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Lottie POV

As Astaroth's words hung in the air, a chill swept through me, freezing my thoughts in place. 'I want your daughter.' The very idea seemed absurd, impossible even. Yet, there he sat atop the altar, the picture of innocence, as if he hadn't just demanded my firstborn. His crimson eyes burned with an unsettling intensity, his offer dangling before us like a forbidden fruit.

I glanced over at Knox and Kane, my mates, never needing the reassurance of the mate bond more than I did at this moment. Their faces mirrored my shock, their expressions a mixture of disbelief and rage- something I understood.

How could we possibly trust a demon? Even if he claimed to be on our side!

But then, amidst the whirlwind of emotions, Astaroth's next words sliced through my turmoil like a knife.

"I will be her mate!" he murmured, his voice a sinister whisper in the depths of this hell-like

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world, "So, you see... I ask that you promise her to me when the time comes."

"Not a chance!" Kane spat the words, bouncing around the room like an angry wasp.

"Daughter." The word echoed in my mind, sending shivers down my spine. A day ago, I hadn't even known I was pregnant, let alone that it was a girl. And here was this demon, casually informing me of the gender of my unborn child as if it were a trivial detail and requesting I hand her over to him and his blood-stained hands.

"Something else, ask for something else." Knox demanded when I was unable to find my voice. I stumbled backwards, my gaze darting between Knox and Kane. They were already on the verge of exploding, their fists clenched, their jaws tight with fury. I knew I needed to say something to defuse this situation. Or pray to the Moon Goddess who currently hated me, that he was joking!

"Maybe you would be better praying to god!" Astaroth laughed into my mind. "Because I am not joking. I need this to happen!"

When I couldn't find the words to answer or force my body to move and be a comfort to my mates. I

sucked down the remaining bit of air my lungs could handle, seeing Knox and Kane lung forward to confront Astaroth. Tears filled my eyes as a wave of dread washed over me because I had seen Astaroth throw Chase around like a ragdoll with a simple flick of his wrist. I knew the damage he could cause.

"No! Not like this!" I gasped, finally finding my voice as my eyes found Chase lying motionless on the ground, a silent reminder of the power Astaroth wielded. His strength was incomprehensible, his influence undeniable. And in the midst of the chaos, I found myself grappling with a single, haunting question.

Why my daughter? Why her when he clearly had so much power?

"Why?" I finally managed to choke out, my voice was barely above a whisper. But amid the chaos, my question was lost, drowned out by the clash of flesh hitting flesh, bones breaking and the almighty roar of anger.

Kane had lunged himself at Astaroth, pulling him from the altar while Knox pummelled him with punch after punch of solid muscle. It was a brutal attack, and one I knew Astaroth was allowing to

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happen—further proof of his sick and twisted ways.

"Stop! Please!" I screamed as the battle raged on. I couldn't help but wonder if there was any truth to Astaroth's offer. Was he my daughter's one-day mate? Because he sure as hell was going to a lot of trouble to get us to agree, including taking one hell of a beating.

If so, maybe there was some hope of bargaining with the devil himself.

"If he really is our daughter's mate, then there is every possibility we can get her to reject him, refuse his advances!" I screamed through mindlink to my mates, hoping they could hear me. My eyes widened with the first trace of hope, seeing Kane freeze a little.

"If we school her on his true nature, the evil that resided in the very foundation of his bones, we can guide her. Help her to make the right choice! IF he really is her mate!" I added, but, Kane had already joined his brother, the pair taking it in turns to punch a bloodied and battered Astaroth to the ground. Shattering any hope I had that I could reach them privately.

"She will be allowed to make her choice!" Astaroth protested into the buzzing space of my mind, as if Knox and Kane were not launching a brutal attack on his body.

"That is all I ask, that when the time comes you allow her to make her own mind up, you do not stand in her way." As Astaroth's chilling words echoed in my head, I felt a shiver race down my spine, sending icy tendrils of fear snaking through my veins. The notion that our daughter held the key to his future happiness seemed unfathomable, yet there was an undeniable truth lingering in the depths of my mind, a truth I couldn't bring myself to accept.

I shook my head in denial, muttering a soft 'no' under my breath while I instinctively placed a protective hand over my stomach as if shielding our unborn child from his sinister intentions. Tears welled up in my eyes as I glanced desperately at Knox and Kane, silently pleading for support, for a shred of hope in this dark and twisted situation.

But before I could find solace in their eyes, Astaroth moved with a flick of his wrists, pinning both Kane and Knox against the wall with a force that left me

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breathless. Irritation crackled in the air around him, his impatience palpable as he took slow, deliberate steps closer to me.

With a heavy sigh, he spoke again, his voice carrying the weight of his words like a leaden cloak. How could I stand idly by and allow our child to be bound to such darkness?

"Lottie, honey. Have you considered that I too am drawn to darkness... that we will be a perfect match.

" But even as I grappled with the horror of his words, I couldn't shake the inexplicable pull I felt towards him, towards this realm of shadows and secrets. It was a sensation I couldn't explain, a longing that tugged at the edges of my consciousness, blurring the lines between reality and illusion.

"You're insane!" I screamed, spit flying from my mouth and splattering his perfect suit. My eyes darted to Kane and Knox, their bodies pulled awkwardly against the walls of the cathedral, reminding me of the way Jesus was nailed to a cross. Ironic and sick at the same time! More proof he is not fit for any child of mine. Ours!



"Yes, probably!" Astaroth grinned slowly from


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
where he stood before me, his gaze piercing through the depths of my soul. I knew that I was trapped in a web of my own making, entangled in a destiny I couldn't escape. All he asked for was my blessing, a simple concession that felt like a betrayal of everything I held dear.

But in the end, as I gazed into the eyes of my mates, their silent strength a beacon of hope in the darkness, I knew that I couldn't surrender to Astaroth's demands, no matter the cost. For our daughter's future, for the light that still flickered within me, I would fight until my last breath.

"No!"

 Pippa Moon  Author

Hey beauties, sorry for the delay. I got offered a cancellation appointment for my surgery and took it, it knocked me sideways like last time. So I ha 

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