

~ The Devil and Carson Mahoney (aka The Devil Made Me Do It) ~

by Zee and Windstar

Disclaimer -

Unlike in the past when a story is the result of Windstar's Canadian brain, frozen by ice and snow and overfilled with images of hockey, I really have to blame Sparky.

Yada, yada... demons, monsters, and gore, Oh My! Yada, yada... same-sex relationship being thrust into your face unashamedly. Yada, yada... the story and its characters are the sole property of the authors, stealing them would result in me unleashing Sparky on you.

A big thanks to Ken for going through it and dealing with all of our seemingly endless spelling and grammar issues.

Feedback, yes please! Zeeamy@gmail.com or Adarkbow@yahoo.com

The music was loud and screaming, just like her soul, Carson would say if she was feeling melodramatic; which she was. It was Thanksgiving and in typical dysfunctional fashion she was getting drunk in a bar, rather than being drunk at home, and that beat being drunk in public, but the night was young so it was entirely possible that she could be drunk in public later. Actually she had been planning on sipping wine and trying to be charming at Sam's parents, but her plans had sort of fallen through.

In reality Sam had dumped her.

"Jesus you going to sit there and look like somebody kicked your kitten. Or are you going to shoot pool?"

Carson turned and looked at her opponent across the pool table. Fascinated by the woman's ability to speak, yet not lose the cigarette clinging to her bottom lip. It just bobbed up and down punctuating points as she spoke. The woman just stared at her and then made a gesture at the table.

Tearing her eyes away from the dancing cigarette, Carson leveled the pool cue to the table and lined up her shot. "That ball over there is going somewhere." She called out. She drew her arm back and then reversed direction.

"See I told you, you'd have fun." Emily's voice came out of nowhere; scaring the crap out of her, and her shot went wild.

"Emily!" she hissed out.

"What?"

She gestured to the pool table.

"You and Lou having a good time?"

"Who is Lou?" Carson asked.

The woman across the pool table with the cigarette attached to her lip waved.

"Oh. Yes, our time together has been enjoyable." She was fairly certain Lou didn't give two shits.

Lou just grunted and bent over to take her shot. Carson watched the smoke from the cigarette with fascination; the smoke split and curled up around both sides of the woman's face then up towards the ceiling. It gave the woman the illusion of having smoky horns and made her look demonic in the grimy lighting of the bar.

"Come dance with me."

Carson looked away from the table where Lou was sinking balls with ease to her friend. "Emily, I'm not really the dancing type."

"Carson, have you looked at the dance floor, most of those people out there aren't the dancing type."

She glanced over to the writhing pit of human existence that was lit up on frantic occasions with splashes of red and purple. True, she wouldn't call what they were doing dancing. It was a cross between an orgy and some sort of primal primitive war dance. "Okay, point to you."

"So," Emily threw her arms around Carson's neck and stood up on her tip toes bringing their faces intimately together. "Come out there and dance with me."

For a moment Carson was tempted to kiss her friend, Emily would probably be the best thing ever to happen to her, but she and Sam had this thing, and she had a rule about fucking her friends. "Emily" She said sadly.

Emily gave a weak smile and let her arms slide off Carson's neck. "Hey, I get it. You don't dance." She reached a hand up and grabbed Carson's chin turning it to the left. "But see that group of wannabe Goth's I'm betting one of them does."

Carson kissed Emily's hand and let it go. "You go get 'em tiger."

She watched Emily bounce off.

"Regrets are a pissar, you sure you want to let the opportunity go?" Her pool opponent with the smoky horns asked.

She didn't reply just took her eyes off of Emily's ass and looked at the table. "You ran the table."

Lou just nodded.

"Fine I'll rack."

The evening progressed with the music getting louder, the bar getting more crowded, and Carson getting drunker. She had run out of quarters shortly before midnight and Lou had decided that the good time between them was over. So now she was relegated to a dark corner next to the bar drinking warm beer that was the draft special for the night. But she wasn't thinking about Samantha anymore.

Emily had found two noble suitors for the evening, Carson had dubbed them Adam and Eve in her head; they were your standard Gothic fair with the black late century clothes, black lipstick, and black nails. She had no idea if Emily was into threesomes, but she doubted it. At the rate things were going she was willing to bet that Eve was going to be the winner at the end of the night; she was up by three dances to Adams one.

Noticing the objects of her musing headed her way she tried to straighten up on the bar stool but ended falling off.

With a concentrated effort she staggered to her feet as Emily flitted over with her two new toys. Carson leaned against the bar in an attempt to look cool and reached for her half gone beer only to lose out as Emily snagged it and took a healthy swallow.

"You sure you don't want to come out and dance with us?" Emily asked batting her eyes.

"Come on you'll enjoy it," the guy said while trying to grind against her.

She looked over at him with a slightly disgusted look on her face. "If you don't stop that I'm taking you to the vet and having you fixed."

He blinked at her not getting what she'd said, but he stopped trying to hump her.

Emily handed Carson back her beer. "From what I understand it doesn't really fix the problem. Come on Carson please." Emily tried again.

"Really Emily I'm just not in the mood to get my groove on."

Emily leaned against the bar facing her. "Sam's a bitch."

Carson chuckled and missed her mouth then wiped spilt beer off of her chin, "That's not a news

flash."

"But to dump you right before the holidays, because she was embarrassed to introduce you to her folks...."

"We don't know why she dumped me, she never really said."

"Carson, when she said the words 'I'm not comfortable with you meeting my folks'. That was a pretty big clue."

"But 'not comfortable' and 'embarrassed' are two totally different words."

Their conversation was interrupted by the young man. "Are we going to dance more or what?"

Emily turned her head, her ponytails bouncing on either side of her head. "Hey, why don't you be a dear and go get me a drink. Okay?"

He nodded eagerly and left.

She turned her attention back to Carson. "So she's a bitch and you should be celebrating your freedom."

"I'm celebrating." She lifted her glass and shouted "Woo hoo to freedom." The three equally as drunk people around her cheered too and slammed their drinks.

"Another round for freedom girl," Emily said getting the bartenders attention and slapped some bills down. She then grabbed the young Goth girl's hand and led her out onto the dance floor.

A few seconds later the boy that she'd mentally dubbed 'Adam' came back with some drink colored a nauseating purple. "Where'd they go?"

"Girls room said something about you joining them."

His eyes got huge, and she snagged the drink out of his hand, before he could race off.

Thirty seconds later she was leaning against the bar taking turns sipping from the drink in her left hand and then from the one in her right, when security escorted 'Adam' out of the bar.

Half way done with both drinks Emily and 'Eve' emerged sweaty from the dance floor. "Hey you ready to go?"

"Sure." Carson responded before she quickly tried to down both drinks.

"Eve and her friends are going to try and raise a demon," Emily said and some nauseating purple colored drink went down the wrong pipe causing Carson to choke.

"You're more than welcome to join us. You know, the more the merrier," the wanna be Goth girl said perkily.

Carson caught the negative headshake and the rude gesture to what Emily hoped she'd be getting out of a demon raising.

"Nah, that's okay. Raising demons always gives me gas, so why don't you run me home, Emily, and then you go have fun with you're new young friend here."

Emily stuck out her tongue.

An old-fashioned hospital ambulance that had been painted black stopped outside a tired old house with a weed choked front lawn. The car door opened and a figure tumbled out on to the gravel drive way. After a moment the figure said, "I'm okay."

The driver side window rolled down and Emily's darkly dyed locks poked out, "You sure? I can walk you to the door?"

"Nah," Carson said stumbling to her feet. "I'm good."

"You sure."

"Yep, go raise some hell, er, demons, or whatever."

"Kay. See you at work."

"Yep." Carson turned and waved as Emily drove away.

She took a step back and fell over the broken fence she had been meaning to fix for her mom, for about 4 months now. All alone in the dark with dawn hours away, she stared up at the cloud covered sky. There was no noise; only the silence of a broken down suburban street.

Without any distractions, she couldn't help but think of Sam. Perhaps she should have seen the break up coming; it wasn't like they had a lot in common. Self admittedly she was gregarious, loud, charming, witty, enjoyed going out to clubs, drinking, and having a good time. Sam was uptight, hated people, loved her books, enjoyed staying in and never drank. They were just too different, they didn't really talk more like pushed each other's button's until they were making out on the couch, and she couldn't say they were together because the sex was great; because they hadn't had any. Sam was very big on waiting because she didn't want to make the same mistake she made with her ex. That was another thing, Heather, Sam's bitch of an ex. She was always being compared to Heather. If they hadn't broken up she was just about to drive down to LA and strangle the bitch, well, at least slash her tires.

She lifted up a sleeve and wiped away the couple of tears that had run down her cheeks.

Her little pity party was broken up by the sound of her mother cursing. "God damn piece of shit car! I can have you made into little tiny cans to hold Vienna sausages!"

Carson almost gagged, as she could almost smell the horrible things. She slowly regained her feet and walked over to the cracked driveway. "Mom?"

Her mom was of course drunk; it wasn't Sunday so it was a forgone conclusion. In the dim light from the kitchen window she could make out her mother's messed up graying hair, she was at least dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, and on her feet was wearing her yellow Homer Simpson slippers that Carson had gotten her last Christmas. In her right hand she held a hairbrush, which she was attempting to use to unlock the car.

"What? You better not be no zombie, I'll blast your ass back to hell. Ungrateful living dead, living on the tit of government welfare; you may be dead but you can get a job like anyone else. At least you don't need medical coverage...." Her mother rambled on.

Carson closed one eye hoping it would help things make more sense. It really didn't help. Things were still weird. "No, mom, it's me." After a couple of seconds where her mom just stared at her confused, she added, "Carson, your eldest."

Her mother's mouth split into a grin. "Carson how are you? Were you out with that Pam girl?"

"It's Sam, and no, we're not dating anymore."

"Oh that's too bad, but it's for the best dear. She would have just ended up dead, you know we're cursed."

Carson pinched the bridge of her nose, and decided a change in topic was in order. "Where are you going?"

"It's the day after Thanksgiving I'm going shopping."

Carson hit the display on her cellphone. "It's 3AM."

"If you want to get the deals you need to get in line early."

"Mom you're drunk, you shouldn't be driving. Especially with the hairbrush, I don't think you'll get too far."

"Fine you drive."

Carson caught the hairbrush and looked at her mom and then the car. Guess she was going to be drunk in public.

Somehow from the pit that was Carson's mind she was able to pull out some good judgment and use it. She called a cab to come pick them up, she was way too drunk to drive and well her mom was mom.

She had pulled her mother out of the cab and paid the driver, when she turned around and saw the line for the still dark and unopened store. "Great googly moogly, they selling crack here."

"No, no. They just have a great deal for the first hour they are open. They have a computer and a printer for a hundred bucks."

Carson blinked and looked at her mom. "You're kidding."

"Nope." Her mother slapped the crumpled ad in her hand.

"This has to be a scam," she muttered.

They took their places at the end of the line with the rest of the scruffy, red-eyed people who looked like they would be a lot happier in bed, asleep.

After an hour, Carson was dozing on her feet, swaying slightly back and forth, when a group of ten people showed up and started walking to the front of the line. People began to mutter darkly, waking her up. She snorted and opened an eye, "What's going on?"

"I can't believe it. Those people just cut in line," her mother said tersely.

"What?" She hadn't been standing here for an hour for a bunch of mouth breathers to come up half hour before the store opened and cut to the front of the line.

"Go talk to them. Make them get to the end. I won't get my computer," her mother whined.

Carson shook her head to clear the cobwebs. "Uh, mom, that one guy is like six-foot."

"So? Didn't you take on a city full of zombies?"

Wow, her mom had been paying attention to her, was all Carson could think of as she got out of line and walked to the front.

She cleared throat and said. "Excuse me."

The people ignored her.

"Hey, excuse me."

A big guy turned and looked at her smirking. "What?"

"Do you think you're more important than anybody else here?"

He blinked in surprise not expecting that. "Uh, no. But see our friend here was saving us a place in line."

"So you think its fair that you and your buddies just show and flounce your way to the front of the line, pissing the rest of us off." The people behind her were cheering her on and adding their own comments.

"Well, life isn't fair." Was the guy's only comeback before he turned his back on her.

Some irate person behind Carson picked up a small rock and threw it at the guy, hitting him in the shoulder. Starting a rather painful chain of events for Carson. He turned around, his brows furrowed, and there was a very clear look of murder in his eyes.

"Shit," was all Carson got out before a haymaker knocked her to the ground. She was going to feel that in morning.

After a moment, when her eyeballs stopped rattling around in her head, she got up to find that the angry muttering had turned into an angry mob, and in the distance she could hear sirens. The big guy swatted a couple of smaller guys off of him and picked Carson up by her shirt.

Nope she sure wasn't thinking about Sam anymore, that woman was completely out of her head, especially how she'd rather be on Sam's ratty couch arguing over something stupid; like the way she ate popcorn. Her eye was already swelling shut and she could taste blood. As he started to swing again she thought, "There's no way Emily's night is topping this."

There was smoke, and people were screaming. The pentagram on the floor was on fire, the flames a disturbing oily black color and a demon with skin the color of a dead fish and horns the size of her forearm sprouting out of its back was currently tearing apart a little wanna be demon raiser.

Emily turned her head and watched her so called date for the evening running off towards the door screaming. She sighed, well fuck, this probably meant she wasn't getting laid.

That was her last coherent thought of the night.

Samantha Sakamoto was in hell.

Not literally, but the raven-haired Asian woman was positive that someone in hell was having more fun than she was at that exact moment. She'd only been home for a day and she was already dreaming of some way to escape.

"Samantha!"

Narrowly avoiding spitting out the wine she'd just been sipping, Samantha looked up from the piece of tablecloth she'd been studying to find her entire family staring at her. Mentally groaning she plastered on the best smile she could and looked to the source of that loud call, her mother.

"Yes Mother?"

"I said; pass the peas to your father. He wants some."

Her father, seated on the other side of the table, didn't look like he wanted any such thing, but he did take the formal silver bowl with the peas and obediently ladled some onto his dish. The older man of obvious Japanese decent went back to eating his meal silently; content to eat without getting involved in the family bickering.

"Really Samantha, can't you pay attention for more than two seconds without drifting off?"

The matriarch of the family sat at the other end of the table from her father, dressed in one of her best dresses, wearing makeup and her good jewelry. It was Thanksgiving after all; everyone was expected to be dressed up for the Sakamoto family dinner. Samantha was positive that her mother had gotten her hair done the day before and her nails.

"I bet she was thinking about one of her books again." A younger version of her father quipped from opposite Samantha.

"Samantha." Her mother used the disappointed tone of voice that the younger woman was all too familiar with "You have to get your head out of the clouds and apply yourself. Why can't you be more like your brother Jonathan?"

Her brother gave her a victorious smile "I forgot to tell you mother, I think I've decided to go for Internal Medicine as my specialty."

Samantha closed her eyes with a wince and tried to tune out the following discussion about how thrilled her mother was that Jonathan had decided to follow in their father's footsteps.

She even managed to tune out most of her mothers not so subtle hints about what she thought of Samantha's choice of careers and lack of a fiancé.

Their father finished his meal sometime during the speech. Getting up he placed his napkin on the dish and picked up the suit coat that hung off the back of his chair.

"I'll be back later. I have to go to the hospital to check up on a few patients." He announced to the room at large and departed before anyone could say anything else.

As always, Samantha envied his ability to retreat from these little family dinners.

Picking up where she'd left off, Samantha's mother continued on for a few moments with how proud both of their parents were with Jonathan's progress. Without pause she switched to another topic.

This time Samantha managed avoid being caught daydreaming.

"Samantha, I got a phone call from your sister earlier. You won't believe the good news she had to share!"

Samantha glanced quickly at her brother, who looked like he was hanging off every word their mother said. No help there.

"She's pregnant again?" she guessed, not really caring.

Her mother paused, staring at her with a small frown. Only then did Samantha realize she'd committed one of the great family crimes, interrupting her mother.

"Well, yes, she is pregnant." The matriarch recovered quickly from her daughter's interruption to go on and on about how happy she was to have another grandchild. Inevitably that quickly changed into questions about when Samantha would be providing the family with more children as well.

As always, the possibility of her brother settling down and raising a family wasn't even mentioned.

For one moment of stark insanity Samantha was tempted to interrupt again. This time she imagined herself telling her mother off and swearing that she'd never have a child, that she'd never marry any of their parents friends son's who were all in business or medicine, since she preferred women.

As it always did, the moment passed without her jumping up and doing any such thing. Instead she mutely listened on, the food she was eating ash in her mouth.

Oh how she wished Carson was here!

The other woman might be loud and obnoxious, but it would have been priceless to see her

talking with Samantha's mother. What little of her appetite had remained fled as Samantha once again remembered that not only would Carson not be coming to dinner, she most probably would never see the other woman again.

Samantha had made sure of that when she'd dumped the other woman before they could reach her parents house.

Pushing back from the table, the former librarian, survivor of the Zombie infestation, fled the table to her old room. Only belatedly did she remember to stop at the base of the stairs to yell back to the formal dinning room asking for permission to leave the table. Not waiting for an answer she hurried upstairs and slammed her bedroom door behind her and locked it.

The room looked exactly as it had when she'd left for University. Her mother had decorated the rooms for each of the children. Samantha's was done in pastels; it was probably the most hideous thing that she could imagine. With, of course the possible exception of her older sister's room that was done in varying shades of pink.

No wonder Janice married the first man she could and moved halfway across the country.

Flopping down on the single bed, Samantha flung her arm over her eyes, trying not to listen to murmured conversation downstairs. No doubt Jonathan was extolling his virtues to their mother, and making sly comments at Samantha's expense.

It was entirely too soon when she heard the tell tale sound of her mothers high heels coming up the polished wooden stairs to stop outside her room.

"Samantha?"

The former librarian tried to pretend to be a hole.

"I know you're in there, stop acting so childish."

Samantha grabbed her blanket and huddled under it.

"Fine. But I wanted you to know that your father and I are throwing a party tomorrow night in celebration of you and your brother being back. I've told all of our friends you will be here, and invited all of their sons. Make sure you're dressed appropriately."

With that the click of high heels on wood receded down the hallway, leaving Samantha alone.

"I'm in hell."

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It turned out that she was wrong. Hell wasn't having dinner with her family in the formal dinning

room.

Hell was being forced to mill about, being dragged back and forth by her mother, from one stiffly dressed group of people to another for hours on end. She'd tried to hide but her brother had found her sitting on the roof where she'd used to flee as a child.

