

Chapter One

Happiness is a relative term. Are any of us really happy? Sure we play the part of the happy exterior for the most part, pretending that nothing is wrong so we won't get those pitiful stares from strangers as they pass by. But the biggest smiles often conceal the darkest pain. Take me for example. To all the other women in this office I was just another happy expectant mother like the rest of them. But not all of their smiles were genuine either. It is statistically impossible for this many women to be in a room and all of them be happy, especially the one sitting across from me.

She couldn't be much older than sixteen. Her eyes were clouded by tears, though they did not break through. We were both here for the same reason, but her problem would be resolved before she left this office. My "miracle" would resolve itself in who knew how long. I doubted I would have the standard gestational time frame of the Zolera five months or the human nine.

I had woken up this morning looking like I was four months pregnant already, a weird thing to see as I had gone to bed with a flat tummy and was only about six weeks along by my count. I was hoping to find out how much longer it would be, though I knew human doctors wouldn't be able to figure that out. But I did hope they could tell me how far along they thought I was by human standards at least, and I could do my own math from there.

The fact that this baby had Clifton's soul was the only reason that I was not completely miserable with my new condition. But the fact that my child's father was a demon, who had tricked me into so many things, this child but also into being his mate, was on the other side of the scale. I wasn't sure which side tipped more when I thought about it.

"Tessa," a woman holding a clipboard said and I stood and followed her past the open door. She led me down a long, winding hallway, abruptly stopping before one of the many doors before handing me a gown. The woman told me to change and that the technician would be in soon. And she was gone before I could ask any questions. Not that she would have any real answers for me.

The small room smelled of bleach and had an odd looking computer set up near one of the side walls. Next to it was a weird looking leather lounge chair with a strip of paper down the center. I had never been in a doctor's office before and didn't much care for it. But, I disrobed, put on the gown and sat on the edge of the seat anyway. Waiting in that spot made me even more nervous than the actual waiting room had, and my mind wandered.

I would love to say that I am a normal woman. But, as I have learned in my time amongst the humans, normal is someone who is generally good, does not kill others, and blends in with the human population in mind, looks and behavior. I doubted that I was any of those things anymore, except for my magical façade. I had done too much bad in my life to consider myself a good person, though many would disagree with that. I had killed...so many. Some had deserved it. Some had been for survival. And some were neither, just the byproduct of being around me at the wrong time. Who was I to determine who lived or died? The title of Zolera

Princess hardly gave me that honor, not that I held that title anymore. Perhaps my former title of Queen Celia in my Aukum life was what granted me the privilege then.

In all of my lives, I had been Aukum, Boru, Human and now Zolera. I dared to think about what my next life held for me, perhaps a lowly cockroach that wouldn't be able to hurt anyone and would live forever. I would willingly accept that outcome if given the chance at this point. Those around me always seemed to suffer, and I questioned whether or not it was my fault at times.

I was now pregnant by a demon and (due to my Yaro massacre) a Lady of Hell. I could never be with my first and greatest love, King Wylen, since he was Aukum and I was not. Clifton, the first love I'd had in this life, had been taken from me by his own mother and my father's second wife. My killing of the bitch had rendered me expelled from Kortis due to my father's inability to cope with the truth he refused to hear.

I was now stuck in my home with Kafkus (the now werewolf and fated love), Kyle (one of my destined loves I had found out too late), his girlfriend Kate, and her brother, (the alpha werewolf) Daryl. Being mated to James had severed my connections with all of my men, and I had recently released Kyle by making him forget that he loved me in any way other than as his sister. Though, I would always remember. What a mess my life had become.

When I thought of "normal" I just had to laugh, if only out of frustration. Normal was for other people not connected to my life in any way. And though I had believed for years that this human world was normal, it was far from it. My world may not have been either with its different species and magic, but we didn't hide who we were like this world did.

Encased in a shroud of normalcy, demons and werewolves lurked beneath my nose. I dared to think what else lay hidden beyond my sight as I doubted that they were the only ones. I guess it's a bit hypocritical of me as I too had hid among the humans for about five years now. Was this world just the place where other's came to hide and guise themselves as normal? The land of opportunity in more ways than one I guess.

There was a small knock at the door which brought me back to the reason I was here, but the frown on my face was ingrained. A very cheery looking woman pushed open the door and stepped into the room, but my expression didn't change despite my attempt.

"Mrs. Turner, is this your first ultrasound?"

"Miss," I corrected her. "And yes."

