

Chapter 1: Trouble in Paradise

“IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?” Killian’s amused drawl interrupted her naughty daydreams.

Popping upright with a squeak, Mica whirled around so fast she wobbled into the bedpost. With both hands behind her back, she flushed scarlet at the knowing gleam in his eye. “I was going to surprise you later.” She peered up through lowered lashes, Mona Lisa smile creasing her lips. “Do you mind so much?”

Her husband carefully closed the door behind him and turned the lock. “Mind?” Smiling slow and easy, he ambled through the bedroom, undressing her with his eyes, letting them linger on the curve of her breast. “You’ve got a bottle of honey in one hand and a thong in the other. I’m just hoping for dessert.” Reaching her now, he wove his hand into the tumbling waves of her hair to tug her head back for a kiss. “Why wait ‘til later?”

“There’s not enough time,” she protested weakly.

“I can be quick,” he muttered against the curve of her throat, his free hand working its way into the waist of her jeans.

Melting like the honey in her hand, she dropped the bottle and clutched his shoulders as he caught her mouth with his. It had been soooo long . . . She groaned aloud and then nipped at his lip when he chuckled at her passion. Sliding her hands beneath his shirt, she reveled in the feel of him, frantically groping every part within reach. “God, you feel so good!” Her heart pounded like a jackhammer. She tried to ignore the clock in her head, but she knew they didn’t have much time. Stroking his erection through his jeans, she hissed, “I want you inside me! Hurry up!”

Yanking furiously at his zipper, he laughed breathlessly, “I’m halfway there. Take off your pants.”

Easier said than done. She cursed her decision to wear tight jeans. They stuck to her sweaty skin and her nearly mindless efforts weren’t helpful. Tugging and wiggling, she finally had them halfway off when the clock ran out.

“Mommy!” The yelling was immediately followed up by desperate banging on the door. “We’re hungry!”

“Fuuuuuuck.” His frustrated moan ended in a heartfelt sigh. Not wanting to break away just yet, he ground against her one last time before thumping his forehead against hers and demanding grumpily, “Didn’t they just eat breakfast?”

“Mommy!”

She copped one last feel of his gorgeous butt and sighed. “They’re *always* hungry.”

Running his fingers over her breast, he muttered, “So am I.”

By the time the sun was setting later that evening, her hormones had slunk back into the closet where they’d been banished by motherhood. One day maybe they’d have sex again. Today wasn’t that day. It was Halloween. The jack-o-lantern was lit; the candy was dumped into a black plastic cauldron; and the playlist was set to creepy music. Rocking her favorite fairy godmother outfit, she was ready to take the kids out for a grand adventure in her parents’ neighborhood. She’d always been a sucker for costumes and screaming kids, although at the moment, she’d like to turn the volume down on the screaming. The five-year-old triplets, Michael, Rafe, and Cian (their nickname for Killian, Jr.), were in the middle of a contest to see who could yell the loudest.

As usual, their grandfather was encouraging them because he had no sense at all. The sound was deafening. It was a happy noise though—unlike the noise that had been creeping into her dreams recently. Those discordant notes were gradually taking over her sleep, taking over her subconscious. Most people wouldn't notice the intrusion, so slight the sound, but she wasn't *most* people. Her psychic spidey senses were on high alert—something wasn't right, and she'd be an idiot to ignore the warning—and an idiot she was not. Unfortunately, her sight wasn't giving her all the info she needed. Despite her attempts to unravel the source of her uneasiness, there was still nothing concrete to pin her worries on. Nothing was jumping up and down with an arrow announcing, "Disaster Looming Ahead!"

Just a feeling . . .

"Are you going to stare into the sky all night? It's almost time for trick or treating to start. I don't know about you, but I'm stealing all of the chocolate." Gesturing at the three boys racing around like frantic squirrels, Abby added, "These guys don't need it anyway."

Understatement of the century.

Abby, her pierced, tatted, and pink-haired stepsister, bounced up and down on the toes of her Doc Martins. The ancient Docs completed her "Walking Dead" zombie look for the night. Abby's hunky, hockey playing boyfriend, Josh, stood in her parents' driveway with Killian and her father, drinking beer and laughing at something Killian said. Odd, Killian didn't usually joke. What was he up to?