"Mom's looking for you," He'd looked so damn smug about finding her, about forcing her to endure the party with him. He'd always been like that.

So there she was, dressed in her best black dress that she hadn't even realized was still in her closet, and making small talk with the dinner guests, who seemed to be comprised of every single eligible male that passed her mother's qualifications.

There were a lot of them.

Her father was hold up in his study with a bunch of his buddies; all of them silver haired or balding, telling stories and drinking port. Samantha wished she could flee there as she had when she was a young girl, climbing up onto her father's lap.

While out in the rest of the house guests stood talking while uniformed waiters circulated among them with drinks and food. The entire thing was being catered of course; there was no chance that Samantha's mother would ever deign to prepare enough food for all of these people. The very thought of her mother and father trying to BBQ something made her smile.

"Samantha dear, pay attention. Really...." her mother shook her head, never once letting up on her claw like grip of her arm. Pulling her unwilling daughter with her, she brought them to another group of chatting men and women. Idly, Samantha wondered if her mother was getting desperate, not all of the men she was being introduced to were Japanese anymore.

Before they could reach the new batch of guests, with their fake smiles and ever so polite conversations, a crash resounded from the kitchen. The waiter closest to the kitchen door slipped inside, never a good sign.

"Now what?" her mother pursed her lips, eyes narrowing. Samantha knew that look; it meant some unfortunate person was going to get a good taste of her mother's verbal lashing. "You mingle." She gave her daughter a push towards the group and stalked towards the kitchen, pausing of course to exchange pleasantries with guests as she went.

Samantha smiled to the people nearest her "Excuse me." She whirled around and made good her escape. There was no way she wasn't going to take advantage of this perfect distraction.

Her good luck held all the way to the back yard. The grass was as impeccable as the rest of the house.

"Finally escaped huh?"

Samantha jerked in surprise at the voice from the shadow, the brief flicker of flame illuminating her brother's face as he lit a cigarette.

"I see you didn't stick around either, Jonathan." Her high heels made walking on the lawn tricky, but she managed it. Moving away from the deck and into the shadows where her brother was, trying to avoid being spotted.

"Since when do you smoke?"

His shrug was hard to see in the darkness. "A while."

They'd never been particularly close. In fact, this was probably the first time she'd spoken to her brother alone since two Christmases ago. The silence between them was awkward.

"So..." Carson would know how to talk to him; Carson seemed to know how to talk to everyone. Of course, the annoying woman wasn't here.

"When do you go back to med school?"

The shadow shrugged again. "Not sure."

Samantha frowned, leaning against the side of the house. "What do you mean, not sure? Don't you have exams soon?"

He laughed. "Yeah. About that, I got kicked out again."

"What!?" she looked around quickly to see if anyone had heard her outburst then said it again a little more quietly. "What happened?"

"Eh, got caught cheating again."

That would make the third time. "Does Mom know?"

Jonathan snorted. "Of course not. Dad said not to bother her. He'd handle it."

By which he meant that he'd make sure Jonathan got in at another school again.

"He wasn't happy, but you know Dad."

Actually, Samantha was starting to realize she didn't. "Nice touch telling her you were going to specialize in Internal Medicine."

Her dry tone was lost on him. "Yeah, I thought so." He sounded amused by it all. The things that happened around him always seemed to amuse him.

"Hey, you know who I saw a few days ago? That girl you were friends with in high school."

It was probably a good thing that it was dark, since Samantha could feel herself glaring in the direction of his cigarette glow.

"You mean Julia? My best friend?"

Jonathan laughed. "Yeah, that's the one. Man she had nice breasts."

"I can't believe you slept with her."

"Awe, come on sis, you can't still be upset about that. I mean, it's not like I raped her."

Samantha curled her fingers into fists. "You two were having sex on my bed!"

He laughed again. "She didn't want to go far."

Of course she hadn't, she'd wanted to make perfectly clear to Samantha that she preferred boys. It hadn't been an accident that she'd walked in to find the two of them going at it.

That had been the last time she'd talked to the person who'd been her constant companion throughout high school.

"You know what Jonathan, why don't you just go fuck yourself." She pushed off the wall and started towards the deck. The party wasn't looking so bad now.

"Ohhh... look who's gotten a potty mouth." He followed her, flicking his cigarette butt off into the darkness.

Just before the deck she spun around, shoving him in his chest with a finger. "I can't believe mother still keeps telling me I should be more like you."

He smirked. "Well you should. At least you'd get laid more often. Besides, you shouldn't be holier than thou. At least I didn't get fired from being the night shift librarian at a hospital."

He laughed again at her surprised look. "You should have gotten up earlier this morning to look through the mail. You can find all sorts of interesting things. Now, I wonder what mother would say if she knew you didn't have a job anymore. Think she'd try to talk Dad into paying for your graduate school?"

There wasn't a snowballs chance in hell of that, they both knew it.

"Go to hell." She managed, nearly tripping on the steps up to the deck. Her brother's amused laughter following her into the house.

Catching a glimpse of her mother emerging from the kitchen, Samantha turned down the hallway to her father's office. There was no way that she was going to put up with her mother's annoying habits after dealing with her brother.

Surprisingly the office was empty.

Her father and his friends must have gone out front to smoke their cigars. Her mother had long ago refused to allow either him or his friends to smoke in the house no matter the reason. She disapproved of him smoking cigars on any evening, so often he would slip out the front to smoke in peace outside.

It was a refuge, regardless of where the old men had gone. So for the first time in her life she stepped into her father's private sanctum without his permission to enter. Quietly she closed the door behind her and leaned against it, sighing in relief when no one followed her.

It smelled like leather, old novels and brandy. The walls were lined with bookshelves all of them filled with leather bound novels. A huge desk dominated one side of the room; behind it was the tall backed chair that her father sat in. For a moment she was back in her childhood, being called in to his office because she'd done something and her mother wanted him to punish her for.

Often as not they'd end up talking instead.

"Wish you'd been around more, daddy."

He'd been a shadow of a figure throughout her youth, gone more often than he was there.

Something on the top of his desk caught her attention. Every time she'd ever come in here that desk had been meticulously clean, not a single paper on it besides the ornate paper weights at the edge. Now there was a single manila folder on it, as if tossed down without thought.

Curious, Samantha moved closer, angling her head to read the file tab.

Huntington Incident.

She blinked in surprise. Huntington? That was where she'd been living when the zombies had happened. Carson, as far as she knew, still lived there with the other members of the geek squad.

Annoyed at once again thinking of Carson, she flipped open the folder. Each page inside was stamped in red with 'Confidential' and she nearly closed it again. She would have if the first page hadn't had a picture of Carson on it along with notes.

Frowning she flipped through the contents, eyes slowly widening as she saw all of the pages inside.

"What is this?"

Pictures of all Huntington, of the zombies that had taken it over, the people who had died, so neatly arranged with attached notes. There were pictures of Carson, Shaggy, Jahor, Emily, and herself. The ones of them in Huntington were blurry, carrying simple labels from where they had been taken. The one's from the military bases that each of them had been quarantined in after the zombie incident had ended.

She didn't understand. Couldn't understand why this was here, in her father's office, on his desk.

Mind wheeling, the former librarian let the folder drop from her fingers back onto the desk.

Turning, she fled back into the party, where even if the encounters were painful, there wasn't likely to be any more surprises.

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Carson stumbled into work; she nearly missed the doors to the morgue the first and second time, because her depth perception was way off. On the third try she hit the doors and stumbled on through.

One eye was swollen shut and her jaw looked two-sizes its normal size. There were various bruises visible on her face, and her normally cocky attitude had been knocked down to a manageable level for the time being. Carefully she looked around the room with her one good eye and found herself alone, well, except for the dead. There was a dead body under a sheet in the room, a toe-tag glinting under the florescent lights. She inched over to it and nervously poked it a few times. It happily didn't do any tricks.

With a happy sigh she eased her body into the chair and picked up a clipboard full of notes for the overnight staff. Thick fingers with swollen black and blue knuckles attempted to pick up a pen, she winced as her knuckles popped in a loud unhappy manor.

Her mother was of course fine, and as they had sat in a jail cell until late into the morning as the police tried to sort everything out. It had been odd to actually spend time with her mother sober, well the first hour her mother was sobering up wasn't pretty, and she'd almost resorted to beating someone with her shoe so she could get thrown into solitary. After the first hour her mother had comedown from her usual drunken state, she found herself in a cell with someone who was just about a complete stranger. In those few hours they had together she met this odd woman she had a few childhood memories of, who was sweet, charming, and wickedly intelligent. Sadly she knew that person would be gone by the time she got home. Of course her drunken mother, was happy with her just the way she was, her sober mother was disappointed she was wasting her potential as a morgue attendant.

In a fit of self-pitying anger, she tossed the pen she had just managed to pick up across the room.

As the pen arched through the air, the double doors into the morgue swung open. Jahor stepped inside frantically wiping crumbs off his shirt from the muffin he'd been eating on his way into work.

Carson winced and turned around in her desk so she wouldn't have to bare witness to the pain and suffering she was going to cause.

Looking up, the young Pakistani man started to say a cheery hello; only it ended up coming out more as a yelp as the pen struck him between the eyes. "Hell-loly shit! Ouch, what the hell was that for?"

Carson just kept focused on the clipboard in front of her. "Ohhh. You said a bad word." She snickered.

Grumbling Jahor picked up the lethal assault weapon pen and chucked it back at Caron's head.

Carson gave a startled cry and nearly passed out in her chair, after the pen hit a sensitive overly abused portion of her head.

"Crap, Jay, you spend the holidays with your mother or what?" she wined.

"Yes, I spent the break with my mother. I'll have you know it's only a holiday if you're American. What do I care that a bunch of sexually repressed white people, hopped up on religion and recently kicked out of their mother country, crashed on this rock and then spread like a genital disease on a cheap hooker?"

Carson cracked a grin and then winced. "Apparently you care a lot about it, 'cause you spent you're whole 'holiday' thinking up that diatribe."

Jahor pulled a chair over to the desk and sat down. "True, so did it sound properly pissed of and self-righteous?"

"Uh huh." She grunted studying the paperwork in front of her

Jahor frowned and then tried to make a grab for the clipboard. "I'm the clipboard junkie not you. Are we in trouble or something?" He made another grab, only to be blocked as Carson turned away from his reaching arm. "Give me my security blanket. We have rules I need to check and double check." Frustrated he grabbed the back of her chair and spun her around. His jaw dropped and he retracted his hands as if he had been burned, and muttered something in his native language that sounded suspiciously like a prayer from evil. "Did you sleep with the fire chief's daughter again, the one that's married to that linebacker?" He edged away from Carson not wanting to be between her and a possible bullet.

"Ha, ha," she said drolly, looking at him with her one good eye at the moment. "That was an accident. She said she was single. She mentioned nothing about a one-night stand, and she sure wasn't a virgin when it came to... you know... with a woman." Even though she tried to sugarcoat her words Jahor turned a bright red. She cleared her throat.

"Anyways, I'll have you know I got this at a day after Thanksgiving Sale riot."

"I thought the American custom was to just spend lots of money on crap they didn't need. When did they put the rioting and wrestling in?"

She frowned. "That's a new tradition. I think they started it this year."

Jahor nodded, but took another step back.

The double door opened again and Emily strode in like the Princess of the Morgue that she was. She and Carson looked at each other and at the exact same time said. "My evening so beat your evening."

Carson quirked her left eyebrow, the one that didn't hurt, and said. "I started a riot waiting in line for an after Thanksgiving sale to start, got beat up, picked up by the police and spent the rest of the day in jail with my mother who was sober for about the last four hours."

The Goth girl hopped up onto the nearest metal table used to perform autopsies on cadavers and swung her legs back and forth, popping her bubble gum as she did so. "I had ten times as good an evening as you did then." She cocked her head to one side considering it then grinned. "Yup, ten times as good, even though the police thing was cool. Did you see our favorite cop?"

"The one that is always threatening to shoot me or the one I let handcuff me for naughty endeavors?" Carson asked wanting to clarify what constituted favorite.

"The one who went through the zombie attack with us?"

"Oh, her. Ms. Shoot Carson. Nope didn't see her. Maybe she got lucky and got a day shift." Carson shifted trying to find a comfortable position then gave up and started just to hope parts of her body would go numb. "So dish. Why was your night better than mine?"

Emily snuck a look at Jahor through her dread locks. "I got laid." She proclaimed proudly, grinning evilly as the Pakistani man turned bright red and sputtering. "And I had a great time with her and her friends."

Carson was normally amused by the flip in gender-roles in the morgue, normally the guys were bragging about time in the sheets, but here it was the other way around and poor Jay had to suck it up. This time she was annoyed, she hadn't had any in a while, and considering how much of her higher brain functions were spent thinking about sex, this just made her grumpy.

"So did the vampire wanna-be's manage to raise that demon?" she said ignoring the whole satisfied smirk Emily was sporting, plus she hated the dreads, she preferred the pigtails.

"Demon?" Emily looked at her oddly. "What demon?"

"That's what I thought. Just a lot of crap on their part. Besides after those zombies the last thing we need is a demon roaming around, causing chaos and destruction." She shifted again her body parts not going numb. "Jay, since you are absolutely mortified by this conversation, will you please go get me some ice? I hurt." She whined.

"Your wish is my... well not really my command but whatever it takes to get out of this conversation." Jay nearly leapt for the door.

"Seriously, what demon? You sure you didn't hit your head really hard last night?"

"No." She eyeballed Emily. "When we left the bar, that girl, what's her name asked if I wanted to come with 'cause you were going to go raise a demon. You gave me the signal for back off I'm getting laid. So I had to drop my drunken ass off at home. Was the sex that good, that it ruined your memory? Maybe I should try Goth girls." She blushed a bit at that when she realized she was sitting next to one that had been hitting on her since the day they met.

"I've been trying to tell you that for years." Emily huffed. "Besides, I'm not the one who's obviously having memory problems, there was no demon raising involved. You sure you didn't do more than just drink?"

Carson looked insulted for a moment. "I sell drugs, I don't do them."

"Fine, whatever. Then it's some sort of dementia." Emily hopped down off the steel table as the elevator from the hospital above them dinged. Signaling the first corpse of the evening. "Hey Jay! First customer of the evening!"

The Pakistani man came running back into the morgue with Carson's ice.

Carson winced as she grabbed the ice out of the air, as Jay tossed it too her. With a sigh she placed it on her face and settled down in the chair. "Okay people, you know the drill," she mumbled.

Emily and Jahor shared a look and then headed for the elevator, but not before the Goth girl could stick out her tongue at Carson. "Don't strain yourself or anything."

#####

Carson was in her now usual spot in the chair. It had been a week since the Thanksgiving

incident. Her eye wasn't swollen shut anymore and her knuckles were back down to their normal size. It didn't hurt to breathe, her ribs now expanding and contracting normally. However her bruises had all started to fade into that sickly green and yellow color that made her pale skin look just that much unhealthier.

Her pain was down to a dull roar if she took a few aspirin, and she felt down right delicious if she actually sampled some of the muscle relaxants from the nurse's station upstairs.

By popular vote since she wasn't any use lifting and taking care of the bodies Jay and Emily had voted her to take care of the paperwork. She had grumbled but taken the job knowing it was only fair. She rubbed her puffy eye and bent back down to the task of form filling. Jay was out getting them lunch and Emily was taking a break, probably chatting up that cute androgynous nurse that had started last week.

They had a bet going on whether it was a boy or a girl.

It wouldn't matter either way to Emily; the woman would take out whatever gender it happened to be for a night on the town.

She growled as she went over the forms. The Huntington Morgue had been unusually busy over the last week. So far they had three fairly young women brought in. It was kind of depressing and alarming, they had a lot of things in common; all of them had that Goth girl look with black nail polish and lipstick.

Piercings were always fun to work around in the morgue and tattoos. Plus all three had died without a mark; they had all died from heart failure. Carson believed in a certain amount of coincidence in life but to have three young, healthy women die of heart failure was weird.

The thing that really got to her during the autopsies was their faces. They all looked like they had been terrified right before they died.

Actually if the ME hadn't scoffed at her assessment, she would have put down cause of death as "scared to death."

She sighed and tried to get her mind back on track but it was stuck on the face of the last young woman who came through the morgue doors.

The double doors behind Carson opened and a cool breeze played along her neck. Frowning a little, Carson turned and tried to look over her shoulder, sighing in annoyance when her neck refused to turn. She ended up twirling the whole chair to face the doorway and almost swallowed her tongue.

The woman was hot.

She was Betty Page and Lana Turner all rolled up into one sex appeal package. Carson was a big

fan of the pin up girls of the forties and fifties when women had lush curves, and this woman was all that and more.

"Hawbaum," Carson said trying to form a sentence and failing. Blushing she cleared her throat and tried again. "How may I help you?"

The woman smiled and Carson was wet, that smile was a promise of every sexual fantasy Carson had ever had, and she'd had a lot. "Yes, I was looking for a friend of mine."

The morgue attendant put on her best sympathy face, if you were looking down here then, well, nothing good could come of it. "I'm sorry for your loss."

"What? Oh. Oh, she's not dead, yet." The woman took a step closer to Carson. "Oh my, look at your face, are you okay?"

"Oh this, this is nothing." She blinked and the woman was suddenly right there next to her. "You... you should see the other woman." She smiled roguishly.

"I'm guessing you're what they call butch?" She gently touched Carson's face stroking the sickly looking bruises.

Carson sighed at the soft touch. "I can be butch if you want me to be, most of the time I'm just Carson."

The woman laughed entrancing Carson all that much more. "My friend, she is average height, with dyed black hair, she is what you would call a Goth. I met her at a party and lost her number, but I remember her saying something about working in the morgue."

Jealousy sprouted like Athena in Carson's head. Of course the hot woman was here for Emily, because ever since she dated Sam her luck with the ladies had gone into the toilet, actually her luck had just plain gone in the dumps. "Of course you're here for Emily."

"Emily, so that's her name." There was a change to the woman's voice that broke Carson out of her entrancement, something hidden under the softness and seduction that was like nails on a chalkboard.

"Um, how did you get back here? We only allow authorized personal or people chaperoned by authorized personal." She tried to scoot back away from the woman but there was no place for her to go.

"Now don't be like that Carson, we were getting along so well." The hand stopped stroking and grasped her jaw painfully.

"Ow!"

The woman jerked Carson's head up and Carson flinched and paled as she saw the fire burning in those eyes. No pupils or anything just flames.

"Now Carson, where can I find Emily?"

"Fuck you!" Carson spat out, her hands curling around the one on her chin trying to get free.