"Oh, sorry about that. And where's daddy?"

Burning in hell for all I care. "Not here today." She seemed to read that I didn't want him here because she didn't ask me any more questions about "daddy."

"Ok, just lay back. I'm not sure if you're far enough along to do this the more pleasant way, but I'll try first."

I laid back and she gave me a paper cloth to cover my lower half before hiking up my gown. The gooey substance she poured like ketchup on my abdomen was abnormally warm, but the stick she prodded around my belly was a little uncomfortable. Her eyes opened wide at the computer monitor and I prayed that my baby wasn't sporting horns or a pointed tail. His

grandfather *was* the devil after all.

“When was your last period?”

“I’m...um...irregular.”

The truth was that my species didn’t have that issue that human women did on the count of only when we truly wanted children did we have them. Aside from throwing demons into the mix anyway. I figured it must be for population control due to my kind’s lengthy lifespan. But I wasn’t complaining. Kate, who was normally a peppy and likeable girl, was definitely not herself that time of the month.

“Well, I have a clear visual on the little one. Let me do some measurements to see where you’re at.”

It took forever. I was poked and prodded at every conceivable angle for what felt like hours in awkward silence. I didn’t comment since I figured she knew what she was doing, but neither did I have much desire for small talk as she worked.

“Do you want to know the sex?” she asked and I said, “Boy” in the most unenthusiastic manner possible. She looked confused by my accuracy but said, “Yup” in the same happy voice.

I too vividly remembered the creepy little boy who had paid me visits before I had shoved a soul down his throat. *Wait...If she’s able to see the sex...*

“How far along am I?”

“You’ll have to talk to your doctor about that if you want specifics, but I’d say...around...twenty to twenty-three weeks. You’re lucky, you are barely even showing. A lot of women I see around this time are *much* bigger.”

I shot forward like someone had slapped me. I knew I was farther than I should have been, but...from six weeks to twenty? It seemed unreal.

“Do you want me to print you off some pictures to take home?”

I nodded but I hadn’t really heard her. My mind was racing with how this was happening so fast. I wouldn’t be able to keep it secret much longer, but I didn’t want to tell anyone either.

She handed me a little folder, told me to get dressed and gave me a cheery “congratulations” on her way out. I mouthed a “thank you” but my voice didn’t work enough to give the words sound.

As I got dressed, my mind went over the faces of the unknowing people that I could no longer hide this from when I finally told them. Some bothered me more than others, especially Kafkus after how miserable he already was now that I was mated to James and our love was on hold because of that fact. This would just cut him deeper. James’ and my connection had postponed him being able to read my mind. That was the only reason I had been able to hide this from him at all. When I was done getting dressed I headed to the front to make an appointment with my doctor, though my mind was still racing with what I knew I had to do.

Only when I had gotten into my car did I open that little folder the technician had given me. They weren’t the best pictures, very grainy, but I could clearly make out the shape of a head and body. One was a pretty good likeness of a face with a hand that I swore was giving me the finger. I smirked at the image. He definitely had some of me in him. But my heart sank when I

thought of what would happen when he came. I couldn't go to the hospital here if he came out blue, and I couldn't return home where I could have help since I was banished. That day was going to suck.

Home was where I really wanted to go since I was tired already and could use a nap, but I needed pants that fit. The ones I had worn to the doctors had only been a glamour since my own had failed to button that morning with my sudden belly.

I couldn't afford department store prices since paying Drina's debt had drained my bank account to a mere \$20,000 about a month ago. My denial kept me from checking it since then, though I knew the account held less than that now. I had no source of income and a household of five adults to support. My visits to the doctor weren't going to come cheap either and I had no insurance. Though, I wouldn't have as many appointments as other women might, and the clinic I went to was on a sliding scale. That fact was helping at least. I had agreed to work for Kent for gross compensation, but hadn't received any calls that he needed me yet. And if my new title of Lady of Hell came with a source of income, I hadn't gotten my first paycheck. Not that I wanted that job to begin with.

When I pulled into the Target parking lot, I wasn't feeling great. I wished I didn't have to spend more money on something as stupid as pants when I had plenty pairs at home. But I hated the feeling of walking around in imagined ones. My glamour made them feel real to the touch, but the wind seemed to go through easier, making me feel like I was half-naked.