The man in question tilted his bottle in salute and tipped back the contents, smooth throat working as the beer slid down. A tiny shiver ran through her as she watched his muscles work. Dressed in his usual costume of faded jeans and a Disturbed t-shirt, he was yummy. Five years of marriage hadn't changed a thing for her. She still lusted for him and loved him as much as the day they got married. Black haired, blue eyed, with chiseled cheekbones and an extraordinarily sexy mouth; he was her fantasy man come to life. The muscles in his shoulders stretched the shirt just enough to draw her eyes and make her mouth water. Those shoulders were broad, hard, and capable of supporting her weight in any position, including above his head. The image of that particular sexcapade was front and center in her mental slideshow of favorite sex scenes with her studly husband. That day, he'd lifted her up and she'd hung on to a branch, her legs draped over his shoulders, his head buried between them. Who knew trees could be so useful? Smiling wistfully at the distant memory, she absently stroked the rune on her hand. Its mellow gold called to Killian. She yearned. It yearned too. Unfortunately, the crazy, sexy night in the woods was nothing but a memory now. That was sex *before* baby. She closed her eyes and remembered their last quickie. Rushed groping in the dark, unsatisfying, frustrating . . . How many weeks ago?

Too many to count. His voice rang with more than a little desperation as he sent his thoughts to her.

Her eyes snapped to his and he winked. She didn't need to glance downwards to know he was hard. She sensed his desire from across the yard. He was a hot, sensual creature. He was always ready to make love. He was also the doting father of their newest little angel, Teagan. Their sexual frustration was all Teagan's fault.

Abby swung her gaze between them and grinned. "Your man looks like he's about to throw you behind the garage and jump your bones. Still not getting any?"

"You've got no idea! It's like this baby has radar. She wakes up the second we're naked. Her timing is freaky." She smothered a smile behind her hand and added, "Killian's really, really frustrated. Probably he could explode if something doesn't give soon."

Teagan had been born on a ridiculously steamy night in July. She'd been late and difficult to birth. After ten hours of labor, Mica had wanted to give up and go to sleep. Unfortunately, that's not an option, so . . . she'd soldiered on. Finally, at 12:01 sharp, princess Teagan deigned to make her grand appearance into the land of the living. Mica had never been more grateful. Killian had never been more awed. The sight of Teagan's tiny pink face, downy black curls, and rosebud mouth sealed the deal for the big bad demon slayer. From the second she took her first breath, he was in love. That was three months ago.

Since then, the baby made it her personal mission to keep her parents from ever having sex again. It never failed. The moment she wrapped her legs around Killian, Teagan woke up shrieking. It was getting bad. Before Teagan's birth, they'd been happily making their way through every position in the *Kama Sutra*. Now? They were lucky if they could swing a quickie in the shower. If she was trying to lock in her position as the spoiled youngest child, she was doing a great job. Sighing long and hard, she nuzzled the silky head resting against her chest and murmured, "Mommy loves you, but you've got to start sleeping or Daddy might lose his mind. You want a car when you're 16, don't you?"

Sneaking up behind them, Killian wrapped both arms around her waist, drawing her back against his chest, and whispering against her ear, "God, I'm aching for you. Let's disappear for a while."

"Awesome plan, except Teagan's just waking up for a bottle."

On cue, two smoky green eyes popped open. Yawning hugely, Teagan shoved a chubby fist to her mouth and drooled over it. Her cute little cries escalated to earsplitting demands in a nanosecond.

He winced at the volume and dropped a kiss on her temple. Automatically fishing out a bottle from Mica's bag, he held it until Mica was ready for it. "Is this much crying normal? She cries more than the boys ever did."

"Sure it's normal. Why wouldn't it be?" But was it? She'd been wondering the same thing for a month. Something was different about Teagan, but she'd be damned if she could figure out what it was. Their pediatrician and Raphael declared she was perfectly healthy. Was it just a girl thing? Could it be that simple?

Killian didn't look convinced, but he didn't have another explanation. Instead, he frowned and said, "Maybe she'll grow out of it."

After shifting Teagan in her harness, Mica offered the screaming baby the bottle and chuckled softly as the wails stopped instantly. "Let's hope so. She's got a good set of lungs on her."

Killian drew a gentle knuckle along the baby's cheek and smiled down at them as the noisy trick or treaters faded into the background. "My two beautiful girls . . . how did I get so lucky?"

