her hands up. “All right! God. You know how I told you as a kid that demons tend to take one mate?”

“My father being the exception, apparently.”

“My sources say he’ll settle down someday, but that’s not my problem anymore. You’re my problem.”

“Thanks, Ma.”

“You know exactly what I mean. I’ve been snatching bits and pieces out of visions for a while now, and I finally put it all together. That store you always go to for coffee, uh, Food Faire, right?”

He felt every hair on his body stand on end as if lightning had struck and took him unawares. Swallowing, he rubbed down the hair on his arms. “What about it?” His voice was calmer than he felt. Surely, she couldn’t be talking about *that* girl—the one who’d been sweetly haunting his dreams but ignoring him in real life.

“Congratulations, *vita mia*, your mate’s the checker in lane one.” She reached across the table and slapped his arm. “How ‘bout that?”

He just stared at her.

“Jase! Aren’t you going to say something? She’s real cute. I would have guessed you’d be happier than you are.”

Suddenly, his throat had gone tight and his mouth very dry. “Are...are you sure?”

“I’d bet good money on it.”

“Well, I’ll take the bet that you’re wrong. Everyone gets things wrong every now and then, even psychics like you.” He stood, dropped his phone into his shirt pocket, and pushed his chair in. “I gotta go.”

“What’s gotten into you? Why don’t you believe me?”

He scoffed. “Two reasons, Ma. That woman hasn’t made eye contact with me a single time in the two years since I started buying my coffee at Food Faire. Second, she wears the kind of gold cross around her neck that even a nun couldn’t help but to covet. I doubt it’s just for show. You think she’s gonna want me? You’re so wrong. There’s no way she’s mine.”

Ma cocked her chin up impudently. “I guess we’ll see. You’ll regret doubting me.”

“Not this time, Ma.”

He stalked to the door, shaking his head. She'd had some screwball premonitions before, but this one took the cake.

A woman as sweet as Cam couldn't possibly want to align herself to a devil like him. She was the stuff of dreams.

Him? Well, he was probably a nightmare.

CHAPTER TWO

“Oh shit.”

Cam Evans barely managed to catch her coupon folder before it hit the floor. She wasn't generally so clumsy, but seeing that man walk through Food Faire's automated doors had momentarily short-circuited her nervous system. She hadn't seen him in weeks, which wasn't so unusual given she didn't exactly memorize most of her customers' routines, but this man was unforgettable. Just looking at him inspired thoughts of all sorts of sins. Naked ones, mostly. His courteous “thank you,” whenever she handed him his change aroused her more than grandiose gifts of roses and jewelry ever had. His deep voice was like caressing fingertips down her body that settled heavily at the place where her legs joined. It made her wet for him.

Her evangelical upbringing should have activated a sort of righteousness in her every time Mr. Tall, Dark, and Demonic entered her proximity. She would avoid his lusty gaze and subtle flirting so she could keep her heart pure and her body chaste. She shouldn't want him. He was an

abomination, and she knew it. She'd been able to recognize his type since she was six years old.

She'd ever told anyone about that spirit visiting her in her dream or of the things he'd shared with her. No one would have believed her.

Her demon waved at her bagger Helen before disappearing into the produce section.

Helen waved back and wore that brazen smile that she used on all the men of a certain age. Normally, Helen's flirtatious brand of customer service didn't bother Cam, but this time Cam wanted to smack her into next week. Could Helen *be* more brazen?

"Fuck, what's a guy like that doing in Akron?" Helen asked in a whisper barely loud enough for Cam to hear. Helen looped the current customer's canvas shopping bag over the hooks and piled vegetables into it. "He should be on top of Mount Olympus wearing nothing but a laurel wreath headband and a smile."

Cam waited until the customer had walked away before responding. She leaned toward the end of the counter and made sure Helen met her gaze. "Back off," she whispered. "That one's mine."

She felt murderously territorial and knew why. After all, she *had* studied demons in college—as much as any outsider could, anyway—and she had a pretty good idea of how they affected the people they encountered. Knowing what he was seemed to intensify his allure.

Helen didn't bother to muffle her peal of laughter. She pulled the next customer's bags off the conveyor belt and looped them over the hooks. "Good one, Cam. Real funny. A guy like that probably isn't looking for someone to take to church. A guy like that probably wants to go home to a freak-nasty kind of girl, and I know just the right person." She fluffed up her chest and made a kissy-face at Cam.

Cam grated her teeth and turned back to her register. Helen was right, of course. Why would he want a reserved girl like Cam when he could have a double-D knockout like Helen?

Cam punched her cashier identification number into the keypad and turned to the customer. Somehow, she managed to greet him with a smile. "Did you find everything you needed at Food Faire?"

Maybe the customer responded, but Cam had already gone into autopilot and didn't hear him. Her mind reeled as she waved groceries over the scanner.

If that demon were anything like her mythology professor's husband, he'd make a loving, affectionate mate. He'd behave as if his purpose in life was to give her pleasure. *Only* her.

What woman wouldn't want that kind of devotion? It was what fairy tales taught little girls to hold out for.

Cam handed the customer her receipt and spotted her demon joining the queue for her lane. Her heart stuttered a few beats and she gripped the counter side to stay upright as her blood drained from her head.

I'm going to do it this time, she told herself. She was going to say something—anything—to let him know she knew what he was and that she didn't care. That was her only advantage over Helen, really—that Cam knew and wouldn't run from him.

Cam turned to Helen again while the next customer piled the contents of her cart onto the conveyor. "We've been working together for years and never once have I called dibs," she said. "Do me a favor and bat your eyelashes at someone else."

Helen made a little clawing gesture at the air and said, "Meow!" She shook out a paper sack and readied it for the purchases. "Well, take your best shot, creampuff. I still say a man like that doesn't want sweet and cute. He's going to

chew you up, spit you out, and break your heart. I'll be here to say *I told you so.*"

"That won't be necessary."

Cam felt the demon's gaze on the side of her face as she moved items over the scanner.

Oh God. What must have he been thinking as he looked at her so fixedly? Did he look at her and know that she was naïve and inexperienced, or did he simply wonder why her line was so freaking long?

Her courage fled.

Maybe Helen was right. Cam didn't know what to do with a man like that, and maybe she should wait until she figured it out.

* * *

Angie Deiulio propped her fuzzy slipper-shod feet up on the patio table and adjusted her phone's headset. She wasn't even on the schedule to work, but the garden was weeded, nothing good was on television, and she was too wired to nap. She figured she might as well earn a few bucks. Those new Fiats were so damned cute, and she was going to buy one whether that kid of hers turned his nose up at it or not. Not her fault if he couldn't fit in one. He

could blame his giant dreamboat daddy, the frickin' *carogna*.

"Thanks for calling Your Psychic Pal," she said in a gravelly voice she hoped was mysterious and spooky. She liked for folks to get their money's worth. They expected theatrics, and she delivered. "This is Helena. What's troubling you today, my child?"

The caller didn't respond immediately, but she didn't disconnect. The longer they stayed on, the more she got paid. It didn't make a difference if they talked.

"Whenever you're ready, I'm here to help you," she said dramatically. She picked at her cuticle and hummed a little bit of Billy Idol's "Soul Standing By."

"I always hated that fucking song," came the deep voice in her headset.

She nearly fell out of her seat in trying to sit up. She knew that voice. Holy shit, how had he found her? Had she accidentally evoked his name or something?

She stabbed her computer's spacebar repeatedly and shook while the machine warmed up. It *couldn't* be him.

"Angie, I know you know who it is," he said.

“Well, I’m hoping my ears are playing tricks on me.” The monitor lit up and she lifted her reading glasses from her hair and settled them on her nose.

All of the customers dispatched to her were listed in the private Your Psychic Pal employee call queue. She never looked at it because she didn’t need to personalize scripts or know anything in advance. She was a real-deal psychic, unlike her peers. If she’d been looking, she would have noticed the odd data inputted for this particular caller.

His phone number was listed as: 000-666-0000.

She rolled her eyes and muttered, “Real funny. What do you want, Gulielmus? And how’d you find me?”

“You know what I want. I want my son. It *was* a son, right? And nothing is really a secret to a demon who’s persistent enough. I asked around and found out you worked from home. My, my, a phone psychic. No irony there at all.”

“Heaven, help me.” She took off her glasses and pinched the bridge of her nose between her thumb and forefinger. “Yes, it was a son. What do you want with Jason?”

“Nothing malevolent.”

“Don’t feed me that caca. It’s been almost thirty years since I last dealt with you, but let me tell you, I’m much smarter now.”

She couldn’t tell if he snorted or scoffed, but whichever it was, in response she made a crude gesture she’d love to show him in person some day. Maybe right after he paid her some back child support.

“I’m certain you are,” he said. “But, I’m being genuine. Consult the cosmos or your spirit guide or whoever you have to, but—”

“Hey, bad time to say it, but I’m pretty sure this call is being recorded for quality assurance.”

“Where’s the phone server stored?”

“At the headquarters downtown. Why?”

“I’ll just pop over there later and scramble the hard drive.”

“Oh. I see. How could I *possibly* forget that small things like the law and physics and stuff don’t apply to you?”

“Angie, I need to speak with Jason.”

“Why?”

“He’s a psychic like you, isn’t he?”

“No. His skill set is limited to finding things.”

“Perfect. That’s all I need him for.”

