

Chapter 1

“And that is why Hades is the King of the Underworld, Ashley.” A smarmy-looking male demon filled the television screen, talking to his co-host.

The female demon looked at him with her ebony black eyes and bouffant red hair and gave a fake laugh. “You are so right, Steve!”

Ashley turned to another camera. “Alright, Amanda, how is the weather looking for the upcoming Fire and Brimstone Ball?”

The screen switched over to a trim feminine demon with glasses and black hair. She smiled into the camera revealing straight white teeth that were sharpened into points.

“That’s right, Ashley and Steve. Don’t forget the annual event is this Saturday at His Highness’ castle. It looks like the morning will bring a light swarm of locusts, but will stop before the ball begins. The high will be about 110 degrees with the low around 97. We should have clear red skies for the big event. Back to you, Ashley.”

“In other news,” Ashley said, turning to the camera, “Twenty-five year old Dot, daughter of Hades, was found to be interfering with the lost souls again...”

Dot clicked off the TV with the remote, sighing as she pet her red-eyed, white bunny. She couldn’t care less what the news had to say about her. It was probably taken out of context anyway. “Well, it looks like Mother will have nice weather for the ball, Beezle.”

She picked up the little fluff ball and held him so that they were eye-to-eye. “Do I really have to go?”

Beezle just looked at her, his pink nose wiggling.

“Well you’re no help,” she said, and lowered Beezle to the pink duvet on her bed.

Dot looked different from the demons and lost souls of Hades. Her hair was a light blond with big curls falling around her shoulders. Her luminous eyes were a clear shade of blue. No one else in Hades had blue eyes, not even her parents. Her mother made sure to remind her of that often. She also liked to point out her figure.

Everyone in her family was tall and thin, except Father. Father was a tall and imposing figure standing at seven and a half feet tall. Dot, however, was only about 5’4”, with a very voluptuous figure. Her mother would often look at her chest and scoff, asking her if she was related to a cow with her big “udders.” Dot had a narrow waist, but her hips and backside curved generously.

It wasn’t just her physical appearance that set her apart. Dot behaved differently than everyone else in Hades. She liked to smile and say hi to everyone that she met, whether they were souls, demons, or monsters.

Her twin sister, Daya, was a chip off the old block, cold and unfeeling like their father and even more like their mother, with her surly disposition and bad temper. Daya couldn’t care less about the lost souls that came into Hades every day.

Dot, on the other hand, felt terrible for the ferry loads of souls that came over from the Topside. She would often sneak down to the River Styx and watch as eyeless souls stepped off the boat.

Living in the Underworld of Darkness was hard for Dot. Misery and loathing with lost souls, demons, and monsters, it surrounded her constantly. And because she was so different, she was ridiculed and put down by nearly everyone. It seemed the news was always announcing something that she had done. The only things that brought her peace were her flowers and her bunny. Beezle was the only light in the endless darkness.

The door burst open making Dot jump. Her sister strode in with a confidence and swagger that a princess of Hades should have. She was as dark as Dot was light. Her deep brown eyes, so dark they were almost black, glowed with an evil glint.

“Hola, bitchola,” she said as she walked in and plopped down on Dot’s bed.

Dot asked with irritation, “Really, Daya? Can’t you knock for once?”

She pulled Beezle close. The poor rabbit trembled slightly after being startled by her sister’s sudden entrance. Stroking his silky white fur, she scooted over for Daya.

“What for? It’s not like you’re doing anything bad.” Daya looked down admiring her stiletto shaped nails in her favorite color, Blood Red.

“Not like me!” Daya gave an evil little giggle that sent a shiver down Dot’s spine.

Dot eyed her suspiciously. “Do I dare ask?”

“Oh, don’t look down your disapproving nose at me. We live in Hades. We’re Hades’ children, for Hell’s sake!”

“You seem to enjoy that fact a little too much.”

“Well it’s better than sitting around being Mary Sunshine, petting your stupid rodent,” Daya said.

“Hey, leave Beezle out of this!” Dot snapped hugging the bunny closer.

Daya rolled her eyes and stood, smoothing her black silk shirt over her trim waist.

“Anyway, Mom wanted me to come get you. Dinner’s ready.”