"Such language. What are they teaching you mortals?" The hand shifted from Carson's chin to her throat and she was easily lifted out of the chair. The woman's former luscious form slowly giving way to her true form.

Choking and gasping for breath she beat at the now white scaly arm, her nails raked up and down ineffectively, they split open and bled.

The now demon's slitted nostrils flared and she drank in Carson's frustration and rage. "Such anger. Truly delicious, and despite everything you don't even give up." The demon's face got closer to Carson's purple one breathing in deeply. "What a truly beautiful creature you are; so amoral. I don't think I've ever seen such a person with one foot in heaven and another in hell. Killing you would be such a waste. Instead, I'd rather tip those scales and see you firmly entrenched in Hell."

She set Carson down and released her hold just enough so that the human could breath.

"I'm going to offer you a deal, Carson. Join with me, be my servant, and the pleasures of the world could be yours." Yes, the demon thought this could work out well. The young human could help her kill those that had raised her from the Pit. Then she would be free to make this a new Hell, with her as its Queen.

So far she had managed to kill off some present at her re-birth into this world but those hard core Goths, most of them were quite fond of crucifixes and believed in the powers of good and evil. It was hard for her to get close to them, but with a human pet, everything became fair game.

Carson's very eloquent refusal speech was summed up as, "Fuck you!"

The demon smiled revealing wickedly pointed teeth, and stared deep into Carson's eyes. "So here you are all alone. That's what you hate isn't it, being alone? Give yourself to me, and you will never be alone, I will be with you always. The other's move through your life using you and discarding you, leaving you to wonder what is so lacking in you that they cannot be bothered to stay. Your father, you mother, and all of your lovers; they've all left you, but I won't do that." The words were being breathed over Carson's lips, each one given life and meaning in steam and heat.

Carson felt each word and an old wound was opened and she relived the night her father didn't come home. She was there as her mother slowly started to care more for the bottle and its well being than hers, and every time a lover left because she just wasn't what they wanted.

"That's it," the demon said lovingly, feeling the woman's will bend. "Pledge me your heart and I shall be the only thing that will fill it forever and ever. We will never be alone and you shall rule this existence with me.

Carson was hypnotized by the flames in the woman's eyes and captured by her words. She shook her head numbly, and the demon grinned in a most horrible fashion, and closed the gap between her lips and the humans. She breathed the damning fires of hell into her slave enjoying the human's squeal of pain. On Carson's heart the demon fire burned in the name of her new Mistress, and the organ turned black with the corruption of it, except for one small part the blackness could not touch.

With a frown the demon pulled back, "What is that?"

"I know not, Mistress."

A scaled hand came back, and then in a blur it moved forward striking Carson across the face. She didn't move except for her head and when she straightened up only a faint trickle of blood oozed out of her split lip. Her tongue emerged and wiped it away.

"Does someone else already have claim to your heart?"

"Of course not."

The demon eyed the human, and then let it go. It was impossible to lie to her now, but what she didn't realize was humanities ability lie to themselves.

Carson felt glorious, her aches and pains were gone, and as she glanced into the reflective surface of a metal gurney she saw she was healed. Her flesh seemed pale, but it was whole, and gone were the lurid bruises. She also felt unburdened, like a load had been taken from her.

She looked at her Mistress, a question clearly visible on her face.

The demon shrugged. "It takes a lot of effort to be good, to let your soul and good-conscious rule you. I've taken that away. Now come along, we really must get rid of those horrible clothes and find you some dates. I'm thinking a couple of Goth girls are just what the doctor ordered."

Clothed once more in the masquerade of human flesh she crooked a finger and Carson eagerly followed her.

#####

Three days after her mother's party, Samantha got her first chance to sneak into her father's study again. It was late at night and the house was silent around her as she snuck down the stairs,

careful to avoid the first one that would squeak if she touched it.

The grandfather clock at the base of the stairway gonged once to announce two thirty and Samantha nearly had a heart attack.

After a moment with her heart beating in her throat, she kept moving.

The door to her father's office was locked as usual when he wasn't inside it. The former librarian had known that of course and crouched down next to the doorknob, pulling out the small piece of metal that Shaggy had showed her how to use.

After getting locked out of safe places with Zombie's chasing after them back in Huntington she'd demanded he teach her how to open locks. It was more difficult when crouching in front of her father's door, nervous at being discovered and trying to do it in the dark. Finally the lock clicked and the doorknob turned, letting her inside.

"Thank you Shaggy," she whispered.

Biting her lip, Samantha considered her options for a moment then hesitantly turned on the light. She wished she'd been able to find a flashlight, or even a lighter.

Now, where would her father hide things he didn't want anybody to read?

Pursing her lips she turned around slowly in the middle of the office, examining the tastefully decorated walls and bookshelves. Nothing screamed out to her and she put her hands on her hips, frowning.

"Damn it."

With an annoyed sigh she set to carefully looking behind every book and every picture and then putting them back exactly as they had been.

There had to be something!

A half hour later she sat down in her father's chair, defeated. The office seemed just that, an office for an older doctor. There wasn't anything out of place that she could find. Maybe he'd only just gotten the one file, there wasn't anything else here, or maybe he had other files at his office.

Either way she wasn't going to get answers tonight.

She hated not finding what she was looking for, not to mention the fact that her mother would expect her to get up early tomorrow morning for some other ridiculous family chore.

And of course, she thought, we can't forget the fact that I'm now single after driving off the only

woman who I've enjoyed being with, even if she was annoying, in years!

All of the frustration bubbled over in that one instant and Samantha slammed both hands onto the top of her father's desk as hard as she dared.

Freezing as the top of the desk shifted slightly.

"Now what is this?" It was hard to tell in the darkness but it seemed to her that the entire top of his desk was loose, like it could move.

Feeling around the desk she found what felt like a release catch under the desk and a keyhole. The lock looked entirely too modern and serious for her little lock picks.

Keys.

She'd seen keys earlier. Getting up off her knees she went to the bookcase with all his travel mementos on it and the wooden bowl that had a bunch of keys in it. Most of them were too big, but a couple could do it. Taking them she went back to his desk and started to try them all.

The fourth one worked.

She was right, the entire top of his desk levered upwards slowly on hidden hinges. No wonder he never put pictures of his family on his desk.

"Now that's more like it."

Rubbing her hands together she picked up the first of the neatly stacked files that were inside and started to flip through its contents. The file that had detailed the zombie incident was gone. In its place was a detailed report of what looked like a series of murders.

Samantha frowned in thought as she flipped through the first one and then the second folder. Two murdered women, young from what she could tell although the pictures that were taken of the crime scenes made Samantha wince and quickly flip to the actual police reports.

A quick check of the locations made her sigh.

Huntington.

Why did it always seem to be Huntington?

Now to find out what made these special enough to be in her father's desk.

#####

Humming tunelessly to herself, Emily dumped the tray full of autopsy instruments into the

cleaning solution. There, she was officially done for the evening.

"Jay!" she hollered, sticking her head into the next door, grinning as the man jumped in surprise. "Still a little jumpy after those zombies, huh?"

He made a shushing motion, looking around worriedly. "You know we aren't supposed to talk about that. Remember what those nice Army men told us."

"You mean threatened us."

"Yeah that too."

Emily laughed. "You are way too stressed out my friend. I'm done for the evening. If Carson shows up tell her she sucks for dumping the shift on us without even saying she was sick or whatever."

"Ok."

With a backwards wave, she headed for the door.

If she was lucky she could get home, change and go out in time to see some friends tonight. Yup, she grinned, things were looking good. The woman twirled her keys and did a little hop.

Dawn was still hours away and the still sleeping world was cold, and silent. The hospital parking lot was probably the only thing going on this time of night.

The parking light that Emily had so smartly parked under wasn't working, leaving that part of the lot dark and somewhat eerie looking.

Ever since the zombies attack, Emily wasn't really fond of dark areas where she couldn't tell what, or who, could be waiting for her. Frowning, she stopped skipping, held out the key for her car, and started to make a rush for the driver's side door.

A shadowy form leaning against the driver side door suddenly drew into focus the closer Emily got to her car.

"AH!" Emily leapt backwards, eyes wide.

Casually Carson leaned against the cold metal of the frame. "Hey, Emily. You sneaking out of work early?"

"Jesus, Carson, you scared the crap out of me!" Emily batted at her friend's shoulder.

Normally Carson was fond of a certain well lived in look when it came to her clothes, that and loud, screaming obnoxious Hawaiian shirts. For the first time as long as Emily and Jahor had

known her Carson was dressed in a finely tailored black button up shirt and pants, it made her look incredibly pale.

"Sorry," Carson said, not really looking sorry at all.

Emily paused in what she was about to say, blinking as she took in the new attire. "New digs? Nice.... Is that what you were doing all day?"

"Well, the old me wasn't working out all that well, so I thought, what's that song lyric, 'a change would do me good'." She chuckled at her joke. "So that new night nurse, you get a date?"

"That's still a work in progress." Emily was still trying to adjust to the new Carson. She kind of missed the old bright shirts, but there was something to be said for sheik.

"Hmmm, guess that means there's hope." She stood up from the car and took a step forward. "So, little girl, would you like a date?"

Emily jerked in surprise. "Really? Yeah!" She unlocked the door to her car. "Where are we going?"

"Where would you like to go?" Carson turned following closely behind Emily, the smile on her face anything other than nice. She took another step in as Emily paused to unlock her car, molding her front into Emily's back and slowly ran a hand up her friend's thigh, to her hip, and finally coming to rest on her stomach teasingly short of her breasts.

Emily's exhaled in a gasp, leaving the keys dangling in the lock to reach up and brace herself against the cars roof. She'd hoped for so long that Carson would want her. Now, finally, all those fantasies were going to come true.

"What about Sam? I thought you were waiting for her?" The second she said it she wanted to slap herself for being an idiot. Why would she ask that when this was exactly what she wanted?

Carson's whole body went tense, one hand frozen on Emily's stomach the other frozen just above the clasp to the crucifix the Goth wore around her neck. "Sam?" Carson's voice sounded hollow and slurred like she was just waking up. Her heart constricted violently and bile clung to the back of her throat. The darkness in her veins and heart screamed that it could have only on mistress and she should continue.

"Carson?" Emily twisted around, frowning at the weird look on her friend's face. "Hey, you all right?"

"I... I'm not sure." She blinked and looked around the parking lot like she wasn't sure where she was and what was going on. Slowly her eyes came down scanning how closely they were standing, and for a second a rather evil look came over her face before disappearing again.

The Goth frowned, tossing her head sideways to get the long dreads out of her face. "You sure you're all right?" There was something going on here, Emily just wasn't sure what.

An oily smile spread across her face. "I'm fine, just fine, what else could I be standing in your arms? We don't need to bring up old girlfriends like Ssssam." Saying the name was painful like opening a wound and her heart seemed to stutter in her chest.

The twisting of Carson's face as she struggled to say that name was more than a little worrisome. "Carson. What's going on? Why can't you say Samantha's name? You're always talking about her. You wouldn't shut up about her for a while there."

Carson's face drew up into an angry scowl and she pushed herself away from Emily. Her insides twisted and with a snarl of rage she turned, punching the other car next to Emily's. Every time her heartbeat it seemed to drum out the name Sam, and she clutched at her chest. She bent over, her other hand reaching out for anything to help her feel stable. What the hell was going on? What was she doing out here, with Emily? Emily? Emily?

"Emily!" She stood up looking in horror at her friend. "You have to get out of here, you're in danger. There's a demon; you raised a demon, and it's killing you all off," she babbled frantically, too much to say not enough time. She could feel the demon coming, its rage at her for failing. "Don't trust me...."

"Demon? Carson what the hell are you talking about? We didn't...." she paused, a sliver of memory sneaking through the gaps of a tall figure with scaly white skin. Confused and a little scared she turned and yanked the door open. Hopping in she turned over the engine and, with a squeal of wheels, started to pull away.

From the darkness a white figure flew at the car, slamming into the side with an enraged scream of hatred. Emily screamed right back in surprise and struggled to put the car in gear, yelling as what sounded like iron spikes scratched along the side of her car.

Then Carson was there her face looking less than human in the bright headlights, there were shouts and then both figures fell away from the car with the sound of breaking glass.

The car swerved, nearly hit a lamp pole and then drove off into the darkness.

Two figures lay on the asphalt in the pool of light at the base of the lamppost. The paler of them stood up, snarling as she reached down and grabbed onto Carson. "How dare you interfere!" she yelled, hauling her upwards until her feet dangled above the ground.

Carson choked and gasped for breath her legs kicking weakly. "She's my friend," she croaked out, but already her memories were fading again, and she wasn't sure why she had defied her orders. The blueness in her eyes faded away leaving only the dull gray in her eyes. Eyes were the window to the soul and Carson's soul was fading like an over washed piece of denim.

The demon shook her thrall once more then tossed her aside with a snarl. "You had one job, to remove the cross from her neck. Why did you fail me in that?" she demanded.

Carson hit the asphalt with a groan and slid across. She quickly got to her knees her head bowed already the split skin was healing on her arms and palms. "I, I don't know, Mistress." There was a name, it skittered across her brain. "Samantha," she whispered and again her heart constricted in pain as it warred with itself to which Master should be obeyed.

Fingers tipped with talons gripped Carson's face and forced her to look up so that the Demon could see into her thrall's eyes. For almost a full minute they stared at one another, until the demon's lips pulled back from long pointed teeth. Straightening she ran her hands down her body, as if pulling on a second skin, and once again the demon resembled a beautiful woman.

"Then you will have to go take care of this Samantha before she becomes a bigger problem. Go and kill her." The woman's voice was once again sultry and low.

Carson's nostril's flared and her eyes were transfixed on the sight before her. "As you wish, I obey." She stood and nearly arched like a cat into her Mistress' touch. She frowned for a second; there was a slight problem she didn't really know where Samantha's parents lived. Then shrugging her shoulders as if to rid her of that slight problem she headed to the hospital library.

As she entered, her lips curled into an evil smirk and she slowly re-adjusted her shirt, smoothing out the wrinkles.

The library was empty except for the extremely unhappy matronly looking woman at the info desk. "Hi," Carson said brightly. "You're the old bat that runs this place. The one with homosexual issues." As the woman looked like she might swallow her own tongue in anger. Carson cracked her knuckles and said. "I need some information. Shall we do this the easy way or the hard way?" She grinned wider showing her teeth. "I'm really hoping you want to do this the hard way."

#####

Emily pulled up into the driveway of the non-descript house in the suburbs that she'd been given the address to. Taking the key out of the ignition, she winced at the odd sound her engine made. That didn't sound good, neither had the rattling that her car had made all the way out here. Getting out, she once again nearly cried at the long scratch marks down the side of her car and the dent where Carson and that... thing had hit. "I can't believe this. She actually wants me and it turns out she was possessed or something. Damn it." Going up to the door she pushed the doorbell of the ranch style house.

An older woman with her hair in curlers, and face cream on, gave a long dramatic sigh as she saw Emily. "It's you." She looked around and then asked, "Where's the rest of the brat pack?"

"Oh god." Emily winced, looking away from the face that opened the door. "Ms. Shaggy, we really need to find you a boyfriend or something." She wished she'd had some sort of warning before that door opened. That would make it two monsters that she'd seen today. "Jay should be here soon."

"It's Mrs. Andover, not Mrs. Shaggy. Can't you just take my boy out to a strip club? Maybe if he finally sees a pair he'll move out of my basement." She sighed again and stepped back. "He's where he always is."

The idea of taking Shaggy to a strip club was actually intriguing and distracted Emily from the sight of his mom's face as she slipped into the house and headed down the stairs to the full basement.

"Hey!" she swung open the door. "Whiz boy are you... AH!" she yelled, ducking as something flew past her head.

"Oh, um, look out. Sorry I was fiddling with my remote controlled helicopter."

Shaggy looked up from the workbench he was sitting at. "I finally got it to fly. I was trying to see if it could carry a small camera that would relay information back." He lifted the control device and tried to pilot the machine back to him but instead he drove it into the wall where it promptly burst into flames and fell to the ground. "Oh shit." Shaggy said frantically as he grabbed a fire extinguisher and rushed over to the small burning pile of plastic.

"I didn't know those things could even burn." Emily watched with interest. Somehow everything that Shaggy touched usually ended up on fire at least once as far as she could tell. "You have anything to make Carson stop acting like a freak yet?"

Shaggy looked up from the foamy mess on the floor. "I'm not certain I quite understand what's wrong with her. She hit on you and then you mentioned Sam and she freaked out. Then something about a white demon. Isn't that the name the American Indians called the white settlers on occasion?"

Emily tossed a rag at her friend's head. "Focus Shaggy, focus." She plopped down onto the nearest chair, claiming it as hers. "Yes, she hit on me, which wasn't bad, but then she went all psycho. There was this thing that was white that attacked my car, but Carson took it off it I think...." She paused, trying to figure it out.

"So Carson is acting odd how? I'm still not...." There was masculine scream of terror from upstairs, followed by Mrs. Andover's voice. "Jeff another one of your weird friends is here. Why can't you go out to a bar like any other 22 year old?"

Jahor came down the stairs his normally dark face looking gray. "Oh my goodness I thought we were overrun by zombies again."

"She wants us to take Shaggy out to a strip club," Emily whispered, conspiratorially to Jahor, patting him on the arm understandingly.

Jahor choked and went from gray to red. "I... I... so what is this about Carson hitting on you? I'd much rather have her hitting on you than pining for that bitch Sam."

"You don't understand. She was acting even weirder than normal. Like it wasn't even Carson. Then something attacked my car when I was driving away!" Emily tried to get them to understand.

"Attacked your car? Are you sure you just didn't hit a dog?" Shaggy piped in.

"Shaggy, a dog wouldn't leave a ten inch gouge in the metal of my car!" Did he honestly think she didn't know the difference between something attacking her car and hitting a dog?

"Really?" The uber geek perked up, grabbed a camera, and started up the steps. "Let's take a look."

"Do we really have to? Your mother is up there. I don't think she likes us." Emily shared a worried look with Jay.

"She's probably watching her shows; she won't even pay attention to us." Shaggy headed up the stairs. He flipped on the porch light illuminating the night. He looked at Emily's car. "I don't see anything.... Whoa."

His eyes widened as he came around to the front. "Are those scratch marks smoking?"

"See." Emily nodded at the gouge along the side of her car. "Do you think my insurance would pay for this? I wonder if they have a mark down for vampire damage or demon or whatever the hell that was."

"I don't know." Shaggy replied as he seriously pondered the question.

