

## Chapter 171: Divine Deception

Kane POV

"You have made your big entrance, got our attention now come on, stop dangling the carrot because we are all ears." I fumed, despite the fact my heart pounded for my brother. I turned to glare at the Moon Goddess, knowing she was speaking of my parents and their apparent betrayal. Because if what she said was true, my family was about to be ripped apart, for good.

"Patience is a virtue, Kane Maddox."

"How will she be more powerful? Because of my demonic wolf?" Knox asked, trying to keep his voice steady while disregarding her earlier taunts.

"Ignore her Knox." I cautioned my brother through the mind link.

"I don't trust a word this bitch says." He snapped back. Sighing relieved that this wasn't about to end with Havoc ripping the Moon Goddess apart. "But if she isn't going to tell us why she was really here, then I am going to take this opportunity to ask questions of my own." Knox added through my

mind. Closing my eyes, knowing nothing good would come from this.

"Amongst other things." She muttered, her eyes levelling on me, the whites flaring with a flash of emotion even I could read. Fear.

"Lottie is right. She scares you." I gasped, because although I had enjoyed Charlotte provoking the Moon Goddess I never thought my little mate might have hit the nail on the head.

"The child will possess abilities that can alter the balance of power. It will be a force beyond comprehension, capable of both creation and destruction." The Moon Goddess met Knox's gaze, her eyes void of emotion. I shifted beside Knox, my hand resting on his shoulder because his tension was palpable. 1

"And my child?" I asked nervously, not sure if I really wanted to know the fate of my firstborn.

"Will suffer because of his sister's gifts." The Moon Goddess warned with steely determination, her eyes locked on me. Suddenly I realised why I might in the future ask for Astaroth's help to control Knox's daughter.

My daughter!

"So, what are you suggesting?" I asked, my voice tight with controlled anger, because this godly creature was already putting a wedge between us, and I was powerless to do anything about it. At least not until I had all the facts.

"However, we DO have another option," She repeated, her gaze drifting back to Charlotte. "To ensure the child's power is kept in check, it must be bound to the will of... me. Raised with the understanding of its responsibility. Only then can we hope to control it."

"Her." I growled low. Not liking how she kept referring to our child as an it, a weapon, a thing of great power... She still had a name, a family, a future, and I would be damned if I let her take that from her.

"You want to bind my child? Control it from birth? That's your solution?" Charlotte asked, shocked by her proposal, her face pale but resolute, as she spoke up.

"Is this bitch real!" Knox laughed, shaking his head.

"You offer this... Why so YOU can have more power to manipulate others? You are no better than the demon." Charlotte scoffed, before looking away from The Moon Goddess, whose only response was to shrug and nod, uncaring of our accusations.

"We all have our roles, Knox Maddox... and you and your daughter will be no different."

"She will have us to guide her, to keep her from delving into the darkness that MIGHT corrupt her." Charlotte explained.

"Might?" The Moon Goddess laughed.

"Yes, might! She is Knox's daughter right. He has the same powers flowing through him from Havoc. Yet he is still good. He doesn't hurt people. He is not evil. Why should his offspring be any different?" Charlotte asked angrily.

"Because Knox had Kane, his protector and guide." Selene tried to say, but I cut her off, so over her bullshit.

"And she will have a sibling, a twin. Like Knox had! She stands the same chance as my brother did." I seethed inwardly.

"We can not take that risk." The Moon Goddess grunted a sound that seemed wrong coming from a goddess's lips.

"I can. And I will." Charlotte demanded, her mind made up.

"Charlotte. This is the only way to guarantee the safety of all realms. The child's potential is too great to be left unchecked." The moon goddess went on, clenching my fists, struggling to keep my anger in check. I licked my lips and stepped closer to the bed and my family.

"And what if we refuse?" I asked through bubbling rage.

"Then the consequences will be dire. For your pack, for the child, and for all who come into contact with it." Her eyes hardened on me. "Including the only child you will have, Kane. It will destroy him, corrupt him and turn him into something you all fear" A cold fire burned within her eyes as she spoke to me, sending something chilling and dark down my spine. 1

"Her! Not it!" I growled again, my tone harsher than before. "And my children will be just fine. I

will be there for them." I confirmed, my mind also made up.

"Of course. Her sorry." The Moon Goddess laughed, but she wasn't fooling anyone. She didn't give two shits about our children or their safety as long as her power remained unchallenged. She was happy.

"So to confirm.. I still have to pick... between my mates and my children.. This offer is only valid IF I pick to save my babies and dissolve the mate bond." Charlotte asked, her eyes filled with hope that I knew was about to be crushed.