“You’re going to try to mark him, aren’t you?”

He was quiet for so long that she he was working up a real good lie for her. But surprisingly, he said, “Yes. I am.”

“Then you can go eff yourself. You go have yourself a nice day, okay?”

“Angie, you had to have known I was coming.”

She blew a raspberry and slumped in the hard, cast iron chair. “Yeah, I knew.”

“Trust me when I say that I have no interest in micromanaging any more of my children. Making him is a matter of necessity. There’s a lot of turmoil in the demon ranks right now, Angie. It’s the kind of disruption that could leak out and have us all exposed.”

She cringed. She didn’t like that idea any more than he did, probably. Nobody would care about a piddling psychic like her, but Jason—no, she couldn’t let her baby get caught up in that kind of mess. He was a lover, not a fighter.

“You’re not gonna let anything happen to him, are you?”

“I give you my word.”

“Your word is worth about two cents.”

“But you’ll have to trust me anyway. Now, where is he?”

* * *

Jason shifted his tin of low-acid coffee to his other hand and counted the bodies in line ahead of him. The guy at the register was engaged in the ancient art of check-writing, and the delay tested Jason’s already short patience.

“What the fuck, luddite?” he muttered.

He could have waited until the end of the cashier’s shift to talk to her, but he knew he wouldn’t be able to rest until he proved that his mother was wrong. He’d get up to the register, say hello to the cashier as he always did, and she’d complete the transaction with courtesy – all without ever looking up at him. Coming on to her would be easier if she’d been alone in an aisle restocking groceries.

“Sir,” a well-modulated alto behind him said.

He turned to see the manageress in her dark-blue Food Faire apron. She held her hands clutched primly in front of her as if she were about to belt out an aria and not

just relocate him to another lane. What she wanted was obvious, but he'd humor her.

"Yes?" He somehow managed to utter it in a fairly neutral voice despite his agitation.

She nodded toward the adjacent aisle. "If you'd like to use our quick-check lane, it's now open with no waiting. I see you only have the..." She nudged her reading glasses down her skinny nose and peered at the national brand coffee he held. "The *coffee*."

"Is she really getting her jollies off from judging my coffee?" he muttered under his breath. He looked down the lane to gauge the check-writer's progress. Still writing. Shit, had the guy started over or was he penning a love letter on the backside of the check?

Jason cracked the knuckles of his free hand against his thigh. Maybe he should go up there and give the guy some *encouragement* to move along.

He felt the prickle of a gaze on the back of his neck and turned. "What?"

The manageress tipped her head toward the other lane. "No waiting over there, sir."

“English is my primary language, so I understood you perfectly well the first time.” He grinned and flicked his hand in a go-away gesture. “Have a nice day.”

Though gone, she’d left a psychic pull on him. She needed something. Fuck. He hated being psychic and knowing such intimate things about strangers, or worse, those he despised.

Groaning, he pushed the niggling plea to the back of his mind as he concentrated on the task at hand. He had maybe sixty seconds to get his act together. The check-writer had moved on, and the cashier – Cam, her nametag said – had already scanned in the next customer’s small purchase. She was damned efficient. Every time he’d gone through her line in the past couple of years, she’d pushed him through at a speed that broke the sound barrier, and she never looked at him.

Well, she was going to look at him *today*.

He pushed his coffee along without aid of the conveyor, and she reached for it.

“Did you find all the items you visited Food Faire for today?” she asked in a cheerful enough voice. He didn’t want cheerful, though. He wanted husky and anticipatory. He wanted her breathless and her eyelids so heavy with lust that when he touched her – *finally* touched her – she’d

beg for him. That was what the incubus part of him wanted – it wanted Jason’s skin hunger appeased.

It wanted touch and response.

Their fingertips barely skimmed as he passed off the canister, but that one small touch was enough to make his nuts draw up.

“Fuck,” he whispered.

“That’ll be ten-fifteen, please,” she said.

“That’s it?” It’d seemed the transaction had just started. Why hadn’t he picked up more than just coffee? He needed more time. Maybe he should go back and get some salt. He needed it anyway. It was supposed to repel evil, or so television shows claimed, and maybe it would keep his father away from him.

“You could probably find it a little less expensive elsewhere,” she whispered with a conspiratorial smile.

He felt his forehead furrow with confusion until he understood they’d gotten their wires crossed.

He just shook his head and swiped his debit card through the reader.

Clearing her throat, she concentrated on her monitor. “Even with the employee discount, I’d save money by driving across town to the superstore.”

Was she talking to him? *Really?* He mentally flailed for something to say—to keep the magic, such as it was, happening. “So...you must live nearby.” *Lame.* He used his thumbs to input his PIN code.

“Walking distance,” she said. “I live a few blocks from here.”

That meddlesome front-end manager hovered near the end of the lane next to the bagger. She stood with her hands clasped behind her back and pinned him with a wilting glower.

He rolled his eyes and put the coffee tin beside his mouth to hide his lips from a right-side view. “Your manager has been out to get me for two years,” he whispered. “She must think I’m the wrong kind of clientele.”

Cam’s shoulders shook with the suppressed giggle, and when she turned to grab his receipt, he had a bright idea to draw her out.

He left the receipt and his card at the register. “Have a good one,” he said, and pushed up an eyebrow as he

passed the bagger. She was grinning at him like she wanted to swallow him whole.

Aggressive never had been his type, so it shouldn't have surprised him that he'd fall for the grand master of playing-hard-to-get.

The manager glowered at him, and he stopped long enough to bow sarcastically.

Judging by her sour puss and the fists balled at her sides, she didn't think he was funny.

Outside, he leaned against the empty bike rack and watched the second hand on his watch. Exactly thirteen seconds later, Cam jogged through the automated doors and looked left and right. Spotting him, she held up his debit card and walked over.

"You left this, Mr. De..." Her forehead furrowed as she studied the card.

"It's pronounced *Deh-OOH-lee-o*," he said.

She nodded and handed the card to him. "Deiulio. So, is that, uh..." Slowly, she tracked her gaze up his body and found his eyes.

She had beautiful brown eyes even richer than the coffee he held, though if there were a competition of which brown was the prettiest, the one her skin wore

would win hands-down. It reminded him of the dark honey he sometimes used in his tea, and he wondered if it would be nearly as sweet.

“Is it what?” he asked.

“Is it...the name you were born with? I know not all...all demons have last names.”

She pulled her gaze away again, which was just as well because the way his jaw dropped probably wasn't especially attractive.

She knew? How the fuck did she know?

He swallowed hard and scanned the parking lot around them. No one coming or going. No one listening.

“What do you know about demons?”

“Um, a bit. I know that most people can't recognize you.”

“And you can?”

“Yes. I guess I'm a little witchy that way.” She made a face that implied that she didn't consider that to be a good thing.

Shit. He knew it. She wanted nothing to do with his kind. Just his luck, he'd get outed by the woman he'd been

infatuated with for two years. She knew his name now. Great.

“Please don’t misunderstand me,” she said and grabbed his wrist.

He looked down at it, stunned by her touch, and she dropped it.

He resisted the urge to take back her hand by shoving his free one into his pocket.

“Sorry. I shouldn’t touch without asking. I just...I don’t know what to do with my hands and you’re standing in front of me and I—” Her words came out in a supersonic blur even his supernatural ears had trouble picking apart.

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and started again. “I just wanted you to know that I know you’re a demon and it’s okay.”

“Half demon,” he said.

Rolling that dark gaze back up to him, she nodded. “Half. Right. I can’t tell half from whole. The energy reads the same way to me. Regardless of which you are, I...I’m not afraid of you.”

“You should be.” He didn’t know why he’d said it. He should have been trying to charm her, not repel her, but

that golden cross glistening at her collarbone made him question her motives. If he wasn't going to be anything to her but an item of curiosity, he wasn't going to indulge her.

"I know, but I've never been..." She the words trail off as if she'd thought better at the last moment.

"Never been what?" he asked.

"Normal." It was practically a whisper.

She looked out into the parking lot and jammed her hands into her apron pockets. With her shoulders hunched the way they were, she looked so small and vulnerable, and he wanted to protect her.

The instinct was certainly there. If what his mother said was true, Cam was his to defend, but maybe he'd feel the same way about any woman.

When she turned back to him, she wore an expression that seemed half hopeful and half anxious. Her cheeks bore a hint of red, and even from where he stood he could sense a slight increase in her body temperature.

He couldn't find it in him to reject her even knowing that the little woman could be dangerous. Maybe he was wrong, but she seemed to need a friend.

He tucked his debit card into his wallet then nudged out a business card. "Listen," he said. "I live nearby, too. I usually have dinner at six. Why don't you come by? You can tell me why you know so much about demons."

When she exhaled, the furrows in her forehead relaxed. She straightened her spine and took the card.

"How about six-thirty? I'll want to change out of this." She indicated her neutral-colored ensemble and cashier's apron. "And I'll need to shake my roommate off my trail. I work with her all day long, and she's going to be suspicious about me going out. I wouldn't put it past her to follow me."

"You mean your bagger?"

She nodded. "Best friend I have, though you couldn't tell on most days."

"Six-thirty, then."

She turned just as her manager came to the doors and poked her head out.

Cam tripped upon seeing her, but quickly recovered. "Sorry, I thought I'd be quicker," she said. "He was halfway down the street by the time I came out."