"There's no such thing as vampires or demons." Jahor grumped as he came up behind them.

"Just like there's no such thing as Zombies?" She dared either of them to say something to that. Planting her hands on her hips she eyed her poor car. "So what are we going to do about Carson? She's obviously under some sort of influence."

"Well...", Shaggy started as he lifted the camera and took a few shots of the damage. "I guess we have to figure out what kind of influence she's under and free her, but first we have to find her."

"Well why did she... attack? Seduce? I'm not really clear on what happened?" Jay mumbled. "And then why did she stop?"

Shaggy's camera flashed highlighting the smoking gashes. "I'm not thinking vampire. These are huge. Aren't vampires just human's only not? I would guess monster or demon."

"Ummm. Good question. I'm not really sure why she wanted to get in my pants. Although it obviously had something to do with my looks and outgoing personality." The Goth girl grinned at them all. "But I think she stopped when I mentioned Samantha to her. She got all weird after that, telling me to get out of there that I was in danger."

Jahor frowned and opened his mouth only to shut it. "Didn't Carson say you'd been picked up by some girl who was going to raise a demon with her friends?"

"See I don't remember anything about raising a demon. I remember some really world rocking, mind blowing, sex though." She really loved it when she got Jahor to sputter like that - it was fun.

Shaggy lowered the camera frowning. "Just rub it in," he muttered under his breath. "So why would a demon attack you? And if Carson was this demon's bitch why would she stop it from attacking you?"

"I don't know. She was all like I'm going to get in your pants until I mentioned Sam then she acted a little bit more like Carson. Oh, I didn't mention the new clothes she's got. They're really nice, a big step up from her previous shirts." Emily sat down on the front steps, frowning.

Shaggy looked like he was doing the, "I have to go potty' dance." "Oh, I have an idea." He took off inside, his mother's voice shouting at him to shut the door.

Emily winced and then looked up at Jay. "I still think we should take him to a strip club."

Jahor looked at Emily. "Um, I'm fairly certain my mother wouldn't approve of me going to a strip club." He sat down next to her. "You know most cultures have some sort of belief in evil spirits. Most of them seek to enter into this world causing chaos and destruction. You have demons, unseele, spirits and other such stuff. I grew up on tales like that so I would stay pure and not invite them in."

"You think that Carson invited them in?" She wished that she could say that Carson was pure enough not to invite in anything.

"It's Carson," he said with a shrug.

"I'm sure I'm going to regret saying this, but I kind of wish Samantha was here. She knows all the things it could be." Emily grimaced. "I can't believe I just said that."

Jahor looked as if he'd just sucked down a 32oz Slurpy.

"Trust me; I'm not happy about it either. She's not my favorite person you know, but if she could

help get Carson back...." Emily trailed off, shrugging.

"And I'm going to regret saying this. But you said Carson acted more like herself when you mentioned Sam?" He looked pained just mentioning her.

Emily groaned. "We're going to have to go get Sam aren't we?"

"If Carson is said legendary creature's bitch, wouldn't it be a tad pissed off that its control failed at the mention of Sam? I think we have to go get her, 'cause I think she's in danger just like you are."

"Great." The Goth girl got up off the stairs and turned towards the house. "Shaggy! We have to go!"

"Hey guys! I Googled some information on demons." He blinked. "What? What do you mean go?"

"Go as in time to take a trip." She raised an eyebrow at Jahor. "Can we take your car?"

"One sec," Shaggy interrupted. "Hey mom I'm borrowing the car."

"Thank god. Please go out and act like a normal 22 year-old," came his mother's voice in reply.

"You have a car? Way to go Shaggy." She leaned closer to Jahor. "Maybe we can get him to pick up some chicks in it for both of you." Emily grinned brightly.

Jahor blushed.

Shaggy grabbed his laptop and bag of tools. "Okay I'm ready who wants to drive." He beamed, excited for another adventure.

"Drive?" Emily and Jahor asked echoing each other.

"It's your car, you drive," Jay said reasonably.

"Oh no, I don't drive. Besides I need to do research on the way."

Jay snagged the keys. "I know I'm going to regret this but why don't you drive."

Shaggy looked uncomfortable for a second.

"Wait let me guess. It involved rocket fuel and the fire department." Emily blurted out.

Shaggy looked over at her shocked as he was setting his stuff into the back seat.

"How did you know?"

#####

It was raining, not surprising really, the rainy season always started around the end of November in Northern California. What she was looking for resided in Los Alto's a place where only the super rich could afford a house.

From what she could see in the dark, Sam's family was above and beyond super rich. That was a lot of house and yard for the Bay area. She drove by slowly then sped up to park a couple of blocks away.

The door of the car opened and Carson got out. The rain felt cold, as she shut the door; her eyes trailing over the body in the back seat. She hadn't killed the guy, and she could hear her mistress in her head wondering why, and she didn't know why; just that she couldn't go that far, yet. Her human morals were slowly crumbling and by sunrise, murder probably wouldn't be that big of a deal.

The rain splattered her hands washing away the dried and caked blood on them. Whistling a random tune that floated into her head she jogged to the gate at the end of the Sakamoto driveway.

With inhuman agility, she scaled the gate and landed on the other side with a chuckle; she could come to enjoy the perks of belonging to her mistress. With a spring in her step, she approached the massive front door and rang the bell.

Inside the house, Samantha idly wondered what would happen if she threw the silver plate that had the roast chicken on it at the wall. Picturing the chaos that might cause and the outrage from her Mother almost made it tempting. The inevitable yelling and such afterwards probably wasn't worth it though.

Sighing, again, she played with the food in her plate, ignoring the polite conversation going on at the table around her. Her brother was telling one of his idiotic stories again, while her mother took in every word. Their father sat silently at the end of the table, eating almost mechanically.

The doorbell was a welcome excuse for the young woman to scrape back from the table, quick enough her chair almost tipped over.

"I'll get it," she volunteered.

"Nonsense dear, the maid can get it."

Samantha got up despite her mother's command. "She's busy in the kitchen," she said, heading quickly to the door.

Grabbing the ornate handle of the heavy door she swung it open, smiling politely at the person on the other side. "Can I help...?" Samantha's words died as she stared at the person on the other side of the door.

"Carson?" she whispered.

The rain had plastered Carson's hair next to her skull, it was an unusual shade of red, so dark it was almost purple like clotted blood, combined with her dark clothes she looked unhealthily pale. Carson grinned at the stunned figure standing in the doorway. "Hi Samantha. Am I in time for dinner?"

"What?" Samantha stared at her, not sure what was going on. This had to be some sort of dream.

"Dear, who is it?" Mrs. Sakamoto called from the dining room.

The pale looking woman brushed past the stunned Samantha and entered the foyer. "Just an old friend of Samantha's," she called out.

"Samantha, you invited a friend over without telling me?" Her mother sounded outraged and got up from the table to come see who this new friend was. Her brother said something and laughed at his own joke, while their father took the interruption to the evening meal to slip away from the table and head to his office with a brief hello to Carson in passing.

"Why you're soaking wet!" Mrs. Sakamoto exclaimed on seeing Carson, surprised by the appearance of this friend of her daughters.

Carson ran a hand through her wet hair, "Close the door, Samantha. You never know what might get in," Carson said in a low voice.

Carson's face changed and she smiled graciously. "And you must be Samantha's sister?"

"I, but, you...." Samantha really didn't know what the hell was going on, so she closed the door, still staring at Carson as if expecting her to disappear at any second.

"Where are your manners Samantha? Introduce me to your friend at once." Mrs. Sakamoto smiled at the compliment. The command jerked Samantha into an automatic response.

"Mom, this is Carson, Carson, this is my Mom."

"Ah, my mistake. You have aged beautifully Mrs. Sakamoto. I must admit it's my fault Samantha didn't tell you I was coming. I originally thought I wouldn't be able to make it up here, but my plans changed. I hope that's alright?"

"Why of course, dear. Come inside and join us for dinner." She led Carson toward the dining

room. "I'm impressed Samantha, not all of your friends are as uncultured as I thought."

Jonathan looked up from the cell phone he'd been composing a text message on, letting out a low whistle as he spotted Carson. She wasn't his usual type, but there was definitely something enticing about her. The wet clothes plastered against her helped. Grinning, he got up and helpfully pulled out a chair next to him for her. "Hi, I'm Jonathan."

Still feeling like she was in another world, Samantha took a seat, staring at Carson as she did so. What was she doing here?

Carson ignored the chair and chose one next to Samantha, giving Jonathan a cool once over as she sat down. "Thank you very much Mrs. Sakamoto. Might I say you have a lovely home?"

Frowning at the cool dismissal, Jonathan glanced at his sister then back at the stranger. Odd, usually he could get the fairer sex to respond to his charms.

"Thank you, how nice of you to notice. I spend quite a lot of time making sure everything is just so."

"You mean the maid does," Samantha mumbled.

"What was that dear?"

"I said it shows." Samantha smiled brightly and then looked over at Carson, uncomfortably aware of how close together they were sitting. "I thought you were busy and wouldn't be able to come to dinner?" she asked, pointedly.

Carson turned her head and looked at Sam. It could have been the light but the red head's eyes seemed more gray than blue. She leaned over slightly grinning evilly and whispered. "I'd never be too busy for you." She winked and sat back up in her chair.

Her eyes darted around the room, noticing the symbols carved above doorways and into the ceiling, they glowed brightly to her eyes. Someone wanted to keep evil out. Carson just smirked.

There was something very evil about that smirk, and even though it wasn't aimed at her, Samantha had to suppress a shiver.

"So what is it that you do, Ms. Carson?" Mrs. Sakamoto asked, resuming her place at the end of the table.

Carson unfurled her napkin with a slight snap and set it in her lap. "I work at the research hospital in Huntington," she replied before taking a sip of water. The room was warm and she could feel herself slowly starting to dry. She was having fun with Samantha's obvious discomfort. It was almost like old times with her annoying the woman, just like the way they had met.

She winced as her heart painfully constricted as it warred with itself and then coughed violently, she quickly grabbed a napkin, covering her mouth. As she pulled it away she stared at the blackness staining the white linen then, shaking her head, she set it down, hiding the stain. "Excuse me."

"Are you all right?" Samantha reached over and touched Carson's arm then flinched back at the look she got in return.

"My husband is a doctor. Perhaps he should take a look at that?" Her mother asked, feigning concern while her eyes studied the sudden concern her daughter had shown with interest. There were precious few people Samantha actually cared about.

Having been shot down, Jonathan continued to shovel food into his mouth, mumbling something about how she might want to see a doctor for that cough.

Carson waved off the concern. "I'm fine, just a little tickle in the back of my throat from the rain. No need to bother your husband." She stared at the brother in amusement. "However we have someone right here at the table studying medicine. Maybe I should ask your brother his opinion on the matter."

The young man jerked a little in surprise at that, staring up at her. "How did you..." He started to ask, just as their mother smiled proudly and interrupted.

"He's a third year medical student."

Carson just smiled at Jonathon, her teeth seeming very white in the light. "Have you decided on an area or just the general offering of drunken co-eds free exams at the frat party?" Her smile seemed anything other than nice. Carson was well aware of the multitude of sins Jonathon Sakamoto was into.

"Umm..." Jonathan obviously wasn't sure how to answer, staring first at Carson then glancing over at his mother, worried what she might be thinking.

With a grim smile, Samantha grabbed onto Carson's hand and tried to tug her away from the table. "Excuse us."

Carson just raised an eyebrow, but didn't move.

"Um, Samantha." She pronounced all three syllables of Sam's name clearly and distinctly. "We aren't dating anymore. You can't just tell me what to do and expect it to happen. You forfeited all those rights, when you abandoned me." For a moment the real Carson seemed to show through, her hurt and anger rising to the surface, and her gray eyes became bluer showing a bitter sadness. "Then you had to go be like everybody else in my life." It was gone.

Samantha opened her mouth to say she didn't abandon her, but then she realized exactly what Carson had said. More specifically, in front of who. Horrified she turned to look at her mother who was staring at her in growing horror. Jonathan snorted, nearly choking on his food then started to laugh, obviously thinking this was hilarious.

"You're a lesbian! I can't believe it! That's why you were so pissed off about me sleeping with that friend of yours from high school!" He started to laugh even harder.

"Mother it isn't like that!" Samantha tried, desperately to stave off complete disaster, feeling sick to her stomach. The world had suddenly crumbled away around her.

"Is what this... this... woman says true, Samantha?" Mrs. Sakamoto demanded, glaring at her son until he reduced the volume of his laughing at least a little.

Carson's now dull gray eyes looked over the table at Jonathon. "You really don't have any room to judge. I wouldn't let you give me a band-aid let alone operate on me. You love to tell people, especially attractive blonde women, how you're studying to be a doctor, yet you really don't like the studying part. You've been what, kicked out of three schools for cheating? Yet, daddy is always there to smooth things over and spend a little money. Really makes it hard for us scholarship kids who really want to help people to get into the program with wastes of space like you taking up room."

Jonathan's laughter cut off in mid laugh at the stranger's words.

Laughing, Carson picked up her water glass and looked over at the matriarch of the Sakamoto family. "Don't tell me you're shocked Mrs. Sakamoto since you paid Heather rather well to leave your daughter and then to top that, got her that job in LA so she would be no where near your precious daughter." Carson chuckled evilly as the room went silent.

"You know what sins are?" Carson said her voice echoing loudly throughout the room. "Lying, stealing, and pride. Actually pride is, oddly enough, considered one of the biggest sins of all."

In the still stunned silence after that, Samantha did the only thing she could do. She fled the table, running up the stairs and away from the two people who sat there still shocked. One look at her mothers face had told her that no matter how Carson had found out about it, she had been right. Her mother had paid off her former girlfriend to leave her.

That meant that all the lying and sneaking around for all of those years had been completely useless.

Dully in the back of her mind part of Carson screamed at her for being such an asshole, the other part however, was hungry. She shrugged and set the water glass down and started to eat.

Mrs. Sakamoto primly folded her napkin and set it aside, finding her voice again. "I think you should leave now Ms. Carson."

A dark red eyebrow shot up and Carson stopped eating. "I really don't think you're in a position to tell me what to do, Agnes." The fireplace at the end of the dinning hall suddenly sprang to life. "So why don't you go somewhere quiet and reflect on all the shitty things you've done. I'm going to finish eating and then I'm going to go kill your daughter."

"How dare you talk to me like that in my own house!"

While his mother raved, Jonathan stood up and slowly backed away towards the phone in the corner. That fireplace trick had been kind of impressive, so had the red eyes, he was going to just get the police to do the dirty work now.

Carson didn't even look up. "Jonathon, I hate you on sheer principle. I had to work three jobs, plus go to school, and still I had to take out student loans to go to Med. school and you just skated in on your family's money and your father's name. Don't piss me off anymore by doing something stupid." She flicked a finger that looked like it now possessed a rather nasty looking claw on it, the old fashioned phone glowed red-hot and started to melt.

"Mom maybe we should just..."

Mrs. Sakamoto ignored her son, standing up and firmly declaring, "You should leave now. I'll have you know my husband is an important man."

Carson frowned; she really didn't have a good sense of the father. He was someone to be careful of because she was fairly certain he had the symbols to ward off evil put into the house, too bad it didn't work on human evil, of course if it did then nobody would ever enter the house. Carson snarled; all humanity seemed to leave her face and her fists slammed down on to the table. A loud crack could be heard as the tabletop split. "I guess no dinner then. We'll go right to dessert." Her now read eyes stared at them for a moment before she turned and left the room.

"Don't go anywhere I'll be back for you later," her voice promised evilly.

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"Would you look at the size of these houses?" Emily let out a low whistle. "No wonder Sam acts like she has a stick up her ass. It's actually a silver spoon." The smallest house, no she was going to call them what it was, mansion had easily been larger than most of the clubs she hung out at. There was no doubt; this was the land of the privileged.

Jahor just tried to focus on what he was doing. The rain was making everybody else out on the roads drive like morons. "What address am I looking for?"

Shaggy's face was highlighted in the light from his laptop screen, making him look even sicklier and paler looking than normal. "Um." He alt-tabbed switching screens. "3414," he mumbled then went back to the FBI occult page he was currently hacking into. "So, the last site said demons

love souls that are perfectly balanced between good and evil and will often times take them as pets or slaves to tip the balance. Also this gives the demon eyes and ears to get into places protected from their kind." He hummed to himself as his fingers flew over the keyboard.

"I still can't believe that there's an FBI site on the occult. How did you find out about this thing?" Emily tried to crane around so that she could look at the screen again. "Is there anything about us on there?"

Jay had to shove Emily sideways so that he could see the road, grumbling about children. "We're nearly there. I think that last palace we passed was 3401."

Shaggy looked up blinking. "Um, this guy I blog with, Reddevil18, told me about how the FBI has some task force that looks into occult based crimes. I thought he was joking, seemed a little too X-files for me, but turns out he was right. However," the young uber-geek frowned. "It's harder to hack into than the Vatican." An icon flashed on the laptop letting him know he had mail.

Clicking it open he read it with a frown. "Uh, well, hmmm. Reddevil8 just emailed me back. He says that if our friend is a pet to this demon we're all in danger, especially anyone our friend might be romantically involved with." He glanced up looking relieved. "Good thing Ms. Bitch and Carson broke up then."

"There it is!" Jay announced with pleasure and promptly took the turn too fast. The car fishtailed and bounced up over the curb to slide to a stop across the entrance of the driveway. "I meant to do that," he hastily announced, to the dubious looks of the other passengers.

"I'm driving on the way back," Emily announced, jumping out of the passenger side door.

Shaggy scrambled around, picking up several pieces of electronics that sported glowing buttons and knobs then, as he got out of the back seat trying to protect his precious gadgets from the rain, he said. "How are we getting in, it's gated?"

Jahor rolled his eyes. "The hired help always has their own entrance. Come on." He marched around the brick wall to the kitchen entrance.

"They do?" Emily shrugged; she thought that was only in movies. "Huh, would you look at that, there is a servant's entrance." The gate was even open. The Goth frowned, brushing wet hair out of her eyes. "Its not really a good sign that it's open is it?"

"One of my Uncles is a doctor at Stanford he has a house that is very similar." Jahor wiped rain out of his face. "I, I don't really know if that gate being open is a good thing or a bad thing."

She gave a tap on the kitchen door and looked up at him with an arched eyebrow when it swung

open easily.

Shaggy shivered and his eyes darted around. "Guys, I feel like were being watched." He made a little eep noise, the kind a baby chick might make, as he spotted a woman across the street staring at them. He was positive she hadn't been there a second ago.