I didn't like the thought of pregnancy pants, but I found some that looked like the jeans I normally wore with a small ring of elastic-y fabric where my new belly would be able to fit. There were no buttons so I wouldn't have to buy any more as my stomach expanded. They would do. I grabbed a few pairs as well as some tank tops from the same section that went lower than the ones I normally wore. Once I had made my purchases, I stopped off in the bathroom to change into my new clothes before heading home. It was so nice to wear pants.

I had pulled into the driveway when my gut told me that I shouldn't go inside. I would have loved to listen to my instincts, but the house was full of people I cared about. I wasn't really worried for myself, since being the mate of the son of the devil had pretty much made me invincible, but no one inside had that luxury. Nothing could have prepared me for what awaited me though.

As soon as I opened the door, I came face to face with my father...well, the man who had been my father before he had disowned me and expelled me anyway. My reward for killing the woman who had killed my Clifton, my brother's pregnant wife, and my mother along with many other Zolera I didn't have a personal connection to.

His face was stern, as it had been when he had renounced me as his kin. He wasn't here to apologize and I didn't want him here. His appearance was not a welcoming one after our last meeting.

"What are you doing in my house?" I asked, barely moving my lips to do so.

His demeanor did not change and his voice matched his face. "It was not my decision to be here."

My arms crossed, my shopping bags hitting my stomach from the quick motion. “Then whose decision was it?”

“It was mine,” said a voice I recognized as Gader’s before he walked into view from the kitchen. I loved my brother, but the fact that he had brought this man into my home was a blow to our relationship.

“So, you thought that you would bring him here and we would be forced to talk it out and we would make up?” *Not freaking likely.*

My father’s eyes were stuck on mine, looking like he was thinking some rude thoughts that he didn’t voice. He still wasn’t open to the fact that Drina had been behind everything, and that me killing her had been the right decision on my part. To him I was simply a traitor who had killed his precious wife for no reason.

Gader looked contemplative before speaking. “Not quite, though I do hope that you will make up sometime before it is too late. But there is a more pressing matter as to why I have brought him here.”

“And that is?” both my father and I asked at the same time. Apparently he didn’t know why he was here either.

Gader stared between my father and me though neither of us had looked away from each other since we had locked eyes, nor dropped our expressions of contempt. My brother grabbed my arm and led me away from him, dragging me into the kitchen, but my eyes stayed on the stupid man until the wall blocked my vision and I finally faced Gader.

“He doesn’t want me on his land, after all I did to save it, so I do not want him on mine. This house is my land. I have the deed to prove it.”

“I brought him here for his own safety, sister.”

“He will need safety from me if he starts spouting his mouth off. I have had it with his unyielding attitude.”

Gader sighed. “I know that he is in danger here as well, but more so in Kortis.”

I laughed, though it was far from a happy sound. “Is someone else trying to kill him? I am not going to be *his* savior again. So, if that’s why you are here, you can just forget it.”

“It is because of Drina.”

“The bitch is dead.”

“Yes, and many were there to witness her confession of the treachery she committed to our kind. You are not the only one who is mad at the King.”

“What are they doing? Trying to overthrow him?”

“Yes. They think he is putting their safety at risk with his ignorance to accept the threats you have exposed.”

I actually laughed at that. “Serves him right. I told him what she had done and he wouldn’t believe me. They can overthrow him and you can be King. I am perfectly fine with that. *You* wouldn’t banish me.”

His expression shifted to a pained one. “But they do not want me to succeed him to the throne.”

The smile melted off my lips as my heart sank. “But you would make an excellent King. Why don’t they want you?”

“That is what I am hoping to find out. But I need your help with that. I do not know if they think I am set in believing the faults our father does, or if they believe our bloodline is now tainted. Very few will speak to me on the subject, but I know where they are meeting.”

“And what do you expect me to do? I have no authority there anymore, not that I ever really did.”

“I need your glamour to get into the place so no one will recognize us.”

“*Us* as in you and father, or *us* as in you and me?”

“I was hoping that you would accompany me. I do not think father could maintain composure if they are speaking ill about him. And I am hoping that you and I can blend in to overhear what is going on without being noticed.”

My lips sucked in as I mulled this information over. I doubted that I would be too upset if my father were taken down a peg or two for not listening to my warning about Drina or the possible Yaro attack. But I didn’t want my people to suffer for it, nor my brother to be blamed for his actions.

“Alright, but I only go for you. You will be the only Zolera King I will answer to. He is dead to me.” I tore my eyes away from my brother and sidestepped to catch sight of my father again. He was now sitting on the couch, arms folded on his chest and looking like an ass. “What are you going to do with him?”