The manageress made that screw-face at him again, and he sighed as the cosmic finder-of-all-things whispered an answer to what she sought into his head.

He couldn't turn off his gift, and that's why he lived alone and worked from home. Whenever he left his apartment, he was barraged by voices in his head. He could read minds to the extent that he knew when people had lost things, and because he was a dowser, he could help them find them. He had a supernatural hotline to the gods, but the only they ever told him was where people could find their lost objects.

People never stopped losing things.

He exhaled. "The cherished silver pen you're missing is tucked into your bun. Maybe you shouldn't bring it to work, if it means so much to you." He walked away from the bike rack as she felt around in her hair.

"You're welcome," he called over his shoulder, then mumbled, "*Megeera.*"

CHAPTER THREE

Cam poised her fist in front of the heavy maroon door and paused. She needed to check in with her gut. Her head said everything was okay, but her head had led her astray in the past. Her gut never had.

From the moment Jason had put that business card in her hand, time had sped by. She could barely remember clocking out or how her manager checked Cam's purse for stolen goods on her way out of Food Faire.

The memory lapse extended to how she wound up in the long, stretchy, black skirt she'd never bothered to get hemmed. She also didn't remember putting on the clingy V-neck shirt that showed off the assets her oh-so-pious aunt had told her would get her in trouble one day.

Well, fortunately for Cam, she *wanted* to get into trouble. Her body had been on autopilot, but she couldn't deny she was exactly where she wanted to be.

She knocked on the door and fluffed up her troublemaking assets, à la Helen. If her cleavage was the first thing Jason saw when he opened the door, so be it. If

she had to resort to her friend's cheap tricks to stir his attention, Cam would do it. He'd been haunting her dreams for a year, teasing her to an unsatisfied peak so she'd wake up dripping wet with no outlet for relief besides her own fingers. And hers weren't big like his. He could probably put one finger in her and make her vibrate like a harp string.

"Oh, God," she whispered, and her legs wobbled beneath her at the very thought. She grabbed the doorframe, and Jason chose that exact moment to open up.

"Whoa. You all right?"

"Um..."

He grabbed her by the shoulders and righted her, and his deep blue eyes held a spark of concern. The pale chambray of his shirt made the startling color of his eyes stand out in deep contrast against his olive skin. Not every demon she'd encountered had been irresistibly sexy in the way he was, but she suspected she knew what gave him his appeal. He'd enticed her so thoroughly in her dreams that she'd always woken up feeling like he'd really been there – that he'd been in her.

He had to be the child of an incubus – a sex demon.

She must have been staring too long, because his sensuous lips pulled up into a grin.

He tucked his dark hair behind his ears and crooked a thumb toward the inside of his apartment. "You want to come in and sit? Dinner will be up soon."

It took her three tries to process the words coming out of his mouth. He had sinful lips for a man. His bottom lip begged to be pulled by her teeth, and she wanted to trace her tongue along the dip of his top lip to memorize its shape. She bet they were soft and silken and that they would feel amazing against the crook of her neck.

"Cam?" He gave her bare left shoulder a gentle squeeze.

It was probably meant to be friendly, but the sensual skim of his fingers on her hungry skin sent an anticipatory jolt to her pussy.

She gasped.

"Really, are you all right?" he asked.

"Hmm?" She craned her neck and fixed her gaze on those beautiful eyes. They were so clear and pure of color that they seemed bottomless. Like she'd fall into them if she stood too close.

His crooked grin was one half amused and one half devilish. Did he know the effect he had on her? That being so close to him made breathing difficult and scattered her thoughts? No man had ever affected her this way before. Her restraint had been the stuff of legends.

“Cameron?” he nudged and this time skimmed his hand down her arm. The fine hairs on her skin stood on end, and her toes curled against the soles of her sandals.

He wanted to touch her. Thank God, he wanted to touch her.

Wait. Cameron?

Her brain took a moment to process it. He’d gotten her name wrong. She had one mind not to correct him and to let him call her anything he wanted to as long as it was pretty. Another part of her brain suggested that perhaps she shouldn’t set precedents she’d be unable to correct later. She wasn’t so desperate that she couldn’t command a little respect. Part of that respect was him calling her by the correct name.

She took a deep breath and found her words. “Cam is short for Camellia.” Her feet moved of their own volition and her left hip brushed against his thigh as she slipped past him.

Damn, he was a big man. It would probably take two of her to make one of him, but she wasn't frightened. She knew he wouldn't hurt her. It was as obvious to her as her skin being brown and her job being dead-end. He wasn't marked. In her experience, demons who were "on the job" bore a faint mark on their palms or on the underside of their wrists. His skin was free of such marring. He was no more dangerous than any other man, though that probably made him dangerous enough.

He shut the door but didn't activate the deadbolt. "*Camellia*," he repeated. "That's pretty. I like that better. I don't know why I thought Cam was short for Cameron."

"It's definitely more common. My sisters and I are all named after flowers." She scanned his apartment and noted the windows and doors, as she did every time she visited a strange place. She doubted she'd be fleeing through that fire escape window. The apartment was large for a single man, maybe even two bedrooms, though she couldn't tell what the hallway led off to. Spacious living area, full-sized kitchen. It must have cost a fortune.

"Do you have a roommate?" She pulled a barstool back from the counter and lifted her skirt out of the way of her feet so she could climb on.

He was still there at the door. She noticed a broken streak of white powder in front of the threshold. Salt? Why would he have salt there?

His smile had waned, and he had a faraway look in his eyes. Had she done something already to offend him?

She mentally catalogued the list of possible transgressions. She'd corrected him on her name, but that couldn't be it. He'd said he liked her name.

"No, I don't have a roommate," he said. "It's just me. Why?"

"I was coveting your apartment. It's probably twice the size of mine, and I have a roommate."

"Right. The bagger." He flinched, and apparently that sparked his movement away from the door. He leaned back against the counter next to her, and he seemed to relax. He still towered over her, even though she was on the stool. "I keep my workspace separate from my living space. I use one of the bedrooms as a home office.

"Not a laptop and coffee shop kind of guy? I thought demons enjoyed crowds."

His jaw tightened again, and he shook his head. "Not this demon. I'm not...on the prowl."

"I guessed that."

“You seem to know more about demons than I do.”

“I doubt that.”

She guessed that his elevated eyebrow was an outward sign of disbelief. Interesting.

“Anyway, I work best in absolute quiet. It’s hard for me to think when there are a lot of bodies moving around. I code software. It’s fiddly. But really, how is it that you know so much about demons?”

“Maybe I’m just a groupie.”

A snort escaped his nose. He walked to the fridge then opened it. “Right. Good girl like you?”

“What makes you think I’m a good girl?” She would have stomped her foot if she didn’t think it’d make her look petulant. Quiet and reserved did not automatically translate into good. At least not in *her* mind.

He held up a bottle of water. She nodded and took it.

“Your cross,” he said. He grabbed another bottle of water and closed the door.

She closed her hand over the pendent and squeezed it. She never took it off and had become blind to it for the most part. “I once had a roommate with sticky fingers,”

she said. "The only jewelry I had that didn't turn up missing was the jewelry I wore. Does it bother you?"

"Is it melting me from the inside out?" he asked, and that brazen grin came back.

If she hadn't been sitting, she would have swooned.

"No. It's not causing me any physical distress. It's just making me wonder what you think of me."

"I think you're fascinating."

"You keep sweet-talking me like that, and you'll be in my bed in no time, girl." He lifted his water bottle in a faux toast.

She lifted hers, too, knowing he was joking, but she couldn't help but to hope the words were truth. "You're a nut, you know that?"

"Damn right. I get it from my mother. She's a psychic. I'd call her a hot mess if it wouldn't be offensive to hot messes."

"Jason, you're awful!" And she *loved* it. She hadn't expected him to be a stick in the mud, but handsome, smart, *and* funny? Holy jackpot.

"Ma would agree with you. She sends me a text message at least once every day letting me know it. She's

got the Italian mama guilt thing down pat, even though she had me kind of young. Sometimes I feel like she's more like an older sister than a parent."

"So, you're close?"

"Yeah. Kinda had to be. The going was tough for us for a lot of years." He leaned his forearms on the counter and fiddled with the water bottle's top. "You close to your folks?"

Up until that moment, she'd been perfectly at ease. Now, her lungs seemed to be unable to draw in enough air and her heart's beats were sharp stabs.

"Shit." He reached across the island and took her hand. "You don't have to answer that. I know a little something about having assholes in the family tree."

She squeezed her fingers tight around his and concentrated on deepening her breaths.

In, out.

In, out.

When some of the pressure in her chest eased, she shook her head and rubbed her eyes with her free hand. "It's been years, but every time I think about it, it feels like a fresh wound. Suffice it to say, my family and I had some

profound philosophical differences, and so we're estranged."

"So, you have no one?"

"Just my crackpot roommate."

"I'm sorry." He turned her hand over and massaged the palm.

His careful, gentle touch relaxed her muscle by muscle from her fingers to her core. The residual tightness in her chest ebbed and a feeling of contentment took its place.

"What are you doing to me?" she whispered.

"It's a little trick I don't get to use so often. I suppose I inherited it from my father. It helps people relax. I guess it's a useful skill to have when your prey is afraid of you and you want to lure them into a false feeling of safety."

"Whatever it is, don't stop. I don't care if the feeling's phony."