"What?" Emily whirled around; blinking in the rain as she tried to see who it was that had caused Shaggy to be surprised. Seeing nothing and no one, she looked at him with a frown.

The woman seemed to be untouched by the rain, her eyes devouring them, and then she grinned. Shaggy whimpered. "That woman right there," he shrieked, backing away.

"What woman... AH!" Emily shrieked in surprise as she suddenly spotted the stranger. There was something oddly familiar about her and she pushed backwards, shoving Jay into the kitchen whether he wanted to go or not.

Jahor turned scanning the street. "I don't see anything..." He trailed off and then spouted out something in his native language that sounded suspiciously like a prayer against evil and let Emily push them into the house. The woman was coming at them now moving faster than anybody possibly should.

"Close the door! Close the door!" Emily was well aware she was yelling but didn't really care as the three of them tumbled into the kitchen.

A bright blue light flared in the doorway blinding everybody, but for a moment the woman looked a lot less womanly. The demon stood outside the door laughing. "I'll get you soon enough, Emily." Then Jahor kicked out catching the door with his foot and slammed it closed.

Sprawled on the floor, tangled up with the two guys, panting from the sudden spurt of adrenaline, Emily stuttered, "Did that... thing... just say my name?" She'd been listening to a lot of loud music recently; maybe her hearing was still messed up.

Shaggy looked up from where he was hyperventilating on the floor and screamed again as he saw another scary lady looking down at him.

Samantha stared down at the three sopping wet people sprawled out on the floor of her parent's kitchen. "Where the hell did you three come from?" She glanced worriedly over her shoulder. "It doesn't matter, you have to leave."

Jahor looked at Shaggy and Emily for a moment before standing up. "We can't, we, uh, well... You see, Emily got hit on by Carson..." He winced. "Wait let me phrase that better." He blew out a breath. "Emily thinks there's something wrong with Carson and we need your help." He looked at the other two hoping someone could explain what was going on better.

"We can't leave 'cause there's a scary demon lady outside, who knows Emily's name," Shaggy

said in one high, squeaky, terrified breath.

"Wait, what did you say? Carson hit on you?" Samantha tried to glare down at Emily but it was fairly obvious her heart just wasn't in it. "Carson's acting strange, well, stranger than usual. I think she just threatened my mother and she just outed me to my family." That last bit hurt more than she was going to admit.

The three stooges just stared at each other. "Wait, Carson's here?" Jahor asked.

"How did she beat us here?" Emily shoved Shaggy's leg off her stomach and stood up, looking past Samantha, trying to spot Carson somewhere deeper in the house.

Samantha grabbed Jahor and helped him up, while Shaggy scabbled up and then went right to the door, making sure to lock it just in case the demon decided to get inside.

"Yes she's here, and she's acting very weird and kind of scary to be honest."

"We think she's been turned into some demon's pet," Shaggy said absently as he checked over his gadgets, making sure they were all right.

Demons.

Samantha narrowed her eyes. That sounded familiar for some reason, but she wasn't sure why. Her eyes widened as she suddenly placed why it sounded familiar.

"One of you opened a gate didn't you? I knew there had to be a reason for all those dead Goth girls that were in my father's files." She stopped and eyed Emily who glared right back.

"What? I didn't do anything with any demon raising ceremony!"

Shaggy's eyes went wide. "You were present when the demon was summoned." He dropped his backpack and snatched up his beloved laptop. "See, according to this occult site, a demon can only be sent back by one of the people who summoned it. So the first thing it does if it breaks free from the summoning circle is to kill everyone present."

He showed the website with pictures of a failed summoning according to the captions next to the pictures.

Jahor's eyes went wide as well. "That first shift after the Thanksgiving break, Carson asked how the demon raising went. You had left with some girl from the bar. I remember because she was all beat up from that riot at the after Thanksgiving sale."

"And I told you I did no such raising thing. I had a lot of hot sex that night that was all!" Emily was really trying to be firm about that, but she wasn't at all as certain as she tried to sound. That doubt showed in her eyes.

"You have to face her. The demon. You have to face her and send her back before Carson...."
Samantha stopped as Jay and Shaggy went white, looking over her shoulder. The former librarian winced and slowly turned around smiling what she hoped was at least a normal smile. "Hi Carson."

"Hi Samantha." Carson's red eyes flickered over everybody. "Hail, hail, the gangs all here." Her face was looking even paler. "I went upstairs looking for you. You know, if we just talk this through I'm sure we can work it out." Her face looked dead serious for a moment before she burst out laughing.

Very slowly Samantha started to back away towards the door that hid the servant's stairs up to the second floor. She'd been hoping to bolt out the kitchen door and get away, but the appearance of a Demon outside made that impossible. Now she just had to see if she could buy Emily time enough to go get rid of said Demon.

"You aren't yourself right now, Carson."

Shaggy whimpered and whispered. "I'm more scared of Carson than Sam, right now."

Jahor just nodded in agreement.

Carson just sneered. "The heart can only have one master Sam, and my Mistress is a little ticked you have a piece of my heart. So since she's promised to always love me and never leave, like everybody else in my fucking miserable life, I'm a little inclined to do as she asks of me. She asked me to do a job but I can't do it properly with you still in here." She raised a clawed hand and tapped her chest before letting her hand drop. "You three stay here. I think Sam and I are going to have a little chase scene, but I'll be right back to take care of you."

"Emily, whatever you are going to do, do it fast!" the half Japanese woman yelled as she turned and fled up the stairs. So much for getting out of the house, now she was running up the stairs in something that was uncomfortably starting to feel like a horror movie.

Carson just made a gun with her fingers, pointing at the threesome standing stunned in the kitchen, and pulled the imaginary trigger. "I'll see you cats and kittens later." With that she proceeded up the stairs.

Shaggy just gulped. "Did... did Carson have horns?"

Jahor rolled his eyes. "It's Carson. She's always been horny."

Emily and Shaggy both backhanded him in the gut.

"What?" he grumbled, rubbing his stomach, "It's true."

Samantha didn't hear any of that; she was concentrating on sprinting up the stairs and reaching the door at the top before Carson got there. She tripped over the top stair, going sprawling. Using her leg, she kicked the door shut and then crawled up to it to turn the lock.

"Damn it" she swore, starting to get up. Now what was she supposed to do; run around with a demonically possessed Carson chasing around after her until she caught her? Then what?

Something large hit the door making it shudder in the doorframe and sending Samantha falling back to the floor. "Go away!" she yelled, even though she knew that wasn't going to do anything. "Great, now I'm acting like a star in one of those horror movies, stupid lines and all." Getting back to her feet again, the former librarian grabbed the nearest chair and shoved it up under the door handle, trying to wedge it in place.

"Samantha." It didn't even really sound like Carson's voice and it was accompanied by the sound of nails being dragged along the door hard enough to gouge the wood. "I just want to talk."

"Sure you do, that's why you're doing that evil laugh!" She glanced behind her at the door that led down to the front of the house. She might make it, but then there was that demon outside and her family was down there.

Even if Jonathan might deserve some personal time with a demon, she couldn't get them into trouble.

Carson snarled at the door and then kicked it hard enough to rattle it on its hinges. "Come on, Sam. If I have to break this door down it's just going to piss me off that much more." She slammed her fist into the wall and huffed in frustration. "God damn it! How like you to just run off and hide, just when things are getting a little difficult. For a mega bitch you sure can dish it out, but you just can't take it."

Talking was good as far as Samantha was concerned. Actually, talking was great, as long as it bought Emily time to do whatever the hell it was that she was going to do. "I'm sorry; is that what you want to hear? I'm sorry I freaked out. But you don't know what my mother is like. Actually, wait; you do know what my mother is like, you left her down stairs cowering in the corner."

Carson blinked for a second and her face shifted looking almost normal. She leaned against the wall; it was cold against her back. "It's a little late for sorry. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Newton, I think." She chuckled, "Admit it; you thought it was great the way your mom looked like she was going to swallow her own tongue. And your brother...." She trailed off. "He's a prick. I can't believe he just got handed a college education, and what the fuck does he do? He blows it. Do you know how hard I had to work to scrape the money up to go and then med school?"

On the other side of the door Samantha stepped closer to the door, her voice as quiet as Carson's, almost as if they were having a normal conversation. "I know, but he is the first son and therefore

can do no wrong in my parents' eyes. My mother's idea of what I should have gotten for my education revolved around how to plan the perfect wedding."

Carson slid down the wall laughing. "The perfect wedding. Oh my, I mean she knew you were a lesbo, she paid Heather off to leave. Which makes me feel great, by the way I mean you only brought her up all the time and compared us. But you know for all my faults, I didn't leave you."

That had the bite of truth to it, which of course only made it hurt worse. Samantha closed her eyes, biting her lip to avoid crying. "I didn't know," she whispered, shaking her head angrily. "I didn't know she did that," Samantha said in a louder, harsher voice, eyes narrowing. "How did you know?"

Carson shrugged. "I don't know. I just did. I look at people now and just see their sins. You're brother's lies and debauched behavior, your mother's pride, Jahor's guilt over masturbating, how Shaggy lusts for Emily, but you... you I look at and I can't see a damn thing. You're still a mystery to me." Again, Carson's heart constricted, at war within itself. She grabbed her chest and doubled over groaning and then she sat back up blinking her watering eyes and wiped away black bile from her lips. "You know, I think we're talking more now than we ever did when we were dating."

"Talking is good," Samantha said out loud, worried by the strange retching like sound that Carson had just made. "Carson, what happened? What does the Demon want?"

"It wants what every vile creature from hell wants: death, destruction, and chaos." She paused breathing out, and smoke came out of her lungs, and her eyes turned a tad bit bluer. Carson grinned slightly, feeling like she had a bit more control. She felt heavier, like a little bit of her soul had come back. The wards on the house were making it harder for the demon's influence to reach her. Right now, it was trashing the car the trio had used to get here.

"It doesn't want to be sent back and only way it can get sent back is if one of the people who summoned it sends it back. Its killing all those stupid Goth wanna-be's. I was supposed to seduce Emily to get that cross she wears around her neck off, that's what it wanted." She got up to her knees and started slowly crawling to the servant's stairs.

If she could just throw herself over the edge, her friends might live. Sure suicide was a sin and she'd be damned to hell forever, but shit happens. Besides, as a demon's thrall, she was probably condemned to hell anyway, but she really didn't want to be responsible for anybody's death, especially her friends, and particularly Sam.

Cursing herself for doing something incredibly stupid, Samantha cracked the door open. "You're sounding more like yourself." She made sure that she could slam it shut quickly in case this all turned out to be a trick.

Carson paused on crawling towards the stairs and looked back. "You shouldn't open the door, Sam; you don't want to risk inviting evil in." She didn't want to answer; she was feeling more like

herself. She understood fundamentally that humans were capable of great good and evil, but to have your soul stripped away taking the very essence of that goodness and having to deal with the aftermath of seeing how truly vile you could be was a little sickening. That and she knew all it took was for the demon to focus back on her and she would be lost again.

"You aren't evil." Samantha was certain of that, if nothing else. Considering the circumstances, she even let pass the nickname. Very carefully she stepped out, leaving the door open behind her for a quick retreat if necessary. "You might be annoying, abrasive, sometimes completely unreasonable, but you aren't evil. You're being controlled." Ever so carefully she inched closer.

Carson turned back around and started crawling on her hands and knees. "I'm not right now. But I invited that thing in, I agreed to be its little pet, I could go all evil lap dog of Satan at any moment. Now get back inside that room and shut the door."

"What are you doing?" Samantha frowned as she watched.

"Nothing," Carson said evasively.

"Carson, are you going to try to throw yourself down the stairs?"

"Now that's a silly thing to do. Why ever would I do something as painful as that?"

"I don't know. You might somehow think that throwing yourself down the stairs would keep you from hurting anyone. Of course you'd just be leaving me and everyone else to deal with the Demon alone," she pointed out reasonably, even as she moved closer in case she had to lunge to try and stop Carson.

"The house is warded. The demon can't get in the house. But as long as I'm that demon's bitch you all are in danger from me. Now go get back inside that room before that demon stops beating on that car outside and realizes I'm not under her control anymore."

"The house is warded?" The dark haired woman blinked in surprise then shook her head, saving that thought for later. "You have to talk to me Carson. Help me beat her." If only she had time to do some proper research, find out what she could about demons and their subjects.

Carson stopped moving and her head dropped to the floor. "Emily has to do the banishment spell. Only Emily can send it back."

"Good. What else? Does she have any weaknesses? Where does she nest?" Dimly Samantha was aware that the tortured sound of metal being slammed by something heavy and strong had stopped.

Carson chuckled. "The usual, symbols of goodness and order. I don't know where it hides out when it's not causing chaos and destruction."

There was something... off about that chuckle and Samantha took a slow, careful, step backwards

towards the door behind her. "Fight her Carson, please. You have to fight her, stay with me."

"Why the hell should I? She promised never to leave me. You on the other hand are a very fickle bitch." She snarled and in a last ditch effort lunged for the stairway.

"No!" Without thought, Samantha lunged after her, managing to grab onto the other woman's waist. They both nearly went down the stairs headfirst, but Samantha's added weight stopped them short of it.

"Damn it Sam! What the hell is wrong with you?" Carson shouted. "Do you want me to kill you all? That's what the little voice keeps telling me to do in my head." Carson shouted as her head and hands hung over the edge of the stairwell.

"I'm not letting you kill yourself, you idiot!" Samantha shouted back, still holding onto Carson's waist and tangled with the larger woman's legs.

Carson started laughing. "I didn't think you cared. You know this is ruining your bitch image."

"I won't tell anyone if you don't." She climbed up the other woman's torso so that she could look into her eyes. "I'm serious Carson, no matter what she does, you're still in there. I'm not letting go of you that easily."

Carson looked away unable to meet Samantha's eyes. "Is that why you dumped me; because you couldn't let me go? Get off me Samantha!"

"No." Instead, she held the other woman's head, trying to force her to meet her eyes. "Look at me. I was an idiot okay? I freaked out and took it out on you. I'm sorry. I regretted it the instant I did it and trust me I would much rather have had you here over the past few days." Samantha grinned feebly. "You know how to liven up an evening."

"It's a talent." Finally Carson sighed and met Samantha's eyes. Her own eyes were a faded blue but there was something in them dark and menacing. "Well if you won't let me take the cowards way out, I think its time we take our relationship to a new level. I think you need to tie me up somewhere."

Samantha waggled her eyebrows. "I thought you would never ask."

#####

Shaggy looked up worried as he heard shouting. "Jesus. Do you think Carson is killing Sam?" He looked back down at his laptop, "We need to make a circle out of salt and, and, I think we need candles."

"Candles?" Emily looked around the kitchen then ducked into the dining room. She gave the older woman and boy who were cowering in the corner a bright smile and grabbed an ornate candle set off the sideboard and hurried back to the kitchen. "Here. Candles." She offered the set that had obviously never been lit. "Now what?"

"We make a circle out of salt and place a candle at true north, south, east and west then we summon the demon and banish it back to hell." There came more loud noises from upstairs then something howled with such rage and hatred from outside that Shaggy seriously considered hiding under the table.

"Um, by we. I mean Emily or anybody else who was at the raising." His eyes scanned the text on the screen. "Crap."

Emily craned her neck, wincing as she caught sight of the car that the demon had been using as a punching bag. "Umm... Shaggy, your mother's car is having a bad day." She turned back at that. "What? I have to summon that thing? Crap, what crap? What do I have to do?"

Shaggy's tired blood shot eyes looked up. "We need holy water, a bible and also the demon's name. You didn't happen to catch it while you were summoning it."

Jay finished rummaging through the cabinets and came up with a bag of salt which he started to use to draw a circle of salt in the middle of the kitchen. "I hope kosher salt will do it, 'cause that's all they have. No normal salt for these people." He grumbled.

"Name? What name? I don't even remember being there to summon her Shaggy!" She yelled, both eyebrows going up as the beating of Shaggy's mother's car stopped. Another quick glance verified that the demon wasn't out front anymore. "Umm... guys' she's not out front anymore."

#####

Carson looked around the room and said. "This is hell. I'm going to have to bleach my eyeballs." She winced. "Do you have to tie it so tight? And do I even want to know why you have rope in your room."

"No, you don't want to know why I have rope in my room." Samantha finished the knot she was working on after answering Carson's second question first. "The pastel wasn't my idea; my mother decorated both my room, my brother's and my sister's."

"Okay, now I'm really curious as to why you have rope in your room." She tried really hard to focus on Sam instead of the room. "You haven't been sleeping well again; you have dark circles under your eyes." She had no choice but to resist the urge to touch Samantha's face since the woman was now busy tying her other hand to the headboard. "OW! You've never done this before have you?"

Unexpectedly, Samantha blushed.

"No. I'm used to using handcuffs." She whispered, shaking her head. "I had the rope because I was going to use it to sneak out of the room and I haven't been sleeping well because the last week has been horrible. My mom threw a party to fix me up with one of the dozens of eligible bachelors from all the family friends." With a tug she finished on the arm and started on the first leg.

Carson's eyebrows hiked up into her bangs. "Oh, wow. I knew you were a naughty librarian. Emily owes me 20 bucks." She frowned a bit, and opened her mouth and then shut it a few times. Then feeling quite insecure she asked. "So did you find an eligible bachelor?"

"HA!" Samantha snorted bitterly. "Of course not. I have this unfortunate habit of falling for annoying women who apparently can be taken over by a demon's influence." She finished with the last leg. "Besides, I'm not a librarian anymore remember?"

"Well you can't be referring to me, because I'm not annoying, I'm charming. And the whole demon thing...." She paused. "I really don't remember what happened or what's happening. I just have vague flashes of memories."

After one last check to make sure that the bonds would hold, Samantha sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. "I haven't heard anything outside for a few minutes." She brushed a lock of Carson's bright hair out of her face. "Did the demon leave?" she didn't really think that was a possibility, but she could hope.

Carson sighed and closed her now back to normal eyes, she focused on the demon. Her brain was starting to quiet, the evil voice that sounded an awful lot like her wasn't screaming a bunch of different things that could be done to her friends, none of them pleasant. With her eyes still closed she murmured. "For future reference tying my legs goes a little beyond my comfort zone."

She could hear the rain still falling, tapping against the window in Samantha's room then in the blackness behind her eyelids the demon was there screaming at her, roaring with tooth and claw. With a gasp of fear she jerked back not even feeling the top of her head connect with the headboard.

The inhuman screaming was coming from outside the house, and one side of the house shuddered as something heavy banged against it.