His face contorted into a painful grin with pleading eyes.

“No, you are not seriously asking if I will let him stay in my home?” I failed to believe it but knew that was what his expression was conveying. My father had already been here too long for my liking. I wanted him gone.

“Please, sister, there is nowhere else for him to go that is safe. Another favor for me, not for him.”

I groaned loud enough for the entire house to hear me and marched into the living room to face the man I despised. “You get to sleep on the couch. Every other room is full.”

He jumped to his feet at my words. “Kings do not sleep on couches. I am not staying here either. Gader, when are we leaving?”

My brother came into the room and puffed himself up into a King pose before addressing him. “You *are* staying here, father, for your safety.”

“I am in no danger, and I will not stay with this former daughter of mine, especially in this world of humans which she would rather consort with than her own kind!”

I couldn’t hold my voice back if I tried, but I didn’t try, not even a little. “These humans do not treat me like you do. I would gladly prefer their company over yours. Not my own kind, just *you*.”

“Quartessa, you should not talk to our King in such a manner,” said Kafkus who was standing at the foot of the stairs now. And I noticed Kyle and Kate were sitting at the very top, their hands on the spindles as they peeked through them like excited children waiting to catch a

glimpse of Santa.

"He is not my King, nor my father," I barked. "He made that quite clear, and *he* started it."

Gader intervened before the King could voice a retort. "Father, you are in danger whether you wish to believe it to be true or not. Your *daughter* has graciously allowed you to stay in her home while the two of us return to Kortis to find out the cause."

My father had scoffed at my relation to him, and, though I wanted to tell him that it was for Gader and not for him that I was agreeing to help, I didn't verbalize it. It was tempting though.

The front door opened and Daryl entered, though no one but me seemed to notice. He scoped the angry room and the two Zolera—in far from human attire and color—and came to stand at my side. He probably thought that I might need defending from the old man staring daggers at me, but I doubted my father would try anything after our last encounter.

The King finally tore his eyes off of me to appraise the new man. "Yet another human? I am glad your mother is not alive to see this. She would be so disappointed."

Daryl growled but I couldn't hold in my words. "My mother was *far* more supportive of my chosen life than you ever were. And it was your stupid decision to bring back that whore of a woman that got her killed in the first place. So don't put this on me. She's dead because of *you*."

Daryl's hand found mine and his grip was painful, either he was telling me to shut up or letting me know that he had my back if some altercation happened. I had no way of knowing.

My father looked as though I had smacked him and I was damn tempted. "Still you spout these lies?! Drina was far too traumatized from Tizania's curse to harm anyone!"

"So, there have been more unexplained deaths in the castle since I killed her?" He continued to stare at me, but said nothing. "I thought not. You will stay here, with my *undeserved* blessing. You will sleep on the couch and you will be damn grateful for my hospitality in this current circumstance."

"You may have my bed," said Kafkus and I glared at him.

"Thank you for your offer, but I have no desire to stay in this world."

"Father, you will not return to Kortis until Quartessa and I fix the problem. Kafkus, would you show our King to your room, please?"

Kafkus nodded, and the man, formerly known as my father, begrudgingly followed him upstairs and out of sight without another word.

What Kafkus was thinking was beyond me. He had been there for Drina's confession as well as my father's inability to accept my words about her. He had also witnessed how my father had treated me for doing the traitor in. I wished I could read his thoughts again and only hoped he wasn't taking his side in this. With our connection broken, Kafkus was hard to read anymore.

"I can see where you get your stubbornness from," Daryl said, finally letting go of my hand but took the bags from me and set them down on the coffee table before turning back to me.

“Are you okay?”

Tears were welling up in my eyes but I held them in best I could. Though I hated the man, he was still my father and my mind was currently stuck on the good times we had shared in the past. Stupid brain. As much as I would like to forget them and focus on the overwhelming bad, they wouldn’t fade. He was still my father.

“I hate what’s happened.”

Daryl pulled me into a hug that I more than reciprocated, clinging to him for the comfort I so desperately needed. “Which part?” he asked as his hands gripped me even tighter.

“He hates me,” I sobbed. “He hates me for what I did. But it was the right thing. I miss my mother. I miss Clifton. I miss Wylen. Oh help me, I even miss Gwinny. What the hell is wrong with me?”

“Hormones?”