He chuckled and took her other hand, too. "You're easy to please, huh?"

"Nope."

"Well, if I'm going to give you the best fucking hand massage ever, you gotta give me something in return." He

punctuated the statement with a wink, and she felt like his eye had sent an erotic arrow straight into her core.

She rubbed her thighs together and whispered, “Anything.”

“Hey now, you better watch your mouth. I’m a very literal kind of guy, and I might call you on the things you say later.”

He raised her right hand to his lips and kissed the back of it.

Oh, fuckin’ marry me.

When he kissed the other hand, too, she had to close her eyes to block out the sight of his sinful lips. “If your goal is to scare me off, you’re doing a piss-poor job of it,” she said breathlessly.

“Not scary, huh?”

She shook her head, but kept her eyes closed. Scary *sexy* was more like it.

“Well, although you’ve pretty much given yourself to me body, mind, and soul, all I really wanted was for you to tell me where you got your demon education. I think you probably know more than Ma.”

Cam opened her eyes and, reluctantly, pulled her hands back. Looking at him was bad enough. Touching him scrambled her damn brain. “When I was six, I had a visitation. I don’t know if it was a spirit guide or some other interested party, but they revealed a lot of arcane knowledge to me. I stayed quiet about it. Didn’t tell anyone in my family, because I figured they’d think I was possessed. As years went on, I noticed I could see angels, and not just the corporeal ones, but also the ones who are invisible to everyone else, too. I could see ghosts as well.”

“And identify demons.”

She nodded. “I couldn’t put names to everything at first, but when I went to college, I studied theology, folklore, and mythology—anything I could get my hands on that explained what was around me. Luckily, I had an independent study unit and the professor supervising it was an expert on mythology and folklore. One day I suggested that perhaps it all blurred—all the religions, I mean. Maybe they were all just parts of one big history.”

“She agreed with you.”

Cam nodded. “She trusted me. I don’t know why. She introduced me to her husband and I knew what he was right of the bat, though he was the first demon I ever shook the hand of. He was nothing like I expected a

demon to be. He was timid and quiet. Very studious, and I could feel in my bones that he was old, old, *old*."

"So, you think you're a witch?"

Was that a note of hopefulness in his voice? Interesting.

She shook her head. "Nah, I don't. Clairsentient and claircognitive, probably."

"A psychic medium at the very least." His eyes suddenly went round and he snapped his fingers. "You know what? You should talk to my mother."

"I'd love to!"

If Cam sounded overeager, she didn't care. She'd never had anyone to talk to like this, and certainly had never wanted to meet any man's *mother*. Jason was special. He would have been extraordinary even without his demonic bag of tricks.

"You're too fucking cute," he said, and leaned onto the island again. His hands were inches from hers, and she barely suppressed her impulse to touch them. She'd missed his touch the moment he took it away.

"Cute is a four-letter word."

“But you *are* cute. The way you crinkle your nose when you laugh makes me want to toss you onto my sofa and tickle you breathless.”

“Great, just like a little sister.” She rolled her eyes.

“Obviously, you haven’t been tickled by the son of a sex demon.” His slow, sexy grin made her reinterpret the nuance of his words.

“I’m afraid to ask, but just where would you be tickling me and with what?”

He winked again. “Scared of me yet, cutie?”

“No, but I’m getting really turned on by you trying to get me there.”

“Yeah?” His gaze raked down to her chest. Somehow, she stifled the compulsion to thrust out her breasts for his inspection. She’d already implied that she wasn’t necessarily a good girl, and the way she saw it, she had nothing to lose.

“So, you’re not from around here, huh?” he asked, meeting her gaze once more.

“Random, but no,” she said. She straightened up on the stool. “I was an out-of-state student which made my tuition was about ten times higher than my Ohioan peers. I’ve been in Ohio long enough that I could probably apply

for in-state student status, but..." She shrugged. "I don't know. I guess I'm reevaluating what I would do with that degree. The economy sucks."

"Your accent is...*Southern*."

"Good ear," she said. "I try to hide it."

"Why the hell would you want to do that?"

"Because it makes me sound stupid. At least that's what my friend Helen tells me."

"Fuck, you need better friends."

"Well, I have you now, right?"

"Girl, you can have me, but the jury's still out on whether or not I'm *better*."

Oh, she'd have him all right.

She swallowed and tried to steer her thoughts out of the filthy-ass gutter. He was so tall. The things they could do on that counter...

She had to look away from him again to get her mind back on track. "I'm originally from Mount Pleasant," she said. "South Carolina. Near Charleston."

"One of the companies I code for is based near there, so I know the area. I also know how hard you're wrestling that tongue of yours." He ran his hand down her arm

again and over her prominent goosebumps. “Are you cold?” He must have also noticed her nipples had juttled out on high alert, and it wasn’t because of the air conditioning.

She crossed her arms over her chest and willed away the heat in her cheeks.

“A little,” she admitted.

“The air conditioner only has two settings: on and off. The landlord keeps saying he’ll fix it. I’ll turn it off for you.”

She grabbed his wrist as he backed away. “No, it’s okay. Don’t leave me.”

She didn’t know where that pitiful last bit had come from, but she dropped his wrist and tried to smooth an expression of nonchalance onto her face. Inside, she felt anything but nonchalant. She’d never wanted anyone as badly as she wanted Jason, and it wasn’t just because of what he was. He talked to her like she was worth his time, and in her life, that’d been a rare thing for sure.

She didn’t know if his cordiality was part and parcel of his demonic appeal, but she hoped a little of that friendliness would turn into true affection for her at some point. Sex was great, but she wanted more than that.

She wanted to be missed if she left.

He let out a breath and placed his heavy hands on her shoulders, kneading. Massaging.

“I don’t know how anyone could leave you,” he said.

“It’s easier than you’d think.”

CHAPTER FOUR

What an odd little woman.

Not that Jason was complaining. Odd seemed to suit him just fine, which shouldn't have been a surprise given his mother's screwball personality. He could never predict what Ma was going to do or say and the same seemed to apply to Cam as well.

"I can't believe a woman like you would be so hard up you'd want a half-demon's company," he said.

"Not hard up. Picky," she muttered.

"And you picked *me*?"

"Duh, Jason."

There was a knock on the door, and he tore himself away to go answer it. His downstairs neighbor, and owner of the best Italian restaurant in town, shouldered her way in without greeting, as always.

"My best lasagna in months," Mrs. Sandrigo said. "I threw in everything but the kitchen sink. You're gonna love it. Maybe that'll fatten you up, huh?" She laughed

and turned, only to stop in her tracks. "Oh. You got company?" She turned back around and flicked her kitchen towel at Jason. He narrowly avoided the snap. "You should have told me. I would have brought more."

He shrugged. "You always bring too much." Some days, he felt like the old woman was trying to fatten him up for the slaughter. As it was, he was well over two hundred pounds. Even at six-four, he wasn't exactly waifish.

"Too much for *who*? A squirrel? A little mouse? Dammit. Take this." She thrust the platter and utensil roll at him, mutt and muttered something under her breath in Italian in such a way he hoped Cam didn't speak it. He only caught bits and pieces himself, and none of what she said was flattering. "Be right back. Got a little more in the warmer."

"How much is a little?"

She threatened to flick the towel again, and he jumped back.

"I'll leave the door unlocked."

"Please do. Make it easy for an old lady."

"I could come down and get it myself, you know."

“I need the exercise. Doctor said I need more stairs.” She mumbled as she went away.

Jason stood there with the platter then let out a breath when the coast was clear. She always had that effect on him. Cam chuckled. He kicked the scattered salt back to the threshold and he turned to her. “You think that’s funny?”

She nodded and grinned. “You should see what it looks like from my perspective. She’s not much bigger than a Christmas ham, and yet she bulldozed you like you were made of dry sand and not flesh and bones.”

“I could lie and say she was just showing off for company, but I won’t waste my breath.”

He slipped the plate onto the counter in front of her and peeled back the foil.

They whistled in chorus.

“How big are the squirrels she feeds and where do they gather?” she asked.

He laughed. “Sandrigo’s is the best value in town for hearty Italian food. Or, at least I think it is. For all I know, the servings in the restaurant may be smaller than what she brings me.”

“Is she related to you? Your grandmother, maybe?”

Jason slid the utensil roll toward her. “No,” he said. “Mrs. Sandrigo is just a concerned neighbor. I guess she saw my Italian name on the mailbox and decided to extend her spirit of *famiglia* to me. She thinks I starve myself. She even drives across town to take food to my mother, and Ma’s not the kind of lady who’d refuse it. Between you and me, she’s not that great of a cook.”

Cam sliced through the mountain of lasagna noodles and dragged the pile of food toward the edge of the plate. “Some son you are.”

“We’ve already established that I’m fabulous.”

“People can’t be good at everything, though. And I’m going to guess that since your mother is alive, you’re not particularly old.” Cam raised the fork to her mouth and drew the food between her lips. Her eyes rolled back and a small moan of culinary ecstasy sounded in her chest.

“No, I’m the age I look. I’m not marked, and thus not immortal. And do you see why Ma doesn’t say no to the food?”

“If you don’t want it, I’ll take whatever Mrs. Sandrigo brings you from now on.”

“Only if you eat it here. You might change your mind.”

“Not the hardship you seem to think it is.” She lashed her tongue along the sauce on the back of the fork tines, and his cock twitched enviously.