Raising her mouth for a kiss, she let it linger a moment before saying, "We'd better get going before the boys lose their minds. Are you ready?"

"Absolutely. Josh and I are going to walk on ahead. Just in case."

"In case of what? Are you sensing something?"

"Not anything specific, but it doesn't hurt to be careful. It's been too quiet lately. You and Abby worry about keeping the little devils from doing property damage and Josh and I will play bodyguards."

"Maybe all of this excitement will wear your daughter out and *we* can get to bed early." *Not to sleep*. She lifted her brows in question.

Killian nuzzled Teagan's curls and said, "I'm not getting my hopes up." He gave her one last soft kiss and warned, "Be careful."

"Always."

"Mommy! Can we go now? Please! All the candy will be gone!" Rafe's plaintive cries were followed by almost identical pleas from his brothers. All three were practically vibrating with desperate energy as the other kids began pouring out of the houses to form a sea of superheroes surging down the sidewalk.

"Go on, guys. Stay between your father and me though—"

A chorus of "Yes, ma'am's!" interrupted her, and they were off like a trio of rockets.

"I mean it!" she yelled after them.

"Mm . . . mmm. I have to say this out loud, but please don't take it the wrong way. Killian has a great butt." Abby whistled just under her breath as the two men's long strides ate up the sidewalk. "A work of art really. Women everywhere thank him."

"It comes from years of exercise." Thousands of years, but who's counting? She cut her eyes to Abby and asked, "Are you already getting tired of Josh? He's pretty cute and he's got all those sweet hockey muscles. He looks great naked, right?"

Abby mumbled something too low to hear before saying brightly, "Oh, sure, Josh is hot. He's sweet. He treats me like a princess. He's got a wicked wrist shot that'll land him a nice multi-million dollar contract one day. What's not to love?"

Uh-oh. Trouble in paradise? Abby's words didn't match the emotions that swirled around her like a little cloud. She seemed sad, a little melancholy. "Hmm . . . why don't I believe you? Is something wrong?"

"Nope. He's perfect." Again, her tone was too bright, almost brittle. She was totally lying. Something was definitely up.

"Are you sure? You don't sound like everything's fine."

Abby's tone hardened as she changed the subject. "Hey, check out that house. They've got a whole fake graveyard in the front!"

Okay . . . guess we're done talking about Abby's love life. Hint taken. Subject changed. Mica kept an eye on the boys as they raced each other to front doors, all three laughing deliriously as they waited politely for their candy. They thought dressing up as red devils was clever, but Killian swore their fake horns and pointy tails were as unlike Lucifer as possible. Apparently the real devil preferred Hugo Boss, but the boys got sucked into the stereotype for sale at the costume store. They weren't happy about making do with plastic pitchforks, but she had to put her foot down for the good of the neighbors. God only knew what trouble they'd get into with real ones. Black haired and blue eyed, the little monsters looked just like their daddy. They acted a lot like him too—i.e., the pitchforks. It was a good thing they inherited some of their mother's sweet personality. Not that she was bragging or anything, but the truth was, they were amazing kids, and she was head over heels for the little dudes.

With Teagan now snoozing in post-bottle bliss, and Abby pointedly looking at everything but Mica, she let her mind wander without direction. Killian was right. Things had been weirdly quiet lately. Plattsburgh had been demon free for months. What was keeping Lucifer's bloodthirsty pets in check? The monsters had to be planning something. That was the only explanation. In any case, she had no answers and there was nothing to do about it right now. She'd keep her psychic eyes open and deal with whatever happens when it happens. In the meantime, she had a family of future warriors to mold. She tucked a warm cap more snugly around Teagan's head and shoved the nagging worry to the back of her mind. Sweeping her gaze

back and forth across the crowded sidewalks, she breathed in a faint whiff of burning wood, along with the scent of dead leaves and pine needles. Starry skies and crisp air made it the perfect night for walking. The oaks and maples were dressed in festive oranges and yellows with splotches of browns and reds adding to the riot of color. It wouldn't be long before the limbs were bare skeletons waving to the harvest moon.

A crack of thunder and flash of light startled her out of her reverie.

"What the hell was that?" Abby yelled.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you." Clutching Teagan against her chest, she broke into a trot. As she rounded the corner, she found him.

"Oh, Cian." Not again!

Killian held their son's arms in a death grip, speaking furiously into his ear. Tears flowed. People stared. Shit.