"No." Carson squeaked out. "She's still here." Carson shook with fear. She could feel the demon calling for her and coldness settled deep into her bones.

The other woman grabbed onto either side of Carson's head, forcing her to look at her. "Stay with me. Fight it! Carson, you have to fight it."

Goose bumps broke out over her skin and she fought to keep her teeth from chattering, she was getting colder. She blinked and looked up into Samantha's eyes the warmth of the other woman's hands nearly burning her. "I'm here. It's still me." But the blue in her eyes seemed to have faded a little bit. "I'm sorry. I should have been more adult about the break-up, its not like it's the first time a girl broke up with me. It just hurt." A lot. It had hurt more than in the past. "I guess I should be happy you over looked everything about me that annoys you so much, and we had the time we had." She cleared her throat feeling a little exposed and vulnerable, "um... I guess I'm good. Why don't you go help the three stooges, so we can all live happy, long, lives?"

Samantha smiled slowly and shook her head. "I don't want to help the three stooges, stupid. I want to help you. Emily can make sure that they don't get killed. She's the one that summoned that thing in the first place right? So she's the one who has to send it back. I'm not going anywhere."

Carson eyed the other woman for a moment. "I suppose. This is Emily, Shaggy, and Jay; they've been without supervision for awhile. For all I know they're having a Star Trek Marathon on your parents big ass TV." She went quiet for a while, but Sam didn't move, and after a few more seconds Carson started to squirm feeling kind of uncomfortable and weak, but she was after all tied limb by limb to the four posters of the bed. "So this is your room, huh?" she said finally. "No wonder you're a little cranky with the rest of the world."

Dark eyes narrowed. "What does that mean?" She flinched as loud banging started up from outside again and what sort of sounded like chanting from downstairs. That was all the evidence Samantha needed that the three musketeers were still alive and being annoying.

"Well, Jesus, just look at all this horrible pastel paint. It looks almost as if a fairy princess puked in here. Growing up like this and with that 'Mother' of yours, I'm pretty certain I would have developed a bitch on wheels attitude too, just for self-defense." Carson's mouth clicked shut, as she saw Sam's eyes narrowing into tiny slits. "I mean all of that with love." She smiled hopefully.

"It just occurred to me, I should be furious with you. You outted me in front of my mother and my brother." Samantha smacked the tied up woman's shoulder.

Carson snorted. "Whatever. You're mother already knew, remember. And your brother; I'd smack him around even if I wasn't being manipulated by some demon. What a waste of space. Plus, I should be mad at you. You were so scared of bringing me home, 'cause you'd have to out yourself, that you broke up with me, but your parents already knew. You could have just told me you weren't out to them yet. I'm not this asshole that you seem to think I am. I could have just been your really good friend for the holidays. Even that would have been more fun than taking my alcoholic mother to the after Thanksgiving sales and getting beat up in a frenzies riot of Capitalist lust." She had started off calm but just gone to shouting in three seconds flat.

Carson's eyes were doing that strange color-changing thing again and Samantha leaned away from her, a worried look on her face. "I said I should be angry with you, but I'm not. Carson, stop! Your letting her win." She was intensely sorry she'd brought up the outing thing. That was

an argument better saved for a non-possessed day in the future.

Carson growled and tried to lunge at Samantha but was brought up short by the ropes on her hands. She chuckled. "Nervous. Not too bad with the ropes." She strained her left hand until the flesh around the rope turned purple. "So you and Heather do this a lot? So were you the one getting tied up or were you doing the tying?" Carson pretended to think as she leered at Sam. "It's a tough call. I can see your control freak issue making you the type but then again often times people who are so controlled in their every day lives like a little taste of someone else being in control so they don't have to think or be responsible. So what was it? I could ask if she was better in bed, if that was what our problem was, but we never got that far." Carson's eyes were a soulless gray now. "Fucking Heather, the great love of your life and in the end she stole you're TV and your heart. You should really come with a warning label, Samantha."

That last one hurt, even though Samantha tried to tell herself it wasn't Carson that was really talking. Those gray eyes looked even more out of place after the blue that she'd been used to seeing. "No, Heather and I didn't do this a lot. Remember, we weren't into using rope." She stood up off the bed; a little worried that Carson might manage to bite her or something. "Besides, at least I stick with someone. Its not like you fought really hard to keep me did you?"

Carson's left hand relaxed resting back against the wood, and the leering face shifted into an expression of puzzlement. "What are you talking about? I am so... I was so... I really liked you. I talked about you so much Jay and Emily kept telling me to shut up at work. I even respected the fact you preferred to stay in rather than go out. What did I do to make you think I didn't want you?"

The other woman paced back and forth next to the bed, scowling. Now she remembered why she hated talks like this, besides the entire possessed and probably going to kill her thing of course. These talks always got messy, unpredictable and illogical. Things that didn't exactly fit well with her worldview.

Then again, Zombie's didn't fit well in her world view either.

She stopped by the side of the bed and sighed, shoulders slumping slightly. "You didn't come get me."

"What?" That had to be the last thing Carson had expected. Her lips pursed as she thought. "I... I..." Her eyes were shifting again. "I'm sorry, I... you didn't seem the damsel in distress type. I showed up to your place with my bag and you said, 'I'm not comfortable with you meeting my parents and that we should break things off'. I didn't want you to see me cry so I said fine and stormed off." She nervously cleared her throat. "Um, in this day and age when I girl breaks up with you and you sort of refuse to accept that and chase after her, its kind of called stalking."

"A little stalking isn't that bad a thing." Samantha shrugged, feeling rather embarrassed by this turn of the conversation. "I didn't say it made sense, but I was hoping you'd... rescue me from my family I guess."

Carson was a little surprised at that. "Okay, I'll add that to the list. Sam thinks stalking is okay." She chuckled, "Yeah, that really doesn't make sense. Even if I was going to go the route of the obsessive stalker, I kind of need a car. Mine got destroyed by zombies. Then there was the fact I didn't know where your folks lived." Her chuckles turned into a big belly laugh, "Oh God, I never suspected you were a big old girl underneath that hard as nails bitch attitude."

"I am not!" Samantha whirled on her, eyes flashing. "And don't call me Sam! Why are you always so annoying?"

Carson stopped laughing and shrank back into the bed as much as her bound limbs would let her. "I'll call you Sam if I want to; it suits you better than Samantha. And how am I annoying?" The bound woman shot back.

"ARGH!" Samantha stomped her foot. "You always do this; you turn everything into a joke! You can't go through life making everything into some sort of comic relief!" The Asian woman narrowed her eyes. "People in school used to call me Sam and tease me about it."

Carson's eyes narrowed. "Get over it. I'm not one of those kids from school and I'm sorry I make a joke about most things in life; it's just a defense mechanism. But life's pretty funny if you think about." Her face was serious, the look she normally had, that she had caught on to the joke before you, was gone.

The other woman gave her an odd look at that. "How can you say life is funny? You've faced down Zombie's and seen the worst that human's can be."

"And that's when you need to find the joke, because if you don't, its so incredibly depressing I'd want to take a gun to my head." She bit her lip, debating how much more to say.

Samantha moved closer to the edge of the bed, bending so that she was even closer. "What else? There's something more isn't there?" She searched Carson's face for a clue.

"Sam, I'm the leader. If I had freaked out and shown how scared I was do you think we would have made it out alive? You think Jay, Emily, and Shaggy would have kept going? So I cut up, and goof off and people forget how scary the world is, I forget how lonely and scary it can be. You've lived here your whole life; your parents still married, this hasn't changed your whole life, it remains secure and steady. When I was six I got shipped off to several different foster homes for about 2 years, till my mom got her shit together and got custody of me again." She blew out a breath. "It was... well, people were nicer if I made them laugh." She frowned and looked away feeling a bit uncomfortable revealing so much.

Reaching out, Samantha brushed a lock of hair out of Carson's face. "You don't always have to joke with me though. I know the world is hard. I know that things hurt. You don't have to pretend with me all the time."

Carson tried to shrug, but it didn't work out very well. "I'm sorry, I just, well... you make me nervous and you can say some pretty mean and cutting things so I just unconsciously try to diffuse it with a joke. Half the time when we were sort of dating I wasn't even sure you liked me."

Samantha rolled her eyes. "Of course I like you, I thought that was pretty obvious when we were making out in that locker under Bill's place, remember?" She couldn't help but grin at that memory, despite how embarrassing it had been at the time to be found by the three musketeers.

Carson brightened a bit at the memory, her blue-gray eyes seeming to shine a lot more blue. "Nothing like the threat of death and doom to make a little make out session that more intense. Although making out with you at the theater and your couch and that book store those were all great, don't get me wrong you're a fantastic kisser."

Leaning closer, Samantha's smile changed. "You're a good kisser too." She whispered, closing in on her lips.

"Hey, Sam, do you.... AH!" Jay screamed from the door as he stared at the scene in front of him. Carson tied up and Samantha kissing her was more than the poor man could take.

Carson's eyes snapped open in irritation, and she growled at Jay. "You're timing sucks buddy."

The Pakistani man covered his eyes with his hand, moaning in pain. "My eyes, I think they just exploded."

Samantha sighed and leaned her head on Carson's shoulder. "I think it might be our timing that sucks," she whispered.

"I'm going to rip his spleen out through his asshole." Carson snarled, a little over the top. "Come on, Sam; just loosen the ropes on my arms," she grumbled smirking as Jay cowered in the doorway. "No, no, no, anytime you kiss me our timing is great," the bound woman insisted, as she leaned her head over to rest it against Sam's enjoying a rare moment of gentle intimacy.

"Don't mind her Jay; she's a little... uh... possessed I guess." Samantha shrugged, grinning at the cowering man. "See, I'm not the alpha bitch anymore. Isn't it fun?"

Jay groaned and nearly slammed his head into the doorway as he tried to turn away, keeping his hand over his eyes. "Please, stop! I can't take more of this," he whimpered. "I just came to see if you had holy water or a cross or candles. Shaggy found this web site that says we need all of those to send the Demon away."

"Tell Shaggy that I don't keep holy water around just incase my parents house gets attacked by demons." She paused and then shrugged. "Although it's a good idea after the past few days."

Regretfully she got up from her enjoyable resting spot and went to one of the pink colored cabinets on one of the bedroom walls.

Jay risked a look and then groaned again at the overwhelming amount of bright cheery paint that assaulted his eyes and immediately covered them again with his hand.

"I think I have candles and a cross somewhere here though." Samantha started digging through her stuff.

Carson frowned as Samantha sat up. She sighed as she was ignored some more. "So how goes the demon banishment?" she asked just to break the silence.

"Umm... good I guess?" Jay didn't sound sure about that at all. "I think the demon destroyed the cars in the driveway." He paused as he realized something. "You're Carson right now right?" he asked, hopefully.

Carson shrugged. "I'm not certain. I feel more like me and it gets better when Sam and I are talking or kissing. Kissing is great." She got a goofy look on her face for a moment before she wiped it away. "Um, so I wouldn't tell me anything specific keep it vague. But I'm sure you three will find away to save me." She smiled hopefully.

"Ok," he agreed quickly. "We're going to get you back though, you have to believe me. Emily and Shaggy are working hard on it right now."

The Asian woman returned with a set of still wrapped white candles that she'd gotten for her birthday and a hefty looking ornate silver cross. "Here." She handed it to him, holding onto the cross as he grabbed it, waiting for him to meet her eyes. "Work fast. She keeps slipping away."

They met their eyes, for once in complete understanding with one another and he nodded. She let him take the cross then turned back to the woman on the bed and forced a smile. "So how do we keep you here with me?"

Carson gave a little wave with one of her bound hands as Jay left then she turned her attention back to Sam. "Um, I thought we were doing pretty good. I only had a couple of relapses and no one died,"

"More of the same, coming right up."

#####

Wide eyed and looking a little pale, Jay stumbled back into the kitchen. "Um... um... I... we have candles and a cross. Sam, er, Samantha didn't have any holy water."

Emily looked up from where she was trying to arrange salt into a perfect circle, which was a lot

harder than it sounded, on the white marble tiled kitchen floor. "Is Carson still acting all weird?"

Shaggy grunted something from where he was hunched over his laptop, searching through web sites.

"You could..." His voice came out high and squeaky and he paused to clear his throat. "Yes, but Samantha seems to have her contained." He blushed slightly and put the stuff down on the table.

The other man looked up from his computer at that. "Contained?" he looked confused. "How'd Samantha do that?"

"Well when I was deemed expendable to go search out Sam." He was still miffed about that. Emily was the only one who could send the demon back and Shaggy had the geek know how to find the information they needed, he had been deemed the sacrificial red-shirt to go in search of the missing supplies they needed to finish the binding circle. "I found them in this hellish room of horrible pastel colors and well, she sorta had Carson tied to the bed and they were sort of occupied."

Shaggy's eyes widened and he looked back and forth from Jay to Emily. "Umm, is it bad for me to want to go take pictures of that?" To which Emily reached over and smacked him upside the head. "Yes it's bad!"

"Owe!" Shaggy winced and sighed, turning back to his laptop. "I didn't say I was going to do it, I just kinda wanted to."

Jahor laughed a little at that. "Well, that at least answers that. Carson and Emily had a bet going on whether or not you were gay. He's definitely a 100% American guy." Jay looked over at his long time friend and studied her face afraid that she would be hurt by Carson yet again. Not that Carson did anything to encourage Emily, but love, lust and crushes really didn't make sense. He sat down next to her and asked softly. "You okay? I know it sucks. I think everybody who meets Carson is half in love with her, but honestly you could do better."

The Goth shrugged, paying a lot of attention to arranging the circle of salt on the floor and pretending not to be affected. "I know she likes Sam, although I don't understand why. That woman is a bitch." She stopped before she started yelling. "I'm fine." She offered him a tight smile.

"You had a bet going on if I was gay?" Shaggy asked, outraged, looking at the two of them. When they ignored him he grumbled to himself as he went back to looking through the web pages. "I have a lot of porn with women in it for someone who's gay."

Jahor reached out and patted her on the back. "You'll find someone who's right for you." He looked over at Shaggy and said, "Having a lot of porn on your computer could just suggest that you're in the closet about being gay. So what's next? We have a circle, candle... hey how are we going to know where true north, south, east and west are to set the candles? I can't exactly go

outside and check the stars."

"Oh." Shaggy blinked, brushing long straggly hair out of his face. "Umm... anyone have a compass? And we need a way to lure the demon into the circle."

Jay sighed looking from Emily to Shaggy. "Fine I'll go back upstairs and ask Samantha if she has a compass." He shuddered and slowly started back to the stairs.

"Take some pictures! Ow!" Shaggy yelled after him, getting thwacked on the back of the head by Emily again.

#####

Carson moaned softly as Samantha's hands traced random patterns over the skin of her abdomen, somehow her shirt had gotten unbuttoned. Normally, said action could be blamed on her, but since her hands were tied up, it was all Sam's fault. Goodness, Sam was a good kisser, and she moaned again, her hands twitching to run through the other woman's long dark hair.

As they pulled apart slightly Carson panted, "I'm not liking this tied up stuff, and I can't touch you."

"Uh huh, no touching for you tonight." Samantha's smile was wicked as she continued her slow torment. This was probably the most pleasant demon fighting that anybody had ever done. It was working though, she had Carson's undivided attention and the other woman's eyes were staying blue. She was also very certain that she could keep this up until the three stooges finished whatever it was that they were doing downstairs.

One hand trailed lower across Carson's abdomen, fingers just grazing under the waistband of her pants. "But I'll reward you for being so good," Samantha promised.

Carson really didn't have a problem begging, and she let out a whimper. Samantha really had no idea how good she had been over the last couple of months. "I can be good, you have no idea."

"Hey Samantha do you have.... Holy shit! Oh goodness my eyes, my eyes!" Jahor turned around his face bright red.

"I can't believe this," the former librarian groaned. With a frustrated sigh she arranged Carson's shirt so that it wasn't quite so revealing and whirled on the man in the doorway. "What is it?" she demanded.

He swallowed a couple of times, "Do you have a compass? We need to make sure the candles are set at true north, south, east and west." He refused to turn around. "I'm not trying to be difficult, but you could, I don't know, shut the door."

With a growl of frustration, Samantha went over to one of her drawers and yanked it open. Inside was a toy compass that had come with one of the Barbie sets that her mother had gotten her. It actually worked, which had been a lot more interesting than the dolls. Stalking over she shoved it into Jay's hands and then shoved him out the door. "Good idea." She smiled unpleasantly at him and then slammed it shut. "Go get the demon!" she yelled from inside.

Carson wiggled on the bed eagerly, "You have all sorts of neat stuff hidden in this pastel nightmare don't you?"

Making sure the door was closed, Samantha returned to the bed. "Let's not talk about my room okay? I think we have better things to do." She set about distracting her once again.

#####

"I still say we should call the police Mother!" Jonathan lowered his voice at the end and looked around worriedly. The two of them were hiding under the dining table from that obviously insane woman that had gone after his sister. He wasn't that worried about Samantha, she was obviously a disappointment to the family, so it wouldn't be that horrible if something happened to her. He was worried about saving his own skin though. After all, he was the firstborn son of the family.

Without waiting for an answer from his mother and without really caring where his father was, Jonathan made a break for the phone that was in the hallway near the front door. Certainly the police could sort this all out. Actually if he played his cards right maybe he could be seen as some sort of hero for calling them!

It was a quiet noise, barely heard above the storm outside. A tentative wrapping of knuckles on solid wood.

Jonathan paused, handheld unit in one hand and ignoring his mother's repeated calls for him to return to the dining room, he moved to the window next to the door and peered out. Trying to see who or what was causing that noise. Maybe the police were already here?

She looked skinny and blonde, vapid like any other Paris Hilton wannabe, and her wet clothes were nearly see through due to the rain.

She was huddled under the over hang of the massive front door looking scared and vulnerable.

"Nice." Jonathan whispered, forgetting the phone in his hand as he hurried to open the door. Scared and vulnerable looking, exactly how he enjoyed his women, and young, even better! "Hi." He flashed his best, big brother trust me, smile at the young woman. His eyes taking in the way her wet clothes clung to her body.

"Oh... um, hi. My car... I sort of lost control a street over and well, I've been trying house after house I need to call Triple A I think." She looked at him her eyes wide and brown, looking very

innocent.

Ignoring the increasingly urgent calls from his mother, Jonathan flashed a wide comforting smile. "You've come to the right place. Why don't you just come in and make your call? I'll make sure you're kept comfortable. Maybe get you out of those wet clothes?"