“*God.*” He put some distance between them and paced near the sofa. “You know, I’m still floored by the fact that in the countless number of times I visited Food Faire, you didn’t look me in the eyes once. You didn’t sway from the customer service script one bit. You should have said something to me. I thought you were being a little snot.”

Her draw dropped. “I’m not a snot! I think you underestimate the fickleness of a front-end manager on a power trip.”

“Come on, she wouldn’t write you up just for asking me about my day or something.”

“Jason, she wrote me up for running after you with your debit card.”

“Fuck.”

“Hey, it’s all right. I get written up for stupid things about once per quarter. She runs a tight ship.”

“It’s a grocery store, not an aircraft carrier.”

She shrugged and picked up her fork again. “It’s a job.”

“What would you rather be doing?” Suddenly, knowing this became very important to him. He wanted to know what made her tick. No, he wanted to know *everything* about her, and all at once. Too bad he couldn’t just download it all straight to his brain. The sooner he knew her quirks, the sooner he could figure out how to keep her from running. He still didn’t believe she wouldn’t.

“If money wasn’t an issue?” she asked.

He nodded.

“Field research on paranormal legends. I think I’d be able to approach it from a unique perspective since I can see things that other people can’t. I’d get to travel a lot, and maybe...help little girls who are floundering like I am right now.” Her voice went soft at the end, and the small hitch in it very nearly ripped his heart in two.

He moved toward her, and her gaze fell more with each step he took.

No, no, no. We’re not going backward. Look at me. He cupped her chin and tilted her face toward heaven where it belonged. “It’s all right. We both had it pretty rough, huh?” He fingered the curl that had come loose from her high bun and nudged it behind her ear. Then he idly

traced the shape of her gold hoop earring—gently skimming her skin and drawing a gasp from her.

He moved around her and leaned in to inhale her seductive floral scent. She smelled as sweet as her name. He followed the taper of her neck from shoulder to jaw with his index finger and bent down to kiss it.

Her head lolled back. He moved his attention to the other side of her neck but paused with his lips mere millimeters away. Again, he waited for her rejection.

“I like when you say my name.” She craned her neck closer to his lips. Her voice was barely a whisper, but he heard them. “You say it like a prayer.”

Some of the tension his body had been holding onto fled as he put his lips to her satiny skin. He never wanted to stop touching her now that he had her so near. “I want to kiss you from head to toe and show my reverence for every part of you.” He slid his left hand up her ribs and warily cupped her breast.

The thrust of her chest spurred him on, so he dragged his thumb over her swollen nipple.

“Yes,” she moaned.

The apartment door slammed open and hit the rubber stopper.

Jason yanked his hand from Cam and pressed his forehead to her shoulder, groaning. *Goddammit.*

“All right, kids. I got you lasagna with extra gravy, some antipasto, and a tiramisu for later.” Mrs. Sandrigo balanced the containers on her stubby, outstretched arms.

Cam slipped out from Jason’s grasp and went to meet her halfway. “That’s really kind of you. I’m Cam, by the way.”

Jason turned his back to them and discreetly adjusted himself.

Way to cockblock, Mrs. S.

“You make sure he eats all of it, huh? Don’t need to save none for later.”

Cam laughed. “Um, I’ll try. Looks to me like he eats pretty well.”

Oh, he’d be eating exactly what he wanted as soon as Mrs. Sandrigo left. Or *whom* he wanted to, rather. He turned and put on what he hoped was an entirely un-sleazy grin for Mrs. Sandrigo’s benefit.

Leave, woman, for fuck’s sake, please –

“You want me to go get a bottle of wine from the cellar?” Mrs. Sandrigo asked Cam.

Cam looked over at Jason, and he tried desperately to keep his expression blank so as not to lead her. If she wanted the wine, she could have it.

“Could we take a rain check on that?” Cam asked.

Thank God.

“Yeah, yeah, any time.” Mrs. Sandrigo draped her ever-present towel over her shoulder and walked toward the door. “I’ll take it out and put your names on it so those knuckleheads don’t give it away. I know just the bottle.”

“Thank you,” Jason called to her back.

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t make me bang on the door for five minutes with your breakfast. It’s hard on an old lady’s wrists.” She pulled the door shut, and Jason waited no more than five seconds before he hurried across the room to lock it. He relieved Cam of the food, set it all on the counter, and grabbed her hand. “Is the bedroom okay?” He pulled her toward it without waiting for her answer.

“To eat dinner?” she said with a laugh. “Might be messy.”

“I figured we’d start with dessert.”

He closed her into his bedroom and picked her up. She squealed as he dropped her on his bed. The lightness of her spirit, and her open, trusting demeanor had him

laughing with an atypically unrestrained mirth. She was everything he needed, but hadn't wanted to believe it was true because their pairing was just too...too *perfect*. He had to have done something right in his pitiful life to have landed her.

He raised her skirt then ran his fingers up the insides of her legs and pressed his hands to her warm, supple thighs to part them wider.

She gasped and grabbed his shoulders as if to hold on for dear life.

He hadn't even started the ride yet.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Tell me,” he said in a low, tremulous voice that had her toes curling and made her heavy with need. “Am I just a curiosity to you, or do you actually like me a little?”

“No! I mean, yes, I knew what you were but I wouldn’t have pursued you if I only wanted a one-night-stand. I’m way too prone to heartbreak.”

“You think I’d break your heart?”

“Helen seems to think you will.”

“Helen doesn’t know shit.” He positioned himself just over her, and she couldn’t ignore his heavy cock bumping the inside of her thigh or how her pussy quavered wantonly for it. They had at least four layers of fabric between them, and it was too much. The anticipation was wrecking her hard-won self-restraint.

He swiveled his hips and ground his cock at the apex of her thighs.

She whimpered, and didn’t care if it sounded pathetic. If the version of him that existed in her dreams were

nearly as good as the real deal, she'd probably forget she spoke English by the end of the night.

"You know..." he said. He ground harder. Blood surged to her clit and her panties drenched. "If you'd been just a little more aggressive, I would have taken you home two years ago."

"Jason, take off your clothes."

"Bossy." He nudged her collar down and kissed the top of her cleavage. She arched her back as his hot tongue lashed between her breasts.

"Kiss my nipples," she said. The words were meant to be said in her head, not aloud, but she sure wasn't going to take them back.

His pinch of one of the forenamed body parts was chastising, but his grin was lustful and those blue eyes held a glint of mischief. "Are you gonna really walk the son of a sex demon through foreplay?"

"Sorry. I'm not used to asking for what I want. I'm used to being told what to do."

"Don't apologize. I want you to tell me what you like." He pulled her shirt down even more to reveal her lacy bra then hooked his thumbs inside the cups. He flicked his thumbs over her bare nipples, and she moaned.

“But I’d also like to have a chance to please you my way. Okay?”

All she could do was nod, because she couldn’t speak through the pressure building in her body. She spread her legs farther to increase the friction against her clit.

When he started to ease away, she put a hand on his neck and pulled him back down to kiss him with more force than she’d intended. She wanted him so badly, and wanted to be wanted *back* even more.

He didn’t pull back. He moaned as well, as he delved his tongue farther between her lips to make a sensual exploration of her mouth. She angled her hips up once more to increase the contact of his cock against her and wrapped her leg around his waist.

Slowly, he worked her skirt up to expose her legs one inch at a time.

“You are *beautiful*.” He pressed his hands to the inside of her legs and skimmed up them up slowly. Her toes curled, and she gasped when his fingertips bumped the edge of her panties. He nudged them to the side and without teasing or further probing, licked her from clit to hole. She nearly launched into outer space from the sinful sensation.

He worked the tip of his tongue into her and flicked it as he grabbed her nub between his thumb and forefinger and gave the smallest tug. He kissed her down below the same way he'd explored her mouth and made little appreciative noises while he did it.

Her head swam at his eagerness. He wasn't just rushing her to the orgasmic finish line, but seemed to actually be enjoying what he did.

That seemed to intensify her pleasure even more.

He pushed one of his big fingers into her, and she sat up. "Fuck!"

"Dirty mouth. I like it." He chuckled with his mouth still on her, and the deep vibrations made her fall back onto the bed and clamp down hard on his finger.

"Been a while for me, too," he said.

"A *while* is an understatement where I'm concerned."

He closed his hot mouth around her clit then suckled it and teased it between his teeth, all the while working his finger in and out of her. Already, she felt so full and so close to the precipice of ecstasy. Him wanting to be with her, and his attention of her body, had turned into the most potent aphrodisiac.

He slid another finger in to stretch her, and she shuddered. She clawed at the bedspread as he filled her again and again, alternating tongue with fingers. He worked her up enough to send her body into a shaking fit yet again, but pulled back and let her panties fall back with a snap before he sat up.

What?

His expression was drawn when he edged off the bed. Embarrassment coursed through her as he stalked to the doorway. Had she done something wrong? Been too loud or perhaps didn't respond the way he liked?

He slapped the light switch, and the bedside lamps snapped on. Then he yanked his shirt over his head and took off his shoes.

Oh!

She reached for the bottom of her shirt, but before she could pull it up, his hands were on her wrists.

"Let me. I want to unwrap you," he said hoarsely.

"Okay." She was his to command. Realizing this filled her with a peace she'd never known before. She was a lustful woman with a healthy sex drive, and she'd found a man willing and able to meet it.