"That is correct because the balance has to be restored. I have granted you two lives." Silence fell throughout the room as we absorbed her words. The weight of the decision pressed down on us, a suffocating burden that threatened to crush our spirits. But as I looked at Charlotte, her strength and determination shining through, I knew we had to find another way. A way that didn't involve binding our child's fate to the whims of a deity.

"We need time to think," I stated finally, my voice steady despite the turmoil raging inside me. "This isn't a decision we can make lightly."

"Very well. But remember, time is a luxury you may

not have." The Moon Goddess nodded, her expression softening slightly. With that, she vanished, leaving us alone with our thoughts and the daunting choices that lay ahead. I turned to Charlotte, taking her hand in mine.

"We'll find a way," I promised Charlotte and Knox, my voice filled with determination. "Together, we'll protect our children. No matter what it takes." I nodded, my eyes shining with fierce resolve.

"Together," Charlotte echoed, her voice unwavering. And in that moment, I knew we would face whatever came our way, united in our love and our fight for our family's future.

"Get ready, we leave in five." Charlotte sighed as she lifted from the bed and slid to the floor, her legs still shaky.

"Where are we going?" I smiled at her because, despite everything we had just learned, the drama we faced and the decisions that lay ahead, there was no one I would rather do this with than her and Knox.


"To see Astaroth, we have a deal to make." She nodded a small smile on her lips, but it didn't quite meet her eyes, eyes that remained low to the floor

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as sadness and hopelessness washed through the bond.


"Baby?" Knox whispered, but she was already on the way to the door.

"We go with Kane's plan." She nodded as she pulled the door open and disappeared out of it.

 Pippa Moon Author

*Author note:*

*If you have read this far you will have read the blurb and know wha* 

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## Chapter 172: Into the Demon's Lair

Kane POV

"Charlotte..." I whispered but it evidently fell on deaf ears as I watched my mate leave, a sense of dread churned in my gut. She was agreeing to my plan, a plan I had thought was foolproof. But Charlotte had laid a compelling case at my feet, making me doubt everything. As the door closed behind her, I met Knox's icy blue hues.

"Brother?" I asked, seeing him look utterly overwhelmed and hurt., although I got it. Not only had he just learned that he had a wolf all along and that our parents had lied to him, but he was also facing the possibility of losing Charlotte, his mate. The misery rippling through him was palpable, a physical force that hit me like a punch to the gut.

I stepped forward, closing the distance between us, and wrapped my arms around him, ignoring the way he fought to push me off. He needed me whether he knew it or not. Knox was usually taller and more imposing than me, but now, he felt small and fragile in my embrace. It seemed impossible, given his size and strength, but in this moment, he was vulnerable, and I needed to be the strong one.

"I've got you, brother," I whispered, my voice thick with emotion. "We'll get through this." Knox's body shuddered as he let out a breath he had been holding, leaning into my embrace. I could feel the weight of his emotions pressing against me, his anger, his confusion, and his deep, aching pain. He had always been the rock, the one I relied on, but now it was my turn to be his anchor.

"I can't believe they lied to me, Kane," Knox murmured, his voice muffled against my shoulder. "All this time, I thought I was... different. Broken."

"You're not broken, Knox," I reassured him, tightening my grip. "You're strong. And we're going to figure this out. All of it. she might be lying" I added with a hopeful edge to my voice, one I did not feel deep down.

"But Lottie... what if we lose her?" He asked as he pulled back slightly, just enough to look me in the eyes. I shook my head, determination hardening my resolve.

"We won't let that happen. She's our mate, Knox. We'll fight for her, for our family. No matter what." I explain, with resolve, I truly felt sitting in my gut

Knox nodded, a flicker of hope igniting in his eyes.

"You're right. We have to stay strong. For her. For us." As we stood there, a united front against the storm of uncertainty, I felt a surge of fierce protectiveness. We had faced countless challenges together, but this was different. This was personal, a battle for the very essence of who we were and what we stood for.

"Let's go find Charlotte," I said, my voice steady. "We need to talk to her, to figure out our next steps. Together."

"Together," he echoed, his voice stronger now as he took a deep breath, drawing strength from our bond. Quickly throwing some of Knox's clothes on, I gave myself a once over in the mirror and sighed realising that over the last four to five days my life had been so chaotic I had barely had the chance to shower, shave and give myself the TLC My reflection showed I seriously needed.