Daya headed toward the door, her six-inch high heeled, snake skin boots tapping on the hardwood floor.

Halfway out, she turned back. “Oh, by the way, Mom’s in a mood.”

“What else is new?” Dot muttered. “She’s always in a mood. Just give her another drink.”

“Well worse than usual. She’s stressing over the ball this weekend.”

“Great,” Dot said under her breath.

She placed Beezle gently back into his cage inside the closet before following her sister down the long staircase.

Running her hand along the cold black banister, Dot slowly descended down the marble steps. If she wasn’t the daughter of Hades, she would skip the ball entirely. But she was royalty and needed to be there to support her mother and father. She’d rather sit in her secret flower garden and hang out with Beezle.

Reaching the bottom step, she turned down the long hallway to the dining room. Her steps slowed the closer she got. She wasn’t in the mood for her mother’s drunkenness, cutting remarks, and disdain.

Voices drifted out from inside.

“Where is that no-good sister of yours?” her mother’s voice snapped.

“She’s coming, Mother. I told her dinner was ready,” Daya said.

“I’m surprised she’s not here already so she could stuff her face. Is it me or is her ass getting bigger?” Dot shook her head in disgust.

Before Daya could respond, Dot walked in and nodded. “Mother.”

“Oh, there you are. I was wondering where you were.” Asta smiled coldly at her with dead green eyes, holding a fluted glass filled with a lime-green colored drink.

Asta was the matriarch of the family. Long ago she had caught Hades’s eye with her fire-red hair that glowed when she got mad. And when she got angry, bad things happened. Dot knew that from experience.

Asta glided to her seat at the long ebony dining table. A soul servant stiffly pulled back the onyx chair for her. Daya waved off the soul servant and pulled out her own chair. Dot headed to her seat next to her sister. The same soul pulled out her chair.

“Thank you,” Dot said softly.

“Dot, we *do not* thank the servants,” Asta said, her frosty voice whipping across the table at her. She took a sip of her drink, glaring at Dot over the rim.

“Sorry, Mother,” Dot muttered, looking down at the table.

Her mother was about to verbally assault her again when the door swung open. There stood the king of Hades in all of his glory. He was a tall imposing figure, as the king of darkness should be. Everything about him was dark , jet black hair, black pointy eyebrows, and infernal eyes that held a dark look of...sadness.

“Hello, Daddy,” Daya said. She beamed at her father, excitement in her eyes.

“Welcome home, darling.” Asta’s cold, frosty demeanor warmed up towards her husband. Dot was surprised that her thin face didn’t crack with the smile she was giving him.

“Father,” Dot said politely.

Hades wore a navy pinstriped suit with a deep red tie. He sauntered behind Asta’s chair, stopping to give her gaunt, sunken cheek a kiss. He then took his place at the head of the table, looking at his family with forlorn eyes.

“How was your day, Daddy?” Daya asked. She was so eager to hear about her father’s day, wanting to learn more about the family business.

“Oh, you know,” he sighed.

Daya looked at her father in confusion. “What is it?” she asked.

Hades ran a hand through his rich dark hair as the soup course was served. He picked up his spoon and tried to put his thoughts into words. “It was just a rough day. Damning souls...making deals with stupid humans...It gets exhausting. Thousands of years of this...It never ends.”

“It sounds like so much fun!” Daya gushed.

“I know it does, little one. But after thousands of years...it gets old.”

“Not this again,” Asta said in a disapproving tone. She shook her empty glass at one of the servants, who scurried away to get her another drink.

Hades turned to his bride his dusky brows lowering over his fathomless eyes. “Don’t start with me, demon!” he barked. “If it wasn’t for my *brothers*,” he said, spitting the word out with disdain, “I’d be in charge of the sky or the waters. But no, I get stuck in this underworld of despair for forever!”

“Enough! Not in front of the girls!” Asta snapped. “Dot may get ideas.”

Dot looked up from her boar-head soup. “What?” She looked around. “Don’t drag me into this, Mother!”

Asta snorted a very unladylike snort. “Please. You walk around Hades with your head up your ass, greeting people like you work at an amusement park on the Topside.”

Dot rolled her wide eyes.