He let go and unfastened his belt buckle. It was right there at her eye level, so she had to notice the pronounced bulge in his pants and wonder if she'd be able to take it. She licked her lips and committed herself to trying. She'd see to his pleasure, the same way he was seeing to hers. She wouldn't leave him disappointed, not after wanting him for so long.

His cock sprang out as he dropped his jeans and boxers, and she crawled reflexively toward it. She wanted it in her mouth. She wanted to taste it and see if the slick at the tip was salty or sweet. She sighed contentedly as she felt the silken skin on her tongue, but he pulled himself away and yanked her onto her feet.

"If I don't get inside of you soon, I'm going to burst. I don't want to come in your mouth."

Oh!

While she sat entranced from the sight of his amazing body, he pulled her skirt down to the floor then paused to pepper her belly and thighs with tender kisses before he worked her panties down. Next came her shirt, which he worked carefully over her head. He tossed it into the pile of their clothes and cupped his hands beneath her breasts. They were heavy with need and aching for his fingers or

his tongue, but he just held them as if they were fragile things he feared breaking.

“Leave the bra on,” came his gravelly whisper. “I like the way you look in it. Beautiful skin through white lace. So sexy.”

“Anything you want,” she said.

He kissed the tops of both breasts and let them fall. “I hope you won’t regret saying that later.”

She sat on the edge of the bed as he pulled open the nightstand drawer. “Why would I?” She didn’t believe he’d take more from her than she was willing to give.

He plucked a foil packet from within and bumped the drawer closed. He didn’t respond right away, just leaned his head a bit to the side and raked his gaze down her body. “What are your limits, Cam?”

Limits?

“I don’t know that I have any. Should I?”

He chuckled. “We all have them. That’s all right. We’ll take it slow and easy. If you want more, ask for it. Tell me what you want to feel. I’ve got some tricks I never get to use. Since you know what I am, there’s no good reason to hide them.”

“What kind of tricks?”

The bright blue of his eyes seemed to pulse as his grin broadened. “I think you’ll find out.”

CHAPTER SIX

“Look at me, Camellia.”

She’d closed her eyes the moment he’d wrapped her legs around his waist.

She opened them, and blinked until her pupils adjusted to the light. “Hmm?” she moaned dreamily.

She was so trusting of him. He didn’t feel he’d earned it yet, but he sure and shit wasn’t going to abuse it – not if he wanted her to stay.

“Are you here with me?”

She nodded, and he paused at the tight barrier. She hooked her legs around his back and clawed his shoulders. “Don’t stop.”

He slipped back out. Tight was nice, but she was *too* tight. “Wait, are you –”

She shook her head hard. “No! When I said it’d been a while, I meant a *very* long while. Some people call this born-again virginity.” She pled to him with not only her voice but with her hands at the back of his head. She

wound her fingers through his hair and pulled his face closer to hers.

Her touch was soothing, but not enough to keep his heart from dropping.

“If you’re celibate by choice, don’t throw that away on a guy like me. I’m just... I’m not worth it.” He wanted more than anything to believe that Ma was right and that this woman was meant to be his, but Cam had too much going for her to be perpetually fettered to a reclusive, semi-misanthropic half demon. Being with him was dating way down.

“Bullshit.” The conviction in her voice was as strong as the hold her thighs had on his waist. She pulled him down more.

He sighed and hung his head.

“Did I get the dud incubus who doesn’t want to have sex? Oh my God.” Her eyes widened at the supposed revelation.

“No, you got one with a killer conscience.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing. But, what we’d do wouldn’t be bad, would it?”

“Listen, maybe I’m aberrant, but I don’t do one-night stands. I don’t pick up women in bars or clubs, and I...I just don’t bring women home.”

“Guess what? I like that about you. It means you’re in control of what you are.”

Control he’d never had to exercise as much as now. He hadn’t cared about any of the others he’d slept with, but Cam was different. Around her, he could unbutton.

He pushed up onto his hands and knees and peered down at her.

“Come down here,” she said.

He eased onto his left side and pulled her into his arms. As he rested his chin atop her sweetly scented hair, he rubbed her back and tried to ignore how her small body’s curvy appeal affected him. She felt like she was made to be right there, nestled against him and cocooned in their little world of two.

She draped her left leg over his hip. Her wet sex against his thigh gave him the courage her words didn’t. He ran his hand down her body slowly, barely touching her skin, and enjoyed her little twitches when he grazed over spots both erogenous and ticklish. His cock strained inside the condom, and he wanted more than anything to

continue where they'd been headed, but his fear of hurting her overrode even that.

She picked her head up and kissed his chin, then his lips. "Make love to me. I know you'll be gentle."

"I might not be able to stop myself from claiming you, Cam. I think you're my mate."

If the declaration startled her at all, she didn't show it. She smoothed his hair back from his face and looked up at him with wonder—as if she'd just now realized this was real.

"I've dreamed about you for two years," she whispered.

At that, he lost all the fight he had in him. She'd been a vision in his sleep for exactly as long—since before he'd found her at that grocery store.

There was no doubting she was his.

"Concentrate on my lips," he said and kissed her. Then he pulled her knee up higher to improve the angle.

For the second time, he eased his cock into her and this time pushed through. She nearly bit his tongue off, and her short nails had probably left indentions in his back deep enough to scar.

“Jason!” she cried out, and shuddered against him.

He stopped.

“I’m sorry,” he said into her hair. “You want me to stop?”

“No, go.”

He slipped in until he could go no more and waited until her body ceased its shaking before he pulled back out.

He rocked gently in and out of her and slowed his thrusts whenever she stopped kissing him and sped up when she seemed more passionate. She had to be in pain. He should flip her onto her back and finish her with his mouth and fingers. She shuddered against him and curled her toes against his shins.

She arched her back and clamped down hard around him in a way that had him grabbing her waist as he tried desperately to keep her still. Closing his eyes, he gathered up all his hope and yearning into a psychic ball and pushed it straight into her core along with his wishes for their future. He wanted her by his side, always. He wanted to learn something new about her every day and put her on the pedestal of his affections.

He'd protect her life with his own, because without her, he'd be missing his spark.

"You're mine, Cam," he said, and if it sounded trite and airy-fairy, he didn't care.

"Jason!"

Her violent spasms and shout of "God, yes!" had him shooting his load as if this were his first time.

"God." Spent, she pressed her hands over her burning face, and he chuckled, not just at her passion, but also of her mortification of it.

He'd have to show her that her spiritedness pleased him. He had plenty of time to do it.

He pulled her in against him and rubbed her back. "Okay?" he asked.

"No. Better than that. *Perfect.*" She snuggled against him and sighed.

He rubbed some more until she fairly melted into him. Sweet, soft warmth. Perfect was good.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Cam had never felt so at ease. They lounged on his huge sofa, still in a state of partial undress, eating nuked Italian food as they watched some silly reality show she'd talked Jason into.

She was amazed there was no discomfort or tension after what they'd done, but when he'd jokingly told her what his mother had said, it all clicked. Of course she was his.

"You don't have to work tomorrow, do you?" he asked. He'd made a sizable dent in his lasagna, but there was no way he was going to finish it all. What Mrs. Sandrigo called a "portion," most would call a "pan." Cam had managed to eat only a little bit of hers, though not for lack of trying.

"I'm on call," she said and set her dish on the coffee table. She'd probably have the stink of garlic seeping through her pores for the next week.

"What does that mean?"

“It means I only have to go in if they need a full cashier battery.

“Do you have to go?”

“It would get me to forty hours, and...I need the money.”

“Damn.” He set down his plate as well.

“Why?”

“I don’t want you to leave. If you walk out the door, you take the magic with you.”

She tossed the nearby leather throw pillow at him. “Oh, shut up.” God, she didn’t want to leave.

“I mean it.” He pulled her close and leaned back so her body was on top of his. She pressed her palms to his naked chest and tried not to look into his eyes. If she looked, she’d fall into them—she’d lose her mind the way she’d already lost her heart to him.

He wouldn’t let her ignore him. He tipped her chin up and pressed his lips to hers. He tasted of marinara sauce, dark beer, and the bit of residual mint from when he’d brushed his teeth after cleaning her up.

He’d had his mouth *there*, on her... Her toes curled, and her pelvis arced reflexively toward his.

He chuckled and eased her borrowed shirt up in the back then palmed her ass with one large hand. He kneaded and rubbed, and her nipples strained against the shirt. He had to feel them stabbing his chest and know what he was doing to her. She didn't even care if it made her a sex fiend. She was probably one long before she found him.

"Are you sure I can't convince you to stay?"

She didn't need convincing. What she needed was a mature trust fund or a winning lottery ticket. "I can stay the—" She swatted his hand away so she could think straight and use real words. "I can stay the night, but I have to be at work by eight."

"That's not enough time." There was a pout in his voice, and it would have been pathetic coming from any other man, but from Jason, it was panty-drenching sexy. She knew that from here on out, his sexual appetite was for her, and her alone. It was a heady thought that made her feel very powerful.

"Sorry. Gotta be a grownup," she said.

"There you go, spoiling things by being all responsible."

"Yep."

“I reluctantly admit I like that in a girl.”

“Yeah? What else do you like about me besides my foul mouth in bed?”

“I like everything about you except your work schedule. And your boss.”