"That's my favourite shirt." Knox whined like a child as he came out of the bathroom dressed in a pair of loose shorts and a vest. Looking every bit the model he always did. It irritated me that I had to go to such lengths to look good when that bastard

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could rock up in a garbage bag and look sexy as fuck, and have all the damn girls fall over him.

"I know." I announced smugly smoothing the shirt out. "But you have to admit, brother... It looks better on me." I teased as I walked down to Charlotte's room.

"Prick." Knox yelled playfully as I pushed her door open, not bothering to knock.

"Hey." Charlotte called as she sat up from the bed, dressed in yoga pants and a t-shirt. Like Knox, she had the gift to look stunning in anything. Nodding to her with a gentle smile I felt my heart sink seeing the red tinges to her eyes, the wetness on her lashes and the firm pull of her lips. She was fighting back tears.

"Princess," I breathed as I stepped forward, but she recoiled away.

"No, let's get this over with. I can't handle the waiting. It's breaking my heart." She gushed as she closed her eyes tight.

"Ours too." Knox whispered, but any other response was cut off as we watched Charlotte summon Astaroth, her determination unwavering.

The air around us crackled with dark energy as the demon appeared, his presence commanding and malevolent. With a wave of his hand, we were whisked away, transported through a swirling vortex of shadows and whispers.

When the world solidified around us, we stood once more in the eerie cathedral from earlier. The blood-red moon cast everything in an ominous shade, bathing the ancient stone and flickering candles in crimson light. Astaroth lounged atop the altar, his gaze sweeping over the three of us with an unsettling mixture of amusement and curiosity.

"So, we have made up our minds?" Astaroth asked, his eyes lingering on each of us in turn. His fingers absently fussed with the ears of a massive black dog at his side. "Oh, ignore Fluffy," he said with a grin. "He's a hellhound."

Charlotte stepped forward, her eyes blazing with resolve. "Yes, we've made up our minds."

I couldn't help but glance warily at the hellhound. Its eyes glowed with an otherworldly fire, and its presence added an extra layer of menace to the already oppressive atmosphere. I stood beside Knox, feeling the tension radiate from him as he

kept his eyes locked on the hellhound.

"And what conclusion have you reached?"

Astaroth's voice was smooth, almost mocking. "Do tell."

"We're willing to consider your offer," Charlotte said firmly, her voice echoing in the vastness of the cathedral. "But there are conditions."

"Conditions? Oh, this should be interesting."

Astaroth arched an eyebrow, his grin widening.

"You will not harm Kane or Knox and will ensure no harm befalls them or anyone I care about. And we will not be violent towards you in return. This truce is non-negotiable." Charlotte didn't waver.

Astaroth chuckled, a low, rumbling sound that sent chills down my spine.

"Very well. And the rest.." He asked with a sly smile.

"I am aware of the deal Kane has put to you." she blurted out, a look of surprise crossing the demon's face quickly as he eyed me but as quickly as it appeared it was gone.

"I see." He laughed dismissing her upset with a flick of his wrist. "What if I can make it easier on

everyone.." He asked casually, returning to fuss the large beast.

"How?" I demanded stepping closer, my hand landing on Knox and Charlotte's side, unifying us as one.

"So to all it needs to seem that Knox and Kane here have a new mate.. Connie, I believe... one they have betrayed you with, correct?" He asked, arching a brow as he continued to fondle the beast's ears. Charlotte, not one to be deterred, nodded.

"The girl you have in mind, Kane.. you choose her because..."

"Because she is already jealous of Charlotte, she wants Knox and I for herself and will be gullible enough to believe anything if it involves her getting her way." I declared truthfully.

"So you have no interest in... naked wrestling... so to speak?" Astaroth asked, his eyes landing on me and only me.

"No." I replied coldly.

"Nor me, I would rather snap my dick off and eat it.

" Knox grunted firmly, his eyes flashing to our

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mates to reassure her, but she lowered her eyes, pain etched on her face.

"Sounds deliciously darling, but I have a better suggestion. If you can get Connie, alone in your room. I can see to it that she falls into a drunken consciousness."

"And that is helpful how?" Charlotte barked, growing irritated quickly.

"Well, then you appear dear Charlotte with some witnesses in tow and Bob's your uncle, Fanny's your aunt. I cast an illusion that mimics your mates here in bed with the little gold digger." Astaroth shrugged. "Jobs a gooden."

"So they wouldn't actually have to.." Charlotte asked, holding her breath.

"Hades no! It would be a shame to sacrifice such a jewel, right Knox?" Astaroth winked at Knox before nodding to me.



