

**Chapter 0171**

Kane POV

"You insulted the Moon goddess, and there will be consequences for that." Astaroth announced, making my jaw clench, because I knew he was most likely right. She would have to make an example of us. "I imagine the second Lottie here rejects you," he declared, stepping toward us, as I instinctively stepped back. "The second she is out of the picture, your second-chance mates will suddenly pop up, and you will be powerless to fight that bond."

"You dare suggest such a thing?" Knox's voice ripped through the room, with a low and dangerous edge to his tone that made me more than a little nervous. "No one could ever replace her!" he spat, and I felt Charlotte tighten her grip on my chest. I agreed, of course.

"Personally, I would force you two to watch as Lottie here, found her second chance mate. Fell in love and raised those pups without you." Astaroth announced, setting a fire under the simmering pot of Rage I was trying to control.

"There is no one else for me, just Kane and Knox."

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Charlotte declared with resolve that left no doubt in my mind she meant it. At this moment in time, she meant it!

"But, maybe she isn't THAT pissed at you! OR petty!" He added with a wink that only fueled the inferno inside me, but, as much as my anger burned bright, I couldn't help but see the twisted logic in the demon's words.

"How can you stand there and listen to this shit!" Knox roared, Charlotte's eyes darting between us filled with unshed tears. I hated seeing them like this, but we needed to stop burying our heads in the sand and face facts! Our union might not be what was for the best for Charlotte!

"The fated mate bond has brought us nothing but pain and suffering, Knox," I admitted with a sigh, feeling Charlotte tense in my arms I leaned down and kissed her forehead, needing to reassure her that I loved her without question, but the bond itself was the issue. "This bond keeps trying to tear us apart. Time and time again. Perhaps severing it is the only way to end this cycle of torment." I admitted with a sigh that wore heavy on my soul.

"No!" Charlotte growled, shoving my chest to get

away, but I held her tight, refusing to let her go.

"I don't like it either," I admitted, my voice barely above a whisper. "But he's right. It's the only way to protect you, to keep you and our children safe from the dangers that come with being tied to us."

"And you tied to me! A traitor's daughter!"

Charlotte uttered, pain etched in her tone. I was about to reassure her, but Knox's jaw tightened, his gaze flickering between me and the demon. I could see the conflict raging within him, torn between his love for Charlotte and the desperate need to keep her out of harm's way.

"We can't trust him," Knox finally said, his voice strained with emotion. "He'll double-cross us the moment it suits him." His words mirrored my own fears, the nagging doubt that chewed at the edges of my mind. But I failed to see what other choices we had. Given the way Chase vibrated in Knox's arms, my silence apparently said more than anything I could have said.

"There has to be a way!" Knox snapped weakly.

"There is, we sacrifice the pups or each other! Those are our choices, Knox! And I refuse to give up on my kid, or yours! And I refuse to let her go!" I

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demanded, holding her to me tightly to prove my point. "This way we MIGHT get to keep it all."

"Might!" Knox repeated with wide eyes. "It's a gamble!" Charlotte's eyes dropped to the floor then slowly lifted to Astaroth.

"How sure are you this will work?" She asked, her lips wobbling in fear.

"This is insane, Kane, you are not listening to his shit are you?" Knox growled angrily, his arms tightening around Chase.

"I will use my powers to fight any bond the Moon goddess tries to spark if it is indeed her plan to make you all suffer. That is easy enough. But you will have to let me stay close by, and you will have to play your part."

"Kane!" Knox seethed, my eyes snapping to my brothers in warning. How could he not see this was our only choice?

"Do you have a better plan, Knox?" I asked, hating myself almost as much as I am sure Knox did me, right now. "It is worth hearing him out." I nodded to Astaroth, Knox's eyes flared with rage before he walked off to lean up the far end of the cathedral,

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evidently needing to put space between us. I watched him carefully lay Chase down, so he could pace gently, no doubt trying to soothe Havoc.

"Play our part?" I asked, my eyes narrowing back on Astaroth.

"Well, for one, the rejection has to be believable, as does the reason for her rejection." Looking down into Charlotte's eyes, I saw the tears paint her lashes and knew she was as scared as I was.

"So, how are your acting skills?" He smirked, my blood running cold as fear set in my bones. In this treacherous place, where alliances shifted like shadows in the night, trust seemed to be a fragile thing, easily shattered by the whims of demons. But there was more at stake than our bond... Something Knox seemed to be missing.

"Our pups!" Rolo noted, for the first time in a while, letting his voice be heard.

"Our future!" I replied.

"We have to try," I announced, my eyes meeting Knox's, my voice steady despite the turmoil raging within me. "For the pup's sake, we have to try, Knox." Knox's gaze softened, a flicker of

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understanding flashing in his eyes. Slowly, he nodded, his resolve weakening with each passing moment.

"Alright," he sighed, his voice firm yet exhausted. "We'll do it. But we'll be watching you every step of the way. One wrong move, and you'll regret it." The demon smiled a twisted grin that sent a chill down my spine.

"Of course," he laughed, his voice dripping with honeyed malice. "I wouldn't expect anything less - but first, we have to discuss the price of my help." Astaroth grinned slowly. I could feel Charlotte shifting uncomfortably and braced myself because if his earlier comments were anything to go by, the price was going to be a steep one.

"What is it you want from me?" I asked, Astaroth's eyes met mine, his head shaking slowly.

"Not from you, so to speak." He laughed, turning his attention to Knox. "Do you remember that little deal we made, friend? In your darkest moment. That I would help you end your suffering if you promised me something small in return." I tensed, remembering my brother's earlier admission.

"Stop talking in riddles and get on with it, demon."

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"Fine, he laughed, walking to the altar and lifting himself on it, his eyes glued on my girl.

"I want your daughter."



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