He skimmed his fingers down her back and wadded up the shirt, which exposed her ass to the air.

He lowered his voice to a seductive rumble that made her spasm. “I love your softness. Not just your body in places like this.” He squeezed. “You’re too sweet for me.”

She grabbed the top band of his sweatpants and nudged them down so his half-erect cock sprang free. “Still think I’m sweet?”

He grinned. “Feel free to try to convince me otherwise.”

He sprang to attention in front of her, and when she put her tongue on him, he groaned and said, “Cam, you don’t have to—”

“Shhh.” She reached into his pants in search of his balls while closing her lips around his cock.

“Fuck,” he whispered and leaned his head back on the armrest. He laid a hand on the back of her head but didn’t

push her down or stop her. It seemed he just needed something to do with his fingers. She'd felt the same way while his skillful tongue was bringing her such sinful pleasure. He toyed with her messy hair while she ran her tongue experimentally around his ridges.

His little moan urged her on. His pleasure heightened her arousal.

There was a bright flash in the room as heat seared her backside. She squeezed her eyes closed and let Jason fall from her mouth.

"Son of a bitch. I guess salt didn't work," he said and zipped up, before he yanked her erect and against him. He stood and backed them to the apartment door.

She fought to turn in his arms, but he pinned her tightly to him.

"Goddammit, another one with a mate," came a deep voice from where the bright light had originated. "It's a fucking epidemic."

Jason's heartbeat thrummed against her ear. He sighed and muttered, "Fuck, fuck, fuck. Ma was right."

"Jason?" She looked up at him to see he looked more annoyed than fearful. "Who's here?"

She knew she wasn't hearing things. Someone had just entered the apartment without use of the front door.

"Remember how you told me I wouldn't want to meet your family?" he said to her.

"Uh, yes. What's happening? I smell sulfur."

"I believe that's *brimstone*," said the stranger. "How about I clear the air for all of us, because I'm running rather short on time. Turn her around, son, so she can see who you're talking to."

"I'd prefer not to."

"Son? Is that...your *father*?" There was a full-blooded incubus behind her? She had to see!

Jason held her tighter and a growl rumbled in his chest.

"Let me see him," she whispered and patted him as if that'd soothe the beast within. "He won't try anything funny. I'm wearing my cross."

"That cross didn't bother *me*. What makes you think it'll bother him?"

"To be half demon, you are woefully out of the loop, babe. It doesn't bother you because you don't mean me any harm, right?"

His nostrils flared. "I'd never hurt you."

"Exactly. Turn me around."

He did. Slowly. He sighed. "Cam, please meet the demon Gulielmus."

The man who'd teleported into the room was huge—well over seven feet tall—and gorgeous. Actually, gorgeous was an understatement. He looked like walking sin with all that golden hair and those bottomless blue eyes. It was obvious where Jason got his looks. More interesting was the amount of power radiating off the man. It was enough to choke her if she hadn't been concentrating on her breathing.

"Holy hell, he must be one of the fallen ones," she muttered.

"What?" Jason asked, obviously dumbfounded.

She reached back and gave his thigh a little pat. She'd get him brought up to speed later. No wonder she was his mate. The guy was clueless.

"Why do you know this?" Gulielmus asked. "That knowledge is a bit arcane for a good church girl."

"Why does everyone think that of me? I haven't been in a church for two years, but at least I can step into one. Bet you can't."

The massive column of man crooked up one of his yellow-blond eyebrows. "Excuse me?"

"I studied theology, mythology, and folklore for three years. But, damn, I never thought I'd get up close and personal with someone of your status. Dear God."

The big man rolled his eyes. "Don't bring Him into it."

Jason turned her back to face him. "Cam, I'm so sorry. My mother said that—"

She squeezed his lips together. "I suspect it's not your fault, so don't explain it. And really? You thought salt would keep him out?" She put her hands on her hips. "Jason, come *on*. You can't use that on demons who can teleport. They don't have to walk over the threshold."

He grimaced. "Ma said she'd give me some things to keep him out, but to pick them up tomorrow. I did what I could."

Gulielmus moved to her side and she turned her head to see his sultry, predatory grin.

"For fuck's sake," Jason hissed. He leaned down and whispered, "Cam, you can go if you want. Like, to a church or something. I'll come get you when he's gone."

"Sweet of you to suggest it, but he doesn't mean me any harm. If he did, my cross would back him up a few

paces. He obviously wants something from you and right now, I'm what's in the way of that. And you know what?" She narrowed her eyes at the big demon. "I'm happy to be in the way."

Gulielmus mumbled something in a language Cam didn't recognize and took a few steps closer. "She's going to be a pain in my ass, just like the rest," he said. "Look, I just need to borrow your boyfriend so he can help me find someone. I'll bring him back."

"You're lying." She stabbed her index finger at his chest, and he raised both eyebrows this time.

"For fuck's sake, I can't even work up a good scare anymore. I must be losing it. Goddammit, tiny person, I *will* bring him back."

"When?"

"Don't know." He pressed his fingers to his temples and massaged. "Your mother believed me, Jason. Does that count for anything?"

"You want to mark me, don't you?"

"Not going to lie. Yes."

"Well, I'm gonna have to pass on that. Sorry to inconvenience you, but that mark will make my gifts unpredictable. I want to be able to touch my mate without

fear of harming her.” He found her hand and laced his fingers through hers. Solidarity.

She appreciated it, but cringed. She hadn’t known that incubi marks could create intimacy issues. That would be problematic, to say the least, given now she wanted nothing more but to touch him.

“Convenience is the least of my worries,” Gulielmus said. “Look, it’s within my power to force you to come, but it’s easier if you just cooperate.”

“What do you want him to do that you can’t do yourself?” Cam asked.

“I don’t know if I like her or hate her,” Gulielmus said, looking over Cam at Jason.

“Your opinion doesn’t really count for much, given the circumstances,” Jason said.

Gulielmus let out a breath. “Not going to argue. The long and short of it is I need a psychic who’s also part demon to help me find a…” He made a moue of disgust. “A *descendent*. It’s important that I find him, and I give you my word I’ll undo the mark as soon as you’re done.”

Cam believed him. She didn’t trust him as far as she could throw him, but nothing he’d said rang any of her bells as being dishonest.

Jason must have believed him, too, because his steely grip on her abated somewhat. “You pop in and say I should have waited to take Cam, and then expect me to leave her here alone? That goes against my wiring. I can’t. I gotta protect her.”

“You have to leave her here. She’s safer here than running around with us.” Gulielmus dug into the pocket of his crisp, black slacks and plucked out a wallet. She saw it only briefly, but caught the name printed on his North Carolina driver’s license. “William Nolitzname.”

He counted out some bills and folded them into Cam’s hand. “Hide out. Go to his mother’s. She’ll know how to keep you safe. You’re a target now, just like all my other kids’ mates. Welcome to the club.”

Cam ogled the wad of hundred-dollar bills in her grasp and looked up to find Gulielmus holding Jason’s hand.

“You say you can undo this,” Jason said. “Can you do me a favor while you’re at it?”

Gulielmus blinked impassively at him. “You children keep getting more bold. What is it you want?”

“Can you...” Jason cut his gaze to Cam and slowly returned his attention to front and center. “Can you turn

off the voices in my head? They make being in public difficult. Cam's undemanding and I don't pick up anything from her. She doesn't bother me."

Cam didn't think Gulielmus was going to respond, but after a reflective moment, he nodded. "I'll see to it," he said. "I'd prefer you to have more power than none, but it's your choice."

Jason opened his fingers, and his father traced the mark onto his palm. The symbol glowed blue briefly before it disappeared.

"That'll connect us psychically," he said. "It draws the demon part of you more fully to the surface. You've got about a month before it's irreversible."

"What's going to happen now?" Jason asked before he opened and closed his freshly scarred hand.

"Do your job, and you'll come home to your woman. What happens after that is up to you."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Jason locked the bedroom door behind him and Cam, which seemed like a wholly pointless gesture given his father's power, but it was a mind over matter move that seemed to calm him a bit.

Cam paced in front of his bed and chewed a cuticle.

"I don't know why you're still here," he said.

She stopped pacing. "Couldn't leave if I wanted to. My instinct is to stick near you, not run away."

"Same way I feel. How do you feel about being a demon's mate? It's gotta be a big step for you considering you wouldn't even look me in the eyes until this morning." He was never going to let her live that down, and she must have known it, too, because she groaned.

"Jason, I think we have a long time to get to know each other. I'm almost positive I'll fall in love with you sooner than later."

"I like the sound of *sooner*." He grinned at her, but couldn't hold it long. He was too stressed. He just got her,

and now he had to leave her. “You gonna be here when I get back?”

She nodded jerkily. “Mm-hmm.”

“I’ve always known he’d come back. Right now, all I’m thinking about is getting back to you as soon as I can.”

“Don’t do anything stupid.” Cam stopped pacing and turned wide eyes to him. “I know he said I should stay, but I should go with you. I don’t have any practical experience, but I’ve read every book out there on angels and demons and lots of other things, too.”

“I know you have book knowledge, but it’s not the same thing as being in the field. I don’t want to drag you into this right now. Just go home and grab your stuff. Tell your roommate whatever lie you need to, and I’ll take you to Ma. You’ll be safe. Unless she kills you with her cooking.”

He pulled her into his arms and nuzzled the top of her head.