Two hours later, they were back in the farmhouse, out in the country, safely away from any humans who could be struck by lightning that came out of nowhere. All three boys were passed out from excitement. Teagan sat propped in her swing, *not* sleeping, watching them fight. Again. Killian heard Mica's teeth grind together as she rounded on him, furious but trying to keep her voice down.

"For the last time, *NO*—I don't agree—he's just a little boy, Killian! I don't want to send him away."

They'd had this convo more times than he could count. She understood the logic. His wife wasn't stupid. Not by any stretch. She knew this was the right thing to do. Convincing her was another story. She wasn't stupid, but damn, she was stubborn. Sucking in another breath and praying for patience, again, he tried another approach.

"Babe, he's got to learn control. How will you explain this when they go to school next year? We already agreed not to home school them. They need to live a human existence. But we can't let him loose on the world until he controls his powers. It's not safe. Would you be able to live with yourself if someone was killed?"

"He's my baby! I don't want to let him go. You can't expect me to agree to this!"

"He's mine too, but he's not a baby anymore. I only want to keep him safe."

"There's another way. You know it!"

"No. There isn't."

Turning her back, she stared at the dark window, arms crossed like a shield, the reflection showing the anger in her eyes. Raising his gaze to Heaven, he drew in a deep, centering breath. *Zen*. He searched for it, but it was slipping through his fingers.

The next morning, he took the boys outside to give Mica some space to breathe. She had a long to-do list, and gets bitchy if she doesn't get to cross everything off. And it was going to storm again. Nothing unusual about that. It was fall in New York. Storms happened. The weather wasn't an issue. He could deal with anything Mother Nature decided to throw at them. After all, he could control the lightning if he chose to. It was one of his ancestral powers. As the descendent of a long line of priests going back centuries before the Druids got organized, he was the keeper of the old ways. Once upon a time, he'd been a simple village priest whose job was keeping people safe from curses and keeping the gods of the natural world content. With Mica by his side, his life had been perfect—until the day she was murdered by a demon, their unborn

daughter dying with her. At the time, he thought he'd never get past it, but Raphael had intervened and rewritten history. He'd found his soul mate again and they'd come full circle with their triplets, and finally, their daughter. He'd never been more content than he was now. He'd never been happier. Their lives were perfect again—except for this little, tiny, minor problem. Their eldest son had inherited his father's powers just as Killian had inherited his father's powers more than 3,000 years earlier. It was fate. It was destiny. It was tearing his perfect marriage apart.

Sweeping his glance across the threatening sky, he mentally calculated when the storm would arrive. They still had some time before any dangerous lightning would be close enough to force them back inside. Slamming the brakes on the unhelpful trip down Memory Lane, he turned his attention back to the front yard. He had guy shit to do with his boys.

In his mind, *guy shit* included baseball, camping, and eventually, marksmanship. Camping and marksmanship would have to wait. Today's focus was on baseball. The boys loved it, but they needed practice. Cian was up first. He was determined to be the world's best pitcher. Cian flung his arm back and lobbed a baseball. It landed in the leaves about twenty feet in front of Killian. "Good throw, son." He tossed the ball back to the boy, saying, "This time, lean into it. Try again."

Cian nodded soberly and threw the ball. It fell short again. Rafe and Michael hooted with laughter from the wraparound porch where they were waiting their turns. Neither was any better than their brother, but that didn't stop them from teasing him.

Cian's face flared with heat as he stomped over to pick up the ball. Turning recklessly, he whipped it towards Killian without aiming. The ball sailed wildly off course and landed in the trees. Rafe and Michael exploded with laughter and Cian exploded with anger.

A sudden bolt of lightning crashed into the side of the garage. Flames shot up the wall.

Aw, hell. Not again.

"Cian!" Mica came running through the front door just as Killian reached the water hose.

The physical damage wasn't too bad this time. The white paint was blistered and blackened, and a gaping hole revealed the pink insulation that nestled between the siding and the interior drywall. He trained the water on the hotspots while her eyes flicked back and forth from the building to Cian's guilty face. She was definitely not happy. "Cian! Get over here, *now!*"

Dragging his feet and glaring daggers at his brothers who were happily laughing at him, Cian shuffled toward his mother.

"What happened?" she demanded.