“Don’t roll your eyes at me, girl! It’s the truth and you know it!”

Hades pressed his fingers against his temple. “Stop you two! You’re giving me a hell of a headache.”

All three ladies looked down at their bowls, feeling chastised. The servant reappeared, silently placing a fresh drink in front of Asta.

“Sorry, Father,” Dot murmured.

“Sorry, Daddy.” This came from Daya.

“I’m sorry, darling,” Asta purred.

The table was silent as the soup bowls were cleared away and the main course was served: wild wildebeest. Dot picked at her meal. The meat tasted too gamey for her.

Asta took a sip from her drink, then picked at the meal with her fork.

“So Daya, what did you do today?” Her green eyes scanned across the table.

Daya finished chewing the mouthful of meat. “Oh Mother, it was a great day! I recruited some new souls that haven’t been in Hades long. They were computer hackers on the Topside.” She picked up her lily-white napkin to wipe a speck of food from the corner of her blood red lips. “I recruited them to make computer viruses and phishing scams that target the humans!” She tinkled a wicked little laugh.

Hades picked up his leg of wildebeest and took a big bite, smiling as he chewed, a glint in his eyes. The hoof was still on the leg, making Dot shiver in disgust.

“Good job, Daya. Your energy is refreshing. Punishing humans through their computers is a wonderful idea!”

Daya beamed from her father’s compliment. She looked at her mother who radiated pride. “Good job, my dear girl. Such a clever young demon.”

Daya turned to her sister with a smug smile on her face. “So, what did you do today, Dot?”

Dot glared at her, wanting to throttle her. “I worked with the caterer today, testing out the dishes for the Fire and Brimstone Ball tomorrow night.”

“Of course it involved food,” Asta hissed, glaring at Dot.

Dot’s eyes snapped to her mother, her patience wearing thin. She was so tired of her disapproval over everything she did. Dot had tried everything, from being nice to her to being nasty. It didn’t matter. Her mother was always cruel.

“And what’s that supposed to mean, Mother?” Dot asked, raising her eyebrows.

Asta slowly lowered her fork to her plate. She placed her elbows on the table, leaning in as she laced her boney fingers together. “It means you could really stand to lay off the food.”

Dot was done with a capital D. She was tired of the cutting remarks, the disdain in her mother’s voice, and the daggers that her green eyes would pierce through her. A girl could only take so much. Her mother had always treated her this way, since she was a young child, always playing favorites between her and her sister. Dot threw her napkin down on her plate in anger. The chair scraped loudly against the marble floor as she stood.

“I have had it! I am done with your little snippy comments, Mother. If you have a problem with me, which obviously you do, then come out with it. You have been this way to me since...forever! What have I ever done to you to make you hate me so much?” Dot turned towards her, glaring at her.

Asta’s thin red eyebrows raised at her daughter’s insolence. “Do you really want to know, dear daughter?”

Dot fisted her hands, placing them on her hips. “Yes Mother, please enlighten me.”

With cold dead eyes her mother replied with as much hatred as she could muster. “You were born!”

SLAM!

Hades’s fist crashed onto the table as he stood. The plates jumped and glasses tipped while a servant dropped a tray in the doorway.

“Asta!” he bellowed, his roar echoing in the dining hall.

Asta and Daya jumped at the sound, both of them startled. Hades lowered back down to his seat before placing his hands on his lowered head, shaking it as he said, “Why...why...why?”

And that was when Hades began to cry. At first it was quiet, then his shoulders began to shake as his sobs grew. He looked up as they all watched the black tears roll down his cheeks.

Dot couldn’t bear to see her father cry. She quietly pushed in her chair and walked to the ornate door. Looking back at her sobbing father, she slipped out the door, shutting it softly.

Dot was halfway down the hall before silent tears spilled down her cheeks. She had done well at keeping it together in front of her mother. She ran to her bedroom and grabbed Beezle from his cage, the only thing that truly loved her for her. By this time, her makeup was sliding down her face. She grabbed a tissue and mopped up the damage, hiccupping with little sobs. There was only one place she could go that would make her happy. She gave one more snuffle and then left the castle to go to the River Lethe, carrying Beezle in her arms. She needed to get away from her family, from the castle, and go to her peaceful world.