She giggled, "And here I was worried I'd find some old creepy guy." She took his arm. "Thank you so much for inviting me in, you really are a gentleman." As the doe eyed young girl crossed the doorway her eyes flashed red with fire.

On the ceiling unseen by any human eye the wards flashed once in warning and then burned away.

#####

"I have to do what?" Emily screeched, staring at Shaggy from the other side of the circle of salt, holding a lit candle in each hand. He looked uncomfortable and pointed defensively at the computer screen. "It says it right here. You have to be naked in the circle to bring the demon to you and send it back to hell."

"There is no way I'm getting naked in front of you two." The Goth girl was positive of that, even when the kitchen lights flickered and then went out.

"No, it says right here..." His laptop went dark, dying as the power went out. "No, no, nonono." His eyes wide he stared at the dead screen. "This can't be happening.

Jahor frowned. "I don't think this is a good thing."

"Umm... wasn't that on battery power?" Emily looked around a little nervously, that was more than just the power in the house going off.

Shaggy nodded in the dark, not that anybody could see. "Yeah, the battery should have kicked on."

"I think somebody needs to go check the circuit breaker." Emily suggested cheerfully in the dark.

The two guys were silent trying not to get voted out of the kitchen.

The dark haired woman rolled her eyes, tossing her head to get a stray dreadlock out of her face. "Fine you two cowards, go together. I'll stay here and tell you when the computer comes back on. I'm safe if I'm in the circle of salt right?"

Shaggy nodded then realized Emily couldn't see him. "Once inside close the circle and then that should keep you safe, however we never anointed the ground with holy water so I'm not certain."

"I'll be fine; just don't be gone long ok?"

The two guys slowly left the kitchen after pausing at the door for a moment trying to maneuver so they didn't have to be first. Finally Jahor just pushed Shaggy through the door.

#####

Upstairs, Carson snarled and bit hard on Samantha's lip drawing a small amount of blood. She immediately realized what she had done and drew back. "Ah, shit Sam. Sorry. There's something wrong...." The lights flickered and went out.

"Owe!" Samantha jerked back, pressing a hand to her now bleeding lip, and grimacing. They'd been having a lot of fun and she supposed it was destined not to last, considering their track record. "What is it? What's happening?" It was hard to stay focused considering that she'd managed to get Carson's shirt off and had been working on the other woman's bra.

In the dark of Samantha's bedroom, it was silent for a moment the sounds of there quickened breathing the only noise. Then Carson gave an evil chuckle that was broken off by the sound of the woman talking to herself. "Stop it! Stop it." She struggled with the ropes, red marks and raw flesh developing under the places where the roped cut against skin. "It's in the house." Carson whispered desperately. "Someone invited her in."

"What?" Alarmed eyes widened then with a curse, Samantha got off of Carson and started to hurriedly button up her shirt and the top of her pants. She'd been hoping that the demon would be kept outside all this time. "Jonathan," She growled. It had to be her brother, the stupid idiot.

Carson was so scared, fear pooled in her belly making her shake. In her head a voice whispered and pleaded, dark and seductive, to remember her promise to always belong with the demon. That dark part of her wanted out, to be set loose upon everything, and it would start with Sam, so the controlled woman could have a vague taste of her pain.

She shook her head sweat trickled down her temple. "They need to hurry Sam, I don't... I'm such a weak person."

"You're not weak. You're one of the strongest people I know, Carson. Who else would have been capable of dragging our asses through a zombie infested town?" Samantha was torn between going downstairs and making sure everyone was going as fast as they could and staying here with Carson.

"What are those idiots doing? I swear if Shaggy's watching porn or something I'm going to kill him."

Carson smiled and then laughed. "If he is watching porn tell me if it has guys or girls, Emily and I have a bet going."

The Asian woman came closer, gripping the laughing woman's shoulder until she could meet eyes that were starting to change color again. "Carson." She waited until she had her attention "I'm going to go see what's going on with them, give them a kick in the ass to get them to hurry up. You have to stay here, stay yourself. Do not give in. Got it?" that sounded like an order.

"I have an overwhelming urge to salute, but I got it," Carson said, "Now go play the hero and save me."

She trailed a fingertip down the tied up woman's cleavage, grinning at the shiver she got. "Don't forget this; we're going to pick this up again later." This was entirely unfair; they'd been getting to some good parts. Samantha found her anger growing at the idiots downstairs.

Carson gave a loud lusty moan for kicks. "Hurry up and kick some ass so we can get to the good parts." She was okay not being the hero, she didn't mind flipping roles, she was flexible about that. It was when one played the oak tree and refused to bend in the wind, and some other metaphorical shit, that they broke. Sure the demon had offered her forever if she gave her heart, but Sam offered her pleasure, and at heart she was a hedonist and pleasure would always win out. Unfortunately for the demon, she had given her heart away to Sam the first time the woman had chewed her out in the library, so she couldn't give the demon something that wasn't hers to give.

"Don't go anywhere." Samantha grinned at her, grabbing a flashlight from the bedside and closing the door after her, making sure it was closed before going down the servant's stairs towards the kitchen.

#####

"So what's your name?" Jonathan leaned casually against the wall, smiling his best charming smile as he handed the girl the portable phone. This night was looking better and better.

"Levantra," she said and gave a girlish squeal as the lights flickered and then went out plunging the house in darkness. "Oh my," she breathed against the flesh of his neck.

This was entirely too easy, Jonathan thought, helpfully wrapping his arms around the frightened teen. "Don't worry; it's just the storm," he said, with a trace of cockiness. "I'll get some candles." There was a thud and another call of his name from the other room as his mother hit something, probably the edge of the table. He rolled his eyes. "Don't mind her."

She pulled away from him, "How can I ever thank you for helping me out in my time of need?" Feminine hands trailed up his chest giving a fair indication of what she had in mind.

His hands slipped lower, cupping her ass as he showed that he was exactly on the same page as she was. "Well I have a few suggestions...."

Her eyes picked up everything in the dark room, she could see the pulse jump in his neck as he

grew excited, and she simpered and cooed encouraging him on. She shoved him back into a chair nearly toppling both over. She flicked a finger and the arms of the chair bowed inwards lock him tightly in place.

"So like my Carson, living your life solely for the pursuit of pleasure. You two have a lot in common. You both enjoy female flesh, although she worships in it and you sully it, you take and never give. Is it your mother that causes this deep seated hatred or maybe your sister because you know she's better than you?"

She circled the chair.

"Yes, Jonathon, the mighty failure. So lacking, that you can only get a girl to spend the night if you've put a little something extra in her drink."

"What the fuck!?" He yelled, tugging on the chair arms, eyes bulging as he felt them actually move to hold him prisoner.

"Jonathan? What's wrong?" his mother moved slowly through the darkened dinning room towards the sound.

She slid around his chair circling. She bent down and spoke in his ear her breath smelled of rotted corpse flesh. "You've never actually had a woman, just a few pity fucks. I'd say your sister is far better with the ladies, leaving you a distant second. Jonathon the date rapist. Jonathon the cheater, envy eats you up that those around you look on you with either pity or distain." The demon circled facing him and fish belly white, scaly thighs parted and draped over his legs, as she sat on him.

In a flash of lightning he saw what stood before him and screamed in fear as he saw her.

His mother let out a soft gasp from just inside the dinning room, followed by a thud as the matriarch of the family fainted.

"What the fuck are you?" Jonathan yelled, struggling against the chair.

"The thing you let in. You opened the door Jonny and invited me in, just like you've been doing your whole life. If you leave the door open evil just invites itself in." She laughed and moved suggestively against him. "What's wrong don't you want to fuck anymore."

"AH! Get away from me!" He struggled harder, only succeeding in toppling over his chair, still screaming.

The demon laughed, a sound not meant to be heard by human ears and shoved her cold tongue into his mouth.

#####

Emily stood wide-eyed in the darkened kitchen; she had lit a few candles, but had just made the room seem spookier. She jumped at some noise and then jumped again as someone screamed.

An older Asian man came to a stop at the doorway to the kitchen, frowning as he spotted the woman surrounded by lit candles. "Excuse me, who are you?" He was carrying a shotgun and wore an obviously expensive business suite, complete with matching tie and spectacles. The Asian man wore his profession of doctor like a sign around his neck.

"Ahhhhh... oh my god!" Emily jumped in the circle and turned. "Who am I? I'm the one fighting this demon menace. Who are you?"

"Demon menace?" The man frowned, considering her words. "You must be one of my daughter's friends." He didn't sound too particularly thrilled by that prospect. "Your name isn't Heather is it?"

"No it's Emily." Understanding dawned on the Goth, "are you Sam's dad?"

"Dr. Sakamoto," he replied, looking relieved that her name wasn't Heather. He looked towards the dining room, where the sound of Jonathan's scream had come from. "The demon is inside the house?"

"I'm not certain. But we think there's a good chance it is." She bit her lip, in worry. "It could just be the storm."

Those intelligent black eyes swung back towards Emily and the good doctor frowned as if suddenly remembering something. "Wait, Emily? Is your name Emily Johnston?"

Emily's expression became very guarded. "Are you the demon in disguise?"

"Don't be ridiculous." He made a motion as if brushing away that comment, and peered closer at what she was standing next to. "You're going to try to banish the demon then." It wasn't a question. "Candles, salt... hmmm... you'll need holy water." He turned and started to walk back the way he'd come.

This perked her up. "Yes, we do. Do you have some?" Unthinking she left the circle, she paused but when he didn't turn into a hideous monster figured she was safe enough.

He shook his head. "Raising demons and you don't even carry around holy water, shameful."

"In theory I was at a demon raising, but..." She trailed off, concentrating really hard on that night. "I don't remember it."

"Meddling with things you don't understand. You're worse than my son." He unlocked the door to his office and stepped inside, the room unlike the rest of the house was lit by a large camping

light. "What a disappointment that boy has become." He went to one of the bookcases and started to swing it out away from the wall on hidden hinges.

"Whoa, whoa. Look if you're having family issues see a therapist, they get paid big bucks to do that sort of thing. Me, I just want your holy water." She frowned. "That sounded petulant didn't it, but it was true. I hate it when things get ultra weird like this. Zombies, demons, next thing you know peace will break out in the Middle East."

He gave her a dark look at that, like a teacher scolding a particularly slow-witted student. "Here." He pulled out a heavy silver flask that was inscribed with a cross. "Holy water." He offered it to her.

She rolled her eyes but took the flask.

"The file was right; you do have problems with authority." He pocketed a few more shells for his shotgun then shoved the bookcase shut.

"File? What are you some creepy stalker type. Look I have a problem with authority who hasn't done a damn thing to earn my respect, that's the problem with a lot of people just because they're older or in positions of power they think they deserve my respect. Well ha on that."

"Says the young lady who is currently being hunted by a demon that she doesn't even remember raising." He went around his desk to fetch a cross from one of the drawers. "It is possible that others have more knowledge of what is going on than you do, Ms. Johnston."

"Well then why aren't they here trying to fix the problem? Oh let me guess they're sitting in meetings debating the best course of action, wasting tax payer's money and letting more people die."

"I'm here," he answered dryly, although it was obvious he would rather not be. "Shall we?" He motioned towards the door.

"Yeah, but it took you long enough to know that something was wrong," she muttered then started towards the door.

#####

Carson was thrashing in the dark on the bed, the skin on her wrists was raw and bleeding, but she didn't care, she wanted lose, wanted out of here. She froze as she heard a floorboard creak under the weight of a foot.

"Sam?" she asked hopefully.

"Not quite, but somebody who equally shares your heart."

"Ah Fuck!" Carson huffed and started to struggle harder.

"Tsk, tsk, leading a girl on like that, making her think she's got a special place in your heart when you've already gone and given it to another."

The footsteps got closer sounding ominous in the dark. "Can you hear them screaming? All your friends." The words were whispered into her ear the breath cold and heavy like a graveyard. And she could hear them, her friends, crying in misery and pain. "And it's your fault, you brought me here, lead me right to them. It's almost as if you wanted me to destroy them."

"Shut up!" Carson cried out, "You're a fucking liar... you're twisting everything. You brought yourself here, not me." Tears streaked down her face hidden in the dark.

"Shhh, shhhh now. I promised you forever, I would stand by you forever if you would be mine, but you broke your end of the deal. To bad," The demon shrugged and leaned in closer. "It's more fun when you bring about your own downfall, but I'm running out of time and I really want you to suffer for breaking your promise. You're demon marked now, a black smudge on your soul, that won't ever wipe clean. So stay here tied to your lover's bed, but she won't ever come back for you. They're all going to die and you'll be trapped here unable to help."

A clawed hand trailed over her face and chest stroking against flesh exposed by her unbuttoned shirt. "One by one I'll snuff out their screams and leave you, alone, in the dark, with silence as your only companion. You're biggest fear. Fitting I think."

"Wait no, comeback, I'll do anything you want just let them live," she begged. "Please."

The demon paused. "You're the lucky fool type Carson. You may be weak and amoral but when the chips are down you have the amazing ability to come through, so no Carson, we are finished."

She frantically pulled at the ties that bound her, trying to get loose as the footsteps retreated and the door shut.

#####

Jahor paused and whispered. "Hey, did you hear someone shouting?"

Shaggy hit him on the shoulder. "Stop that. I'm paranoid enough as it is. Just shut up and find the panel." They were in the basement of the house and like most basements this one was entirely too spooky to be in right now.

"Maybe we should have looked for somebody who lives here and asked where the circuit breaker panel was." He suggested as they slowly made their way down the stairs. "Or brought a flashlight or a candle"

"Did you really want to meet Samantha's mom or dad? She has to get that bitchy attitude from at least one of them." A brighter flash of light from the basement windows and a nearly instantaneous clap of thunder made the young man nearly jump onto Jahor's back.

"Are you hitting on me?" Jahor said with a chuckle and continued down the steps.

Shaggy hit him again, this time harder in the back. "Shut up! Let's just find the circuit breaker." He paused. "I knew I should have brought that portable generator I was tinkering with yesterday."

Jay shuddered, "Only if it's already blown up at least twice." Jay ran out of steps and turned right scanning the shelves for a flashlight or for something that looked circuit breaker shaped in the flickering dark.

"Hey, not all of my inventions blow up!" He paused. "It only blew up once," he muttered. A can went tumbling across the basement floor as Shaggy kicked it by accident. They both instinctively froze then relaxed as nothing happened afterwards. "Clothing with glow sticks sewn into it!" he suddenly exclaimed, having another idea for an invention.

Jay rolled his eyes. "Only if you are one of those little raver kids at those techno dance parties."

The Pakistani man grinned in triumph. "Found it." He opened the metal lid and slid his hands over the switches, his grin turning into a frown. "That's odd."

"What?" Shaggy frowned in the dark. "Raver what?" They continued to slowly advance down the wall until Jahor found the box. "What's wrong?"

"The switches are all on." Jay whispered, as panic clawed its way up his throat.

"Shit," the younger man whispered. "That's bad."

He shook his head. "Now let's not be silly. Could be power is just out in the neighborhood. That wouldn't necessarily trip the breakers." He fumbled with the door and re-latched it.

"Jay, do you remember the Zombies? I don't believe in the easy answer after that." There was something wrong again, he could tell. "I knew I should have brought the flame thrower."

Jay winced at the mention of the combustible weapon. "I'm certain there won't be any need for a flame thrower. Besides, doesn't most of your Christian mythos around demons say they live in fire and brimstone?" He turned around in the dark barely seeing the outline of the other man. They both flinched as brighter lightning and louder thunder sounded again, and the Pakistani man jumped, his elbow hitting a shelf and causing something to tumble onto the floor. He grinned. It looked vaguely flashlight shaped. Crouched down he began to fumble his hands around after the flashlight that was rolling away.

"Hey! Watch where you're grabbing there!" Shaggy backed away from the wildly flailing man, grimacing as he stepped into something a little sticky. "Eww... did you wet yourself?"

Jay stood up quickly his head connecting solidly with Shaggy's. "Ow!" He howled in pain and held his head in his hands. "Jeez, and no, I did not wet myself, it was probably you, you big old geek." He glared in the direction he thought the other man was standing.

"Owe! Damn it Jay." Shaggy jumped around, holding his head in both hands. "Hey, stop that, I'm okay, I don't need you holding my hand!"

"What are you talking about? I'm over here, and I'm certainly not holding your hand. Nothing against Carson and Emily but I'm not into same-sex loving thing." Jahor wasn't certain if the stress of the whole situation was getting to him but suddenly he was just angry. Angry at Emily and Carson for getting them into this situation, angry at Shaggy for being unable to make things right the first time, and at himself for being stupid enough to put himself in this situation. Things like this didn't exist in a normally rational world, and he desperately wanted his world rational and normal.

There was a moment of silence as Shaggy considered that and slowly turned his head towards the sound of Jay's voice. "You're over there?" That wasn't good, not at all.

"Yes, I'm over here." There was a slight tone of fear in Shaggy's voice that had Jahor back on his hands and knee's looking for that flashlight.

Making a sound that was remarkably like a whimper, the younger man reached up and touched the thing that was holding onto his shoulder. When his fingers felt something that wasn't at all warm or even vaguely human feeling he shrieked and lunged away, tumbling over Jay as he searched for the flashlight.

As Shaggy scrambled over the top of him mowing him down he decided to fuck the flashlight, he was out of there, besides he really didn't want to see what made the other man scream like a little school girl and run. He ran wondering if there was another way out of the basement. Samantha's folks looked rich; surely they could afford another entry way in and out of the basement.

Still screaming like a girl, Shaggy slammed into a wall, flailed sideways and then stumbled onto what felt like another set of stairs. "Jay! Over here!" He ran up them, tripping and sliding all the way.

"What? Where are you?" He tried to follow the fading sounds of Shaggy's high-pitched scream.

"Jahor Vutukury, what are you doing in this place?" came the sharp, heavily accented sound of his mother's voice.

He stopped scrambling and stunned, turned towards the voice. "Mother?" She was standing there holding a flashlight. The light from it highlighted her face in deep shadows. "What? How?"

"I am a mother I know when my son's purity is at stake."

"What? What are you...?" He blinked his brain shutting down in her overbearing presences.

"You hang out with those unclean people, heathens and whores. They fill your mind, dirtying it from proper thought." A hand rose up and beckoned him over.

"They're not unclean." He flinched, thinking of Carson with her horns and clawed fingers as he slowly walked over to her.

She hugged him. "Its okay mother's here and we'll get you clean again."

He felt his will weaken in the blistering presence of her, and he started to fold and bend just like he always did. "I'm not dirty," he said weakly.