Staring at the ground, one tear rolling over his cheek, he mumbled, "I didn't mean it, Mommy. I swear it was an accident." He swallowed hard, sniffing back a nose full of snot before finally lifting his chin to give her the full force of his huge blue eyes. "I was just so mad!"

Mica frowned at the boy then locked her gaze to Killian's. *Don't you dare say I told you so.*

He responded coolly, *I don't need to, do I?*

She took a step forward to comfort Cian. Stopping abruptly, she frowned again. Killian held his breath. He could see the wheels turning in her mind. Would she stand her ground or cave? There had to be consequences for using his powers recklessly. Her disapproval was one of the strongest tools they had to mold his behavior, but she had a soft heart—too soft for the job of raising these boys. They would be warriors when they grew up. They were promised to the Four Horsemen. Millions would die. The screams would be deafening. When that time came, they would have to be heartless. He knew it; Raphael knew it.

Mica, however, did not agree.

Reaching out to pluck a stray leaf from his hair, Mica said kindly, "I know you didn't mean it, honey. Go inside and wash up for lunch." Catching Michael and Rafe's grinning faces, she snapped, "You two knock it off. Go wash up!"

After the three kids bolted into the house, she gave Killian the hairy eyeball. "Don't say it. I don't want to hear it again." With that, she walked stiffly away.

Damn it.

Later that night, Mica peeked into the nursery one more time, assuring herself that Teagan was actually asleep. Thank God. It was nearly midnight, and she was exhausted. She started stripping her shirt off before she made it to their bedroom. Halfway through the doorway, she paused. Would he be awake? Waiting for her? Wanting to talk? She didn't want to talk about Cian again. She just wanted this to go away.

"It's not going away, babe. Wishing won't make it happen." His voice was mellow, warm, nearly sad in the hushed room.

He sat with his bare back braced against the headboard, legs crossed at the ankles, laptop perched on his lap. She froze at the sound of his voice. As usual, he was right. It pissed her the hell off, too. Just once—once—she wanted him to be wrong. Cian was her baby, her sweet, kind, beautiful son. He wasn't old enough to go away for months like some kind of medieval squire! He was hers, and by God, she would raise him. *Here* with his brothers and baby sister. Raising him was *her* job. Not Raphael's.

Killian sat the laptop on the nightstand and rolled smoothly to his feet. Cupping her stiff shoulders in his palms, he locked his eyes to hers. "You're a smart woman. You know I'm right about this." Stroking her skin with the pads of his thumbs, he continued softly, "This isn't about you being a good mother. You're amazing. No one doubts that. This is about *control*. He's getting stronger every day. He's got to learn to control his powers before he hurts someone. We can't teach him here. It's not safe."

"Stop! Just . . . stop. I'm sick of talking about this." Her voice cracked and she bit down on her lip to keep a wave of frustrating emotion from sweeping her away.

"It'll be okay." He reached for her, hand brushing the softness of her back as she moved.

"No, it won't." Lurching away from his touch, she jerked the rest of her clothes off and stomped to the bathroom, locking the door behind her with a decisive click. Sagging against the wooden vanity, she squeezed her eyes against the tears that threatened. He was just a baby. *Just a baby*. She didn't care about the friggin' apocalypse. They had time to get ready. She'd made Killian and Raphael promise the kids would have a normal childhood with normal problems. Now Raphael wanted to take that away . . . and Killian was pressuring her to get on board. *Damn them both!*

With a ragged sigh, she let the dam break, tears flowing as sobs shook her. Then Killian's arms were around her, cuddling her close, holding her like he'd never let her go. Whispering against her hair, stroking her back, calming her . . . *loving* her until the raw panic drifted away, leaving an unsettling feeling of loss in its wake. As her tears slowed to a trickle, he dropped tender kisses along her hairline, smoothing stray tendrils away from her face.

"Don't shut me out," he murmured against her ear. "We're in this together."

The desperation in his voice tugged at her. His emotions slammed her like an avalanche. His pain was palpable even as he tried to bury it to be strong for her. She trembled against the surging need washing against her. He was her soul mate, her one destined love. He was her

everything. And he was crushed by her retreat. Shutting him out wounded him more than any weapon she could conjure.

“Mica, please . . .” He caught her mouth with his, gently questioning, tugging her lower lip until she clutched his head in her hands and took control with an urgency that surprised her.

Dragging her mouth away, she panted, “I’m still mad at you,” before pulling him closer.