“I guess.” I pulled away from him and remembered what I didn’t want to as I dried my eyes. “No, *definitely* hormones. Daryl, I...I need to tell you something.”

“What?”

“I...I’m...” My voice failed me as I struggled to get the words out. In my mind I could already see how he was going to react and that fact wasn’t helping.

“What are these?” Gader asked and I noticed that he had a pair of my new pants in his hands. He was stretching the material, watching them spread apart and shrink back up. “Your normal pants do not do this.”

Daryl’s head snapped from my brother to me faster than I could drop the look of surprise from my face. “You’re pregnant?!” he asked in a voice so loud I knew I wouldn’t have to worry about telling the rest of my house, maybe even my block.

I snatched the pants from Gader who sucked in a breath, looked apologetic and mouthed a “sorry.” Well, Gader had inadvertently helped me from having to tell...*everyone* since he had sounded the Daryl alarm.

“Yes.”

Daryl’s intrusive hand was on my belly before I knew what he was doing. “Who is the father?” He appeared to know already with that glare of his, but he seemed to be waiting for my conformation.

When I turned away, I noticed Kate and Kyle had stealthily moved to the couch. Both of them were leaned forward to hear the news as well, and I noticed my father and Kafkus were back in view now.

My eyes dropped to the floor before I said the name. “James.”

“The demon?” asked Kate.

“When?” asked Kyle.

“Did he trick you with this too?” asked Daryl.

“Were you planning on informing me?” asked Kafkus.

“I did not know you had yet to tell them,” said Gader.

“No doubt with a half-breed,” said my father.

I screamed as loud as I could and the room grew quiet before I answered each of their questions in turn with the angriest face I could manage at each of them. “*Yes*, the demon. *On* my birthday. *When* he tricked me. *No*, I hadn’t told anyone yet. I was going to tell you, today in fact. And yes, a half-breed demon. *Thanks for all of your support!* I didn’t ask for this but the child has Clifton’s soul and I’m trying hard not to stress on the fact that I am about twenty-three weeks along even though it has only been six weeks since the conception!”

The room was deathly quiet after my little outburst, but at least I shouldn’t have to explain myself any further. Oh, no, it would not go quite that smoothly for me.

“You gave my son a soul?!” barked James who was now behind me and I turned around to face him.

“No, I gave *my* son a soul.”

He growled a deep and disturbing rumble that would have scared me had I not been his mate. That had given me a kind of antidote to any demon’s fury since I partially was one now.

“Get out!”

“You have tainted my bloodline.”

I held up the sonogram where the child was flipping off the camera. “I think this one was meant for you.”

His face contorted into something I wasn’t quite expecting and he laughed as he took it from me. “The little hellraiser.” I just rolled my eyes. At least he wasn’t harassing me anymore. That was something.

I took a moment to look around the room while he admired the picture I had meant as an insult. It was an odd group of people. A demon, a werewolf, two humans, a Zolera-werewolf hybrid, two royal Zolera and whatever the hell I was anymore. No one was talking and it was *very* awkward silence. I just wanted to “poof” my way out of the room. In fact, I tried...didn’t work.

“King Dobbin, Prince Gader, this is James, also known as Peracas, the son of the devil and father to my unborn child.”

My father winced at the words, but I think he was more bothered by who James was than me calling him by name instead of father. But he didn’t acknowledge James. He just shook his head with the shame I had caused him by being stuck with James, and it felt like he had just twisted the knife he had already lodged in me a month ago. It hadn’t been my choice.

James, on the other hand, smiled wider and managed a bow to each of them. “Always nice to meet the in-laws.”

Kafkus, I noticed, was looking close to murder but maintained his composure well. I tore my focus off of him and placed it on the demon. “Why are you here?” I hoped that Daryl’s wolf would get the translation on the ritual done for my talisman. Then I could stop him from just showing up. But he hadn’t informed me that he had yet.

James looked a little puzzled, as if I was supposed to want him there. “You said you would return to discuss your new position with my father, yet you haven’t done so. I came to escort you. We figured it would be nicer than summoning you as before. Although, he could

always do that if you wa—”

“No, I wouldn’t like that.” I remembered all too well being swallowed by the ground at very inconvenient times. “But I’m busy now.” I gestured to the crowded room. “Another time.”

“My father has given you plenty of time. Your time is up. You have duties to learn if you are to do your job properly.”

“What job?” asked my father in a tone of mild curiosity but one still full of shame.