"Shhh, mother knows best." She whispered before she grabbed his head. She was standing next to a larger industrial sink, which was in the corner next to the washer and dryer. The sink was over full, the water flowing over the sides and across the floor.

He blinked. "What are you...?"

In a flash his head was under the water, the demon just laughed and pulled him back out. "Such dirty thoughts in your head boy need to flush them out so I can eat them. They're so tasty."

Jahor gasped then icy wet coldness surrounded his head again. He's arms wind milled and panic clawed at his throat, as his fears of water and drowning seemed to come true.

"Jay?" Shaggy turned around halfway up the stairs to a door that he was pretty sure was going to lead them out of the basement. The moonlight through t he windows of the door was the only source of light and he hesitated as he considered going back into that darkness for his friend.

Darkness was not something the inventor enjoyed. This was the last time he walked around without at least a glow stick! "Jay?" He started down the steps.

The demon smiled. So much fear and anger, simmering in all these people. It was absolutely delicious. She stopped for a moment hearing the tentative, scared voice and let go of the man's head. He slumped and fell to the floor. It was also amazing how many different issues, fears, and hang-ups these people all had that focused on women.

Smiling, the demon ran a hand down her body changing it from a short, chubby woman of Middle Eastern decent to a short, skinny, Goth girl with black dyed hair. With a sway in her hips she walked towards the stairs.

"E... Emily?" Scared eyes widened behind glasses that already made them look large. Shaggy

stumbled backwards on the steps as she suddenly emerged from the darkness at the base of the stairs. "I... umm... thought you were upstairs?"

"What, and let you guys have all the fun? Hardly. Plus, I heard you screaming." She smiled and moved closer, into Shaggy's personal space. Gently she touched his hair and face. "You okay?"

"Yeah." He answered quickly, blinking and then trying to peer around her shoulder into the darkness beyond. "Did you see Jay? I think I heard him yelling."

"No, didn't see him. He must have gone upstairs." She took his hand in hers. "Why don't we go upstairs and take a look." She tugged him back up the stairs.

"Oh, okay," he answered as his brain fried at the touch of her hand. "You sure? You're acting umm... different," he stuttered.

"Maybe it's the thunder and the lightening, but I'm wondering why I never noticed how handsome you were before," she said finally as they made it to the top of the stairs. She leaned in closer, "Your glasses make you look very intelligent." She breathed into his ear. Seeing she had gotten the appropriate responses from the right places she leaned in even closer kissing him.

#####

Carson didn't feel the blood running down her arm as she frantically tried to work her arm loose. She really did have nobody to blame but herself for this whole horrible night. She'd be lucky if anybody survived, and if they did, she'd be lucky if they ever spoke to her again.

"Psst. Hey."

"Holy shit!" Carson barked out. "Whose there?"

"I didn't even get to say 'knock, knock' yet?"

"What? Look, I really don't have time for games. So either help me or get the fuck away from me, I'm busy."

"Yeah, you're always busy. A real exciting life you got, always rushing in to play the white knight, or psycho stalker ex."

Carson frowned. The voice seemed kind of familiar.

"Goodness you're slow."

Carson frowned.

"Fine, I'm you."

"What? You can't be me, I'm me."

"We're not getting into the whole philosophy of Plato and the fire and the shadow people since you failed philosophy and only got a C 'cause you seduced the teacher's assistant. Wait that was me, but anyways."

Carson felt a headache coming on. "A point to this and quickly."

"You're a very lucky woman you made a deal with a devil and lived."

Carson have a hysterical laugh, "this isn't what I would call living."

"Shush. Let me get to my point. I'm you, well, I'm the darker you. The one who does the things we know we really shouldn't. When you accepted that deal, she breathed hellfire into you, giving me more.... Hmm, not sure they have a term for this, but I became more real. Like a split personality."

"Ah, fuck, I've cracked," Carson, sighed.

"Stop whining. You didn't think you could make a deal with a devil and just get out of it unscathed. There's more to it than fancy new clothes and healing of old wounds. She marked us, were tainted with hellfire and there will always be a black mark on us. Literally, when the lights come on go look in the mirror. Right over your heart will be a black mark, it won't ever go away."

"There is no us or we, just me. Split personality implies loony bin, I'm not going to one of those. Besides why are you telling me this, I would think you'd want to be, well, in control of the whole package."

"Tempting, but you're missing the point. Besides there will be times when I take control anyway, and there won't be anything you can do about it. She left us here and since I'm you, I have the same fears and phobia's about being alone in the dark, so I'm less than thrilled with little miss demon."

"So what are we going to do about it? I'm a little out of the loop right now."

"She took a little humanity from you and gave you a little taste of hell. Burn, baby, burn."

"What?"

"Disco inferno, time. Burn the ropes like you did with the phone."

"It can't be that easy, and I'm a little afraid of the ramifications of being able to do that is."

"Chicken."

"Fuck you."

"Burn, baby, burn."

She felt ghostly hands on her chest and cheek then her skin tingled and the sensation was gone. She looked up in the dark to where the rope should be holding her hand to the bedpost and imagined it burning. There was a flash of light in the dark, and Carson grinned until she felt her skin get uncomfortably warm and then she yelped and pulled frantically until the rope gave way.

#####

"What the hell are you doing?" Samantha's high-pitched screech cut through the moment like a chainsaw and Shaggy jerked back from Emily's welcome arms.

"Umm... kissing Emily?" Shaggy kept an arm around the Goth girl, just in case she decided to run.

In the flickering light of the two candles on the kitchen countertop he could clearly make out the expression of disgust on the Asian woman's face. "That's not Emily."

The uber geek blinked and stared at the woman in his arms. "Wha... what do you mean this isn't Emily? Emily. Tell her it's you?" His voice took on a pleading quality as fear began to mount and climb up his spine.

Emily's serene face, with her overly red ripe lips broke into a snarl and she turned out of Shaggy's arms and faced the other woman.

"Emily, I know you're not fond of Sam...antha but..."

"Shut up you fucking nerd. You think a real lady would find you attractive. Trust me; the real Emily isn't pining over your skinny, pasty, white ass," the demon said with a growl.

"Hey!" Samantha frowned. "I'm the only one who insults him." That settled it; the demon was so going down, she was the only one allowed to put that expression of fear and panic on their faces. "Aren't you the big demon, scaring a geek and an uptight morgue attendant in a dark basement," she sneered. "Please, Ronald McDonald could have done that."

The demon's mouth opened and then shut completely phased by the fact the woman wasn't shaking in fear. Slowly the facade of Emily that she wore faded and stretched leaving white scaly flesh and hell fire filled eyes. Still the woman didn't even bat an eyelash. Snarling, the demon tried to feel the source of the Asian woman's greatest fear only to come up empty. "Impossible!" she roared making Shaggy cry out in fear and huddle in the nearest corner.

"You... you... everybody is afraid of something. Why can't I read you?" the demon sputtered in frustration.

"My greatest fear already came to pass you stupid bitch." Samantha smiled as she said it, slowly stepping backwards and trying to lure the demon away from Shaggy's side. "Carson went away and then she outted me to my family. I haven't had time to come up with another greatest fear in the last half hour." This had to be one of the stupidest things she'd even done. The former librarian was really hoping that Shaggy had a plan before the demon got pissed off enough to rip her heart out.

"You're the one who has the other part of Carson's heart. Poor Carson, you left her all alone in the dark, tied to the bed. Defenseless." Her slitted nostrils flared as she felt the first tendrils of unease come off the woman. She would not let some flesh bag mortal get the best of her. She was a demon; she fed off of fear and misery. She'd been getting quite full from the first young man then Carson, the Pakistani, and now the geek in the corner. But then this buzz kill had to poke her nose in and popped her bubble of power.

"You're just a bottom feeder. Gorging yourself off the basest emotions you can evoke in those around you. How's it feel to know that your entire existence in this world is dictated by the fact that you must live off the leftovers of human emotions?" It was a struggle to avoid thinking about what could have happened to Carson and Samantha knew that if she let herself, she would do more than worry about what might have happened to the other woman. Instead she slowly took another step backwards.

Shaggy slowly came back to his senses, blinking owlishly behind his glasses and then making a gagging sound as he saw what he'd just been kissing. Where was the real Emily? The candles she'd been holding were on the kitchen countertop but there was no sign of her in the kitchen.

The demon snarled and started towards Samantha. "I'm going to rip that smug look right off your face and then I'm going to piss down your neck." She howled in anger.

Samantha walked backwards towards the door hoping to make a break for it. Just as the demon got ready to pounce, the kitchen door burst open hitting Samantha and smashing her between the door and the wall as two figures burst in.

"Get away from my daughter!" a masculine voice shouted then was drowned out by the firing of a gun.

The demon's flesh ripped open as the bullets drove into its scaly hide.

Shaggy yelled in surprise and hit the ground, not at all wanting anything to do with flying bullets.

Dr. Sakamoto unloaded both barrels of the antique looking shotgun into the demon, staggering backwards from the recoil. "The circle young lady, get it into the circle," he said to Emily,

struggling to reload the shotgun.

The demon stood up, her flesh smoked and hissed, and greenish-black blood dripped onto the floor. "No!" she screeched. "I will not go back." She lunged forward only to draw back as Emily flicked holy water at it.

Shaggy scrambled with the candles and the compass, frantically setting them up amidst the chaos erupting in the kitchen.

The demon lunged for the stairs down to the basement only to stop short as Jahor suddenly emerged into the kitchen, dripping wet and praying loudly in his native tongue: a prayer of protection against evil.

Holy water hit the white flesh and the demon cried out stepping backwards.

Squirming out from behind the door, Samantha grabbed the holy water from Emily's hands and shoved her towards the circle of salt. "Jay, together!" She splashed water at the demon. Between his prayers and the water, they started to herd it towards the Goth woman. Behind her, she was vaguely aware of her father unloading the shotgun shells from his gun and reloading it.

Writhing in agony the demon was slowly forced back into the circle of salt. Shaggy quickly sealed the circle and then looked hopefully over at Emily. "Start the ceremony Emily." He told her urgently.

Emily held the cross and started reading the frantically written ceremony Shaggy had put together from information from the Internet. "Demon, spawn of the underworld, I command you back to hell. Your presence is no longer wanted here and by all things pure I command you...." She paused, she needed the demon's name. She floundered.

"Can't remember dear, too busy trying to get up under some skirt," the demon chuckled and stepped forward pushing on the barrier. "Without that I'm afraid you're sunk and I can last forever, can you? Eventually you'll run out of bullets, water and voice." She laughed an evil sound, one not meant to be heard by human ears. She stepped forward again and the circle of salt flared briefly and then a clawed hand reached out of the circle towards Emily.

The door opened behind Samantha, her father and Emily. Carson stood there bloody and bruised her eyes flashing a cold gray.

"Carson?" Samantha stared in surprise, not sure how the other woman could have gotten loose from the bonds that she'd tied. She really hoped it was Carson and not the possessed puppet standing there. The gray eyes worried her.

With a click, Dr. Sakamoto snapped shut the breach of the shotgun and raised it to his shoulder, aiming at the demon's hand.

The demon's eyes widened in pleasure. "I see my little puppet's back. Be a dear and get the shotgun for me."

As Dr. Sakamoto turned in surprise, Carson merely shoved the barrel up and out of her face. She didn't really even feel the burn of the muzzle as the shotgun went off. Then she was stepping away from Samantha's dad, her eyes focused on the demon. "Hi, Levantra, ready to take a little trip?" She snarled then with a quick sprint she tackled the demon taking them both into the circle.

Emily quickly grasped what was being said. "By all things pure I command you, Levantra, back to the circle of hell that spawned you." As the demon's name was spoken the circle was locked, trapping the demon and Carson inside.

As soon as the circle was sealed the lights flickered and then came back on, momentarily blinding everyone.

Unable to see, Emily fumbled and lost her place.

Carson grunted as she dodged a blow from the demon and backed up only to stop as her back cracked against the invisible barrier of the circle. Scaly hands locked around her throat lifting her up and she was smashed again and again against the barrier.

"Emily," she croaked out. "Hurry up please." There was a pop from her chest and she hoped it wasn't a rib.

Samantha was by her side, steadying the Goth girl and holding up the printed instructions. "Here." She pointed at the spot where Emily had been reading. There was little love lost between each of them but they were both bound by their love for Carson and Emily nodded, taking a breath and starting to read again.

"By all things pure, I revoke that which summoned you here. I undo that which was cast and close the gate that I helped open."

The demon paused feeling herself starting to loose form. "Stop it!" she shouted. "Stop or I'll crush her throat!" The demon snarled in warning. "I won't go back!"

Carson found herself flipped around and a fish belly white arm was locked securely around her throat. "What, you can't possibly be afraid of a few words? 'Sticks and stones may break bones but names will never hurt me.' Guess that adage doesn't hold so true for you." Carson wheezed out.

"Shut up. I should have killed you once I realized you were the fool in this play. Fools survive and bring change, they say that which can't be said, and everyone loves the fool." In frustration the demon shook Carson enjoying the sounds of her gagging.

Carson cried out in pain as a clawed fist smashed into her back. "That's it, Emily. You got her scared, keep it up."

"Faster, Emily, go faster," Samantha urged. It was hard to resist the urge to cross into the circle and try to save Carson. There was nothing they could do until the demon was gone.

Grimly the Goth girl kept reading, her eyes focused on the page in front of her, trying to avoid looking at anything else that was happening around her.

Worriedly, Shaggy danced back and forth as her father reloaded his shotgun a second time. Samantha had to reach out and shove the young man sideways into Jay to keep him from getting too close to the ring of salt. "Jay, keep him out of trouble," she hissed.

Jay sighed and pulled the uber geek back with him next to the sink. "Calm down," he whispered.

Carson couldn't really see anything anymore, only spots that danced all over blocking her vision. Her right leg gave out and she vowed that if this situation ever came up again she'd not go into the circle with the demon. That had been plain stupid on her part.

As the words poured from Emily, the demon howled and made one last try at flailing out of the circle, her claws scrabbling at the invisible wall that kept her sealed in with Carson. From nowhere wind erupted, suddenly filling the kitchen. Everything from loose paper to small pots suddenly was flying through the air as something red and glowing opened in the center of the circle.

With a scream of hatred and rage the demon latched onto Carson again, even as it was drawn towards that glowing pit. "I won't go alone!" It howled.

"CARSON!" Samantha screamed, lunging for her girlfriend, ignoring the salt circle that she'd just given Shaggy hell for getting near.

Carson gasped for breath as the demon's hold on her shifted and she blinked her eyes a couple of times clearing them. She was being dragged backwards and down. A quick look over her shoulder showed her various things she really had never wanted to see and would probably give her nightmares for several years.

She turned back and tried to break free, her body trying to go forward against the demon's hold. The demon's hold was forced loose and she cried out in pain as claws sliced her as the demon frantically tried to grab hold of her. Her left hand stretched out, she reached for Sam.

"No! Don't break the circle!" Shaggy shouted as he started towards the Asian woman.

"Get the fuck off me!" Samantha elbowed him in the head, kicked Jay in the shin, and reached across the circle of salt to grab onto Carson's outstretched hand while Emily's frantically kept up the chant that was the end of the banishment.

Carson nearly sobbed as Samantha's hand grabbed hers. "Don't let go," she pleaded then gave another cry of pain as the demon grabbed her foot and nearly pulled her off of her feet. Frantically she shook her foot trying to get it to slip out of the shoe.

Emily looked around frantic. "That's it there's nothing left of the banishment chant. Why isn't she gone yet?" She turned shouting at Shaggy.

The young geek stared at the opening to hell that was now slowly starting to close. "Samantha broke the seal. I think if the demon doesn't fall through before that thing closes were screwed."

Jahor grabbed the cross out of Shaggy's hand and determinedly walked over to the circle of salt. "I want you gone. You have no purpose here in my nice organized rational world. I want you gone!" Over and over he hit the demon's hand using the cross as a hammer. The fingers smoked and the flesh split open releasing a foul smell into the air. Then one by one the fingers fell away from Carson's foot.

"Careful." Dr. Sakamoto cautioned, stepping up next to Jahor and aiming the shotgun barrel at the demons head. Eyes wide, Samantha had time to turn away before her father pulled the trigger. Since it wasn't holding onto Carson anymore the blast hurled the demon into the pit, which promptly vanished, leaving behind only a reek of sulfur, and the splattered remnants of black ichor.

Carson lay very still on the floor, her heart was beating loudly in her chest, and the shotgun blast was still ringed in her ears. "Did we win?" she asked her voice rough and scratchy from the abuse it had taken.

"I really hope so." Samantha knelt down next to her, brushing hair out of the injured woman's face.

There was a moment of silence as they all looked at one another in the now lit kitchen, wearily acknowledging that they had somehow managed to get involved in and survive another extraordinary situation.

"That was fun," Shaggy finally spoke up, only to get hit by Jay on the shoulder. "What?" he yelled. "It was. We were all together again and I got to get out of the house and then there was a demon and everything!"

"I'm going to kill him." The dark haired woman whispered, kissing Carson softly, careful of the other woman's split lip.

There was a rather familiar sound outside and through the window they could make out flashing lights and what looked like an aerial spot light illuminating the back yard.

"That's the army again isn't it?" Emily groaned.

Dr. Sakamoto sighed and nodded. "I called for help when I realized that thing was in the house." He suddenly looked worried. "Your mother, I should make sure she is all right."

Carson stiffened. "Are you..." She dropped her voice down to a quiet whisper. "Are you sure you want to kiss me in front of your dad?"

Sam looked up to see her father watching them with a definitely odd look. She smiled hesitantly at him and was relieved as he smiled faintly back before turning and going in search of her mother and brother, wherever they had ended up. "Yeah, it's fine. We'll have to have a talk later probably." She didn't really care right now though as she focused on kissing Carson again, until a stray thought caused her to pull back and frown. "How'd you get out of the ropes?"

Doors slamming could be heard from the front of the house and people running and shouting orders.

"Not again." Shaggy groaned. Jay, resigned, sat down on a chair and waited for the inevitable.

Rolling her eyes, Emily turned away from the two, mumbling something about demon bait under her breath.

Carson shrugged. "You were taking too long to play hero. I got bored." Sensing that their time together was again drawing short she said. "I'll tell you later. I promise, but I'd rather be kissing you."

That sounded like a great idea to Samantha, who gladly returned to kissing the other woman on the kitchen floor in the remnants of the salt circle, which was exactly how the Special Forces soldiers found them as they burst in through the door and windows, yelling for people to get down, and brandishing their weapons.

The End