He chuckled low in his throat, voice turning harsh and sexy. “Be mad if you want but let me love you.”

As she plundered his mouth, he slid his hand between her thighs, stroking with the rhythm of their tongues. Bending her over his arm, he dipped his head to press kisses from one breast to the other, clever fingers still working magic until she cried out, arching her back, delicious orgasm rolling through her. Before the tremors could slow, he propped her on the edge of the vanity and dragged her ankles to his shoulders.

Hours later, he kissed her fingers, one by one, before settling his mouth on her ring finger. The gleaming gold band rested right where he’d placed it five years earlier. That band, the same one he’d given her in the time that history called the Bronze Age, meant everything to him. She was his then; she was his now. She would be his for all eternity. She’d sworn to stand by him and she had. So far.

Hating the distance growing between them and needing to connect with her, Killian had taken her from the bathroom to the bedroom in a whirlwind of sex that left her wet, bruised, and limp with exhaustion. Just how she liked it. “I love you so much it hurts sometimes,” he whispered into the darkness. He brought her hand to his chest and pressed it against his heart. Its violent rhythm from their lovemaking had settled into a steady thump of satisfaction. He wasn’t sure he could move if an entire horde of demons attacked. Mica had fallen into a sated sleep.

He kissed her palm and studied the pearly rune on the back of her hand. He’d carved that rune into her tender flesh, making her bleed, using that blood to bind them together for her protection. That bond had awakened his memories and hers, starting them on the path to finding each other again. That simple bit of magic had changed them both. After 3,000 years, he’d found her again. Looking down at her face pressed into his chest, he sighed, bringing her closer yet. She was precious. She was fierce. She was *glowing* in her sleep.

What now?

In her dream, Mica stood before a yawning chasm with her back to a forest full of malevolent spirits. The hair on the nape of her neck rose; her scalp itched with the urge to look behind her, but there was no time for distractions. There was no time for fear. Cian waited on the other side of the chasm. His feet were only inches from the edge; his eyes blinded by a gleaming ray of light. He stared over the empty space, mouth opened in a silent scream.

Suddenly, the light vanished. The darkness was absolute. Cian’s scream echoed, faded . . . until it stopped completely.

“No!” Racing to the cliff’s edge, Mica tumbled forward as the soft earth gave way.

Falling, falling . . . until she landed on a slab of grey granite that snapped her spine on impact. Lying sprawled as a rag doll, she braced for the expected pain but none came. “Cian?”

She turned her head to search for him. He lay battered and broken on the rocky ground just three feet away. “No! God, no!”

Wincing in pain, he smiled over at her, his cobalt blue eyes alight with internal flame, his *saol* outlining his tiny body. His outstretched hand reached for hers; his fingers gleamed to dispel the pitch darkness of the ravine. “Don’t cry, Mommy. I’ll save us. Trust me. I have the power now.”

Just as his tiny fingertips touched hers, a shadow swooped between them, leaving her gasping awake in Killian’s arms.

“I can’t do this anymore.” She spoke the words precisely, her enunciation clear. “I won’t.” The outwardly calm tone barely masked the tenuous grip she had on her emotions. After last night’s terrifying dream, every instinct screamed to take her boy and run, run, run away. Surely Killian would understand? He pressed his lips together and pushed away from the counter he was leaning against. Breakfast had been tense, uncomfortable. The silence was painful.

“Mica, he’ll be fine. It’s only for a few weeks. He’s always fine, isn’t he? Don’t you trust me?” His lip curled up on one side in the slightest hint of a smile. He rolled his shoulders in a stretch before taking her hand and giving it a squeeze that was supposed to be reassuring, but was really just annoying.

She tugged at her hand, but he only tightened his grip. Beastly man. “You know perfectly well I trust you. Don’t be stupid. It’s just . . . just the dreams. Something’s coming. I can feel it.” Whirling away with sudden fire in her eyes, she challenged, “Don’t you trust *me*? I’m the psychic one, remember? Don’t you trust my visions anymore? I’m not usually wrong, am I?”

He tugged her back around, pulling her close enough to see the black stubble along his jaw. “Those dreams don’t have enough detail to be premonitions. Look, I get it. You’re worried. I know you are. But try to be reasonable—”

“Reasonable?” Her voice shot up so high he flinched like she’d slapped him. “*Reasonable?*”

“Is this a bad time? I don’t want to intrude, but I need to speak with you both.”