“If anything happens to you, I’ll—”

“Shhh.”

He couldn’t tell her he knew exactly what would happen. Her heart would break, and she wouldn’t recover. Now that his father had marked him, he’d live

indefinitely, even if the mark were undone. Infinity was a long fucking time to be miserable.

She pressed her forehead against his chest, and he hugged her tighter.

“If you don’t call me often, I’m coming after you,” she murmured.

“Oh, yeah? Is finding people one of your psychic talents, too?”

“Nope. I’ve got a cousin at a cell phone company who can track your SIM card. She’d do it, too. She won’t even ask why.”

“Well, damn.” He kissed her forehead, and, reluctantly, let her go.

She sat on the edge of the bed and watched him pack. He didn’t know what he’d done in life to deserve her, but whatever it was, he hoped he kept doing it for as long as she’d have him.

Maybe that’d be forever, but he needed to survive whatever the demon Gulielmus had in store for him first.

* * *

What does the demon Gulielmus have in store for Jason [and his brothers]? Find out on in Claude’s story: *A Demon Bewitched* – Sons of Gulielmus, Book 3.

New to the series? Meet Jason's quirky half-demon half-siblings in the earlier installments:

Book 1: *A Demon in Waiting**

Novella: "A Demoness Matched" (*Melt My Heart* anthology)

Book 2: *A Demon in Love*

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Turn the page for a sneak peek of *A Demon Bewitched*.

A DEMON BEWITCHED

The last time Claude Fortier fell for a woman, a vengeful demon named Gulielmus killed her while she slept. Even worse? That demon happened to be his father.

Nearly 200 years later, Claude's lover is back ... sort of. Gail Colvard may have been born with his sweet Laurette's soul, but her new-and-improved incarnation is a witch who isn't taking any mess – not from him, and not from dear old dad, either. Unfortunately, it isn't just Gulielmus she needs to worry about.

When an enemy intent on upsetting the balance of power in the supernatural world targets Gail, Claude fears he's doomed to lose her again. And this time, it'll be for good. Can love truly conquer evil?

From Chapter One

If Claude Fortier had been a typical man, he wouldn't have seen the punches and slaps coming.

A typical man wouldn't have lost count way back in the 1860s of how many fights he'd had to carefully extricate himself from. Fighting men was too easy. *Hurting* them was too easy, and he didn't even have to use his magic to do it. He could probably put a fist through his opponent's skull without too much effort.

He wasn't fighting a man this time, though.

The angry witch boldly swinging at his head was very much a woman. To the best of his recollection, he'd never tussled with a woman. For that matter, he'd never come to blows in a country-western bar's parking lot, either. He was far more likely to be found haunting one of North Carolina's few strip clubs. The music tended to be much better than the "I love God, America, my truck, and beer (in that order)" tunes played at joints like Rooster's. However, strip club patrons had a higher-than-average tendency to pick a fight when Claude suggested that they should, perhaps, keep their fucking hands to themselves. The dancers didn't like being touched.

The irony wasn't lost on him that it was the incubus in the audience cautioning restraint. Honor wasn't a catalogued sex demon trait, but a few had consciences. Claude was one of those few.

He laughed and leaned back to avoid a wild punch. “Well, goddamn, *chéri*. You’re really trying to lay it on me, huh?”

She growled.

“Save it for the bedroom.”

She swung again, grunting as she missed. “You wish. How about you stand still and make it easier for me?”

“Not today.” He stepped sideways and narrowly avoided her sweeping kick, whistling low. “Damn. I bet you could have me black and blue in all the ways I like. Just ask nicely, *chéri*. Maybe I’ll oblige you.”

She froze, and the creases in her forehead deepened slightly. “What?”

Thirty. She had to be around there. He’d been following her for weeks, from the time his prescient brother Charles had told him, “She’s back,” but this was the first time he’d seen her up close. Well, this *version* of her. The last time he’d known her, she’d been a young Creole woman named Laurette and they’d shared a home in 1843 New Orleans. Their love had been passionate, but far too short. He’d thought with her back that they had another chance—but this woman obviously wasn’t his

Laurette. Sweet Laurette hadn't been a witch, and she sure as shit hadn't had a swing like a prizefighter.

Laurette hadn't been a fighter of any sort, to tell the truth, and his inner caveman had liked that about her. This chick, though? She wouldn't know sweet if it bit her on her well-apportioned ass.

Tuning back into the here and now, he shrugged in response. "I believe in being up front." She didn't look like his Laurette, but shit, the body she was in was *fine*. The way she pursed her full lips as she considered him made a certain neglected body part of his stand up and wave. He said a silent prayer of thanks to the gods for steering him clear of the skinny jeans trend. His junk had already endured enough torture. Celibacy was a bitch.

"You crept up so you could make a crude pass at me?"

He tried to smooth his expression into a mask of trustworthiness. He'd had a lot of practice at that in the past two hundred-something years. Demons, or half-demons in his case, weren't generally trustworthy sorts. Add his witch half to the mix, and he should have been born with a *Caution* blinker installed in his forehead. Instead, he'd gotten blue eyes that turned red when he drew on his magic. He was pretty sure they were blue at

the moment. He hadn't wanted to ensorcell her, just talk to her. That talking thing was going so well.

"I didn't creep up on you. In fact, I very audibly said *excuse me.*" He leaned in and flicked at the small headphones dangling from her neck. He pulled his hand away before her swat could connect. Scrapy little—

He ground his teeth. "Maybe you shouldn't walk into dark parking lots with your earbuds in. You should be able to hear what's going on around you."

Her dark eyes narrowed. "Maybe I wear them to discourage strangers from initiating unwelcome conversation. Some men just won't take the hint. You think I haven't noticed you've been here every night for weeks? Creepy."

He squeezed the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger and stared at her. Apparently, his slow and gentle tactic had backfired. His plan was to reveal his witch magic to her gradually so she'd approach him, curious but comfortable. She seemed blind to it—or maybe she didn't give a shit. He could take a hint.

"Okay," he said, taking a step back in concession. He was growing weary of the whole exchange. Whatever curiosity he'd had about not-Laurette was waning by the second. She couldn't possibly be his mate. Charles had

gotten it wrong. “You don’t want to have a conversation? Suit yourself.”

“Really?” She packed a shitload of incredulity into those two – no, *three* – flat syllables.

He barely managed to suppress his snort. The accents in North Carolina were so different from region to region. He’d heard a lot of them during his decades in the state, but he couldn’t quite peg hers beyond the fact she wasn’t from the mountains.

“Bullshit.” She reached into her purse, and all he needed was a glimpse of the plastic to know her intent. Shy of decapitation, she couldn’t do him any major harm, but if he were going to be forced to inhale chemicals, he’d at least like a nice contact buzz or nicotine hit. Pepper spray, unfortunately, wasn’t formulated to have that side effect.

She aimed it square at his face, and he fainted left, weaved right, grabbed her around the generous thighs he’d been ogling for the better part of the evening, and hauled her up to his left shoulder.

“I was going to walk away, *chéri*,” he said through clenched teeth. “I was going to go and let your attitude keep you company, but you need to learn to save the fighting for when it counts.”

“Pride wounded? Poor baby.” She brought her elbow down hard on his back.

The blow knocked the wind out of his lungs, and he stumbled as he gasped for air, but somehow managed not to drop her.

Grunting, he started toward the back of the country-western bar’s parking lot, swerving a bit with each step as she flailed atop him.

“Put me down, or so help me, God, I’ll—” She shifted on his shoulder again, but this time he anticipated the blow and tossed her onto the grassy strip between the deep ditch that acted as a barrier between the bar and the sorghum field next door, and the concrete of the parking lot.

She fell with an *oomph*, and scrambled onto all fours as he backed up, predicting the offensive strategy she’d take next. Sure enough, she jumped to her feet, swiped her hands through the, air and pushed magic at him.

It was probably meant to hurt, at least a little. He feigned a yawn, patting his mouth, as she groaned and tried that little trick again.

His skin tickled where her magic touched, and he should have been angry that her reflex had been to fight

and not talk. She'd come after him like a wildcat on the offensive, and all this time he'd been trying to be a fucking gentleman. He'd given her space, hadn't stalked her.

At least, not closely.

He wasn't angry, though. He'd never stopped loving her, even after her death all those years ago. In fact, he'd never forgiven himself for how she'd died.

ABOUT HOLLEY TRENT

Holley Trent is a Carolina girl gone west. Raised in rural coastal North Carolina, she has Southern sensibilities but her adventurous spirit drove her to Colorado for new experiences. She writes contemporary and paranormal romances ranging from sensual to erotic that are usually set in her home state.

Her protagonists regularly fall victim to her odd sense of humor and find themselves in improbable situations (with happily-ever-after outcomes). Holley's cast of characters tends to swear, drink and do a fair amount of carousing, but they're generally well intentioned and obey all laws and ordinances. Usually.

She's a member of EPIC, Romance Writers of America, as well as Passionate Ink, Colorado Romance Writers and CIM-RWA: the Cultural Interracial and Multicultural special interest RWA chapter.

For Holley's complete backlist, including titles from Crimson Romance and Lyrical Press please visit her website at <http://www.holleytrent.com>.

Want to chat about *A Demon Found* or another Holley Trent title? Catch her online on Twitter where she tweets under the handle [@holleytrent](#) or fan her [Facebook](#) page.

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