James turned to him and smiled, though it wasn’t a friendly one by any means. “You should be proud of your daughter. She has earned the title of Lady of Hell. There have not been any Ladies in centuries, not many women are able to do what she has done.”

He scoffed. “She is no daughter of mine. You can take her.” *Gee, thanks dad.*

“No one is taking me anywhere! I am sooooo sick of being pulled in all directions. Quartessa, would you mind helping a man who resents every breath you take? Quartessa, would you mind fulfilling your duties even though you were tricked into the job? Quartessa, would you mind if I just sucked the life out of you and caused you to have a nervous breakdown? Quartessa! Quartessa! Quartessa! You know what? Deal with your own problems. I’m out.” I stormed from the room, marched up to my bedroom and threw myself on the bed, screaming obscenities into the covers directed at two individuals below.

Why was I in so high demand? I would gladly just lock myself away for the rest of this crappy life until my new one started, if anyone would actually let me be at peace. I was sure that, if I died, I would just be hunted down and somehow forced to remember all the shit of this life and pick right back up where I had left off. James would always find me, whether I was the same person or not. Somehow, I knew that.

There was a slight knock on the door but I didn’t bother to see who it was. I wanted to be alone.

“Quartessa?”

“What?”

“Are you ok?”

“My life sucks.”

Kafkus sat down next to me and, though I knew he wanted to, he didn’t touch me. His touch no longer gave either of us the comfort it used to before James had stolen that joy.

“I will help you in any way that I can.” There was a long pause, where I breathed in my recycled air from the comforter my face was still buried in, before he spoke again. “I cannot believe you hid something like this from me.”

“I knew that you wouldn’t be happy about it.”

“No, but I will always be here for you. You know that.”

“I do.” That he was still in this house with me with our tainted and miserable bond proved that fact.

“How did you give the child Clifton’s soul?”

I shrugged though my face was still buried in the sheets. “Because I asked for one, though I didn’t know whose I was asking for. I learned that fact later. I refused to let my child

not have one and grow up to be as deceitful as his father is.”

He took the little folder of the other sonograms I still had in my hand, and I tilted my head a bit to see him looking through them.

“If he has Clifton’s soul he should be alright. He was a good man, Quartessa, and if this child has half of you too, he will grow up to be one as well.” His words were sweet and consoled me a bit at least.

I rolled over and grazed the tips of my fingers across his cheek, despite knowing how depressed it would make me feel by the lack of emotion I would receive from it. “I wish the other half was yours. Then he would be a *better* man.”

Kafkus sighed and I didn’t need to be able to read his mind to know that he was wishing the same thing. “I have been researching with Daryl. We will find a way to break your bond. I will have you back if it is the last thing I do.”

“Please be smart about it. I don’t want to lose you, more than I already have anyway. And why are you being so nice to my father? Offering him your bed after how he treated me?”

“He is still my King, Quartessa, my allegiance did not change.”

“So you take his side?”

“I take neither. I understand how it feels to be blinded by love, but I also know you did what you thought was right. This is a delicate situation.”

“You can have my room then.”

“I will be alright in the living room until your father can return home.” He sighed and looked away from me. “I miss you.”

I sighed too, knowing exactly what he meant. Though we were on the same bed, our bodies close, it was as if we were at opposite ends of both the worlds we lived in right now.

“I miss you more.”

“I do not think that is possible.”

“All this mush is going to make me vomit,” said James from the doorway and I glared at him. “She’s not even yours. She is *mine*.”

Kafkus didn’t look angry at James’ stinging words, he looked sad. Tears leaked from his eyes and though I wanted to wipe them away, I just couldn’t bear the thought of another empty touch. I wanted so bad to hug Kafkus, to get that feeling of unconditional love, but I knew that I would feel nothing. A void of feelings.

“Only until I can find a way to be rid of you.” Though I had said it to James, my words were a promise to Kafkus that I would find my way back to him.

“Good luck with that,” James said with an almost challenge behind his words that I fully accepted. “My father is waiting. Time to go.”

Seeing no way out of it, I hopped off the bed and the two of them followed me downstairs.

The room was just how I had left it, everyone in their same spots as if no time had passed since my outburst.

“Gader, I have to go take care of *hell* business, but we will do what we talked about when

I get back.” I wanted my father out of my house as soon as possible, which was before he had arrived.

My brother frowned but nodded.

James led me out the front door and I gave him a good jab in the ribs from my irritation. It didn’t do much of anything since he simply laughed and pulled me to his side. Jackass.