She took advantage of Raphael’s interruption to snatch her hand out of Killian’s grip. She glared at him for good measure before aiming her annoyance at Raphael. Normally she would have a smile for him, but he was right in the middle of their argument. She just couldn’t come up with one at the moment. He was lucky she wasn’t throwing dishes.

As usual, Raphael didn’t miss a thing. He glanced between them with a frown on his aristocratic face. His usually sparkling eyes were somber as he rested them on her. She swallowed a smartass comment before it could form. No matter how mad she was, she wouldn’t be disrespectful to the archangel who’d brought her and Killian together after 3,000 years of searching. But still . . . He wasn’t in her good graces at the moment. It was his fault her and Killian had been fighting for months. It was his fault she had been torn in half, divided between her baby and the greater good of all humankind. And yes, it was *his* fault she had been weeping and moody ever since Teagan was born three months ago.

Seriously, babe? Killian’s mouth twitched with his thoughts.

Okay, maybe not. That was possibly a wee bit unreasonable. He didn’t get her pregnant after all.

The two men stared at each other for several heartbeats before Raphael nodded once and turned his attention back to her. Arching one finely-shaped brow, he said calmly, “Surely you cannot blame me for postpartum depression, my child. Is it not common to have hormonal swings after pregnancy?” He looked to Killian for reinforcement. His beseeching expression was almost funny.

Killian stared at the ceiling and whistled instead of jumping into that boiling pot. She cracked a reluctant smile. Her husband wasn't stupid. He wouldn't disrespect his maker, but he'd never cross his wife.

She divided her glare between the two of them and ground out, "It's not polite to use telepathy in front of someone else. I do *not* have postpartum depression. I'm *not* having hormone swings either. What I am is pissed off that you two keep taking Cian away for training. Every time he comes back, he's different. He's too quiet, stuck in his head. It's not natural, and I don't like it."

Straddling a kitchen chair, Killian argued reasonably, "First of all, yes, you are having hormone swings. Trust me on this. You've been snapping my head off over nothing and crying over toilet paper commercials."

She gasped and sputtered, "That's not true!" They were puppy food commercials. Totally different.

Leaning forward, he said, "Oh, yes, it is. You haven't been yourself in months."

Raphael nodded sagely. "Killian's right. You've not been happy the last few times I've come."

"That's because you keep taking my son away from me! What do you expect me to do? I'm *not* happy about that. I'm *not* okay with this plan. But I don't have a say in any of this! You two make all of the decisions, and I have to agree regardless of my feelings. All for some prophesized apocalypse that may not happen for a thousand more years! If at ALL!"

"We've been through this several times already. You know perfectly well that I do not have the date of Armageddon. Clearly it's not happening until the boys have reached manhood. After that? Only God knows." Usually unruffled, Raphael fiddled with a pen lying on the counter. Tapping it absently, he searched her eyes with real concern. "I thought you understood the need to train the boys to use their powers while they're just beginning to develop? Surely you realize how important it is to keep them secret? If they don't control them, they will be discovered. That would put them in danger. There are many who would exploit them or destroy them if they could."

"They can be trained here. The house is shielded against demons. We don't have any close neighbors. It's perfect."

Killian shook his head. "It's *not* perfect. Cian could take out the house and everyone inside! It's much safer to take him away from the property. If there's an accident, no one will be there to see it."

She rounded on him and shouted, "I am so done with this! As of right now, you don't have my agreement to take Cian away. I know you'll still do it, but you better understand the consequences of pissing me off. End of discussion!"

"That didn't go well." Raphael rubbed at his jaw, clearly considering his next words carefully. After a beat, he asked, "Do you really think it's simply hormones?"

Killian groaned aloud. "I honestly don't know what to think. I thought I knew . . . but now?" He stared after the sound of her footsteps. She was going to the basement to work out. He pitied the punching bag.

"Perhaps I owe her an apology once she calms down," Raphael mused.

Before Killian could comment, Raphael was gone.

He pushed himself to his feet. An apology from Raphael wasn't going to fix this. Mica was a wreck inside. She was doing her best to hide it, but he knew her thoughts. They weren't going to fix this problem right now, but he could let her vent. And beat the crap out of him on the mats. Yanking open the basement door, he stripped off his shirt and headed down. At least one of them would feel better.