Chapter III

Hope In Hell

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Even deep within the Gothic bowls of our haunted mansion, this decrepit air is far more sad and gloomy than usual.

A glowing television flickers with red static center of the living room, while two large fireplaces bellow open flames on opposite ends like imposing hellish bonfires, but offering neither warmth nor comfort to me now.

“*I can't fucking believe this bullshit. Ten million channels from the underworld we’re paying for, and we can't even get Food Network uptop.”*

That stupid drunk ghost belches as he flips through all the dead air, tossing a coffin shaped remote onto the sofa next to Beatrice, sickly looking in obvious discomfort and pain, her legs draped limply over the leather cushions.

Her usual coat of brown now sports a more grayish color, her fangs occasionally dripping sickly black tar, significantly decreased in size while her many eyes wince and squint into the open flames across from us.

My heels softly click against the floor as I approach her with a frosted pink donut in my claws, quietly sniffing with my head low, the crimson remnants of blood staining down my distraught porcelain face.

"So...All this time, the spider was...Living?"

I shoot him an angry and venomous glare, scowling through his green transparent face with more bloody tears forming across my slit vampiric eyes.

"...Well I certainly didn't know that. Thought it might've been a parlor trick or somethin’ you were doing."

There was a time I would have smacked him upside the head. Made a joke about Dan Aykroyd fucking his mother. Dig my claws into his ectoplasmic face to remind him the dead can still feel pain.

But in this moment, all of my strength is reserved for holding back heartbroken sobs.

Slowly I walk closer to my dying girlfriend, nuzzled on a small mound of pillows, her fuzzy eight legs twitching against my favorite werewolf pelt blanket.

"She's not alive, she's just...still got her foot in the door is all."

Marley floats towards his box as I set the donut before Beatrice, hiding my defeat beneath a small, friendly smile.

"Hey babe....I'm gonna fix this, okay?...How are you holding up?" My voice whispers, and I follow her wincing eyes up to the ceiling, noticing a cobweb that hadn't been there before.

'SCARED'

One of her legs reaches out to me, twitching and trembling, and I gently take her delicate paw within my own.

My black eyelids droop as more red tears overwhelm my sight, using my arm to clean my face. Behind us Marley clicks and clangs around his wooden torture box of crap and useless junk.

"...You wanna run that by me one more time?" I hear his ghostly voice cough, sniffing as I turn my head around my body to face him like Regan would.

"You know how witches keep pets?"

"I'm not familiar."

"Yeah. But she is."

"....Huh?"

My head spins back around as I rise up, walking past the flickering television and towards the left side fireplace, my long talons reaching out to fix a small black rose on its mantle.

I feel so distraught I barely even notice when my husband joins us, enraptured by the glowing phone in his hands, casting an inviting hue over his young and boyish face.

"...Are you sure you don't know any deathly spirits like this?" I hear his deep voice, normally so sexy and delightful to my ears, though now it's hard to feel any excitement.

"Nah you're thinkin' of my Uncle Marley. Man, that fucking guy….Hey sweetheart, you think I'm annoying, be glad you don't know him."

There's more racket and scraping as he digs around over the contents of his box, tossing a sharp bladed apache knife that sticks into the wall behind him, before examining an old flintlock pistol.

"...Or was he my great uncle? Eh, whichever one was always showing up unannounced like he owned the damn **burp** place. Jackass….What about you, bloodbag?"

Nefastus surveys my backside, trailing his red eyes across my open skin, before returning his gaze into the glowing phone screen.

"I've heard of different manifestations of Death, but never anything as twisted as you described."

He rests his tall and slender body against the entryway, looking up from his phone once more to study the beautiful Gothic architecture of our intimate home.

"I mean, I know a lot of monsters, I honestly thought he'd be the type of guy you could at least sit down and play a round of chess with."

I can feel those perfect hunter eyes scanning me, and I close my own when his claws touch my back, his whispering voice welcomed against my skin.

"I'm only getting a faint signal from Hell, I can't smell any living for miles outside, and that X thing you showed me is actually usable for once..." Slowly I feel myself turn in place by his magic, something that would have aroused me to no end just a few hours prior.

"...Cara, whatever happened out there…I think this world is dying." He holds me tightly by my shoulders. Even at 6'5 in my heels, he's still quite taller than me.

The truth was I couldn't care less about the stupid world dying, what has it ever done for me anyway? My only world that mattered was here.

There's a long silence as we stare into each other's crimson eyes, finally broken by Marley's echoey voice nervously laughing.

"...Guess you're right, witch. It's probably about time I start lookin' for another place to haunt up." I look into his blank eyes, scowling again as the green spirit floats down to sit against the carpet.

"You know, find a nice upper class family to rattle the chains around, freak the dog out, maybe write a little blood on the walls when I'm bored….Eh, wonder what the Cheneys are up to now."

His box closes with a slam, resting his translucent arms over its lid like a bar counter, now clutching a whiskey bottle within his ghostly hand.

"...Can I talk to you upstairs?" My husband keeps my shoulder as I walk back over to Beatrice, gently petting the top of her fuzzy head with my thumb.

Her pedipalps twitch as more bile leaks from her fangs, and I give a small nod, letting a single streak of blood trail down my cheek...

As Nefastus leads me from the room, Marley taps his fingers against his chain covered box, slowly rising up to float closer to her, bottle still in hand.

"So uh.....You checked out pretty rough too, huh?"

He looks down at Beatrice, her only response being a few more pained winces as her legs twitch.

"...Yeah, well.....You know what they say. Life sucks and then you fucking die horribly." He tilts his bottle over the donut before her, letting a river of booze pour over the unwanted pastry.

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Lord Nefastus really was an enjoyable sight, even in these depressing times. With his black jeans and tight fitting shirt, he looks just as handsome as the night we met, almost like a dark porcelain Ken doll from Hell.

But rather than looking at my yummy prince, I was too busy staring up into the night sky where the moon used to be. Now just a bright light, pained human expressions forming and reforming with agonizing cries carried by the night wind.

"Did you know about this?" His voice draws my attention back into those beautiful eyes, and it takes me a moment of collection before I respond.

"What....Yeah, they burned her but...I didn't know...*that thing* came after her, too."

"Well I've known Beatrice longer than anyone. She's like family, certainly more than any of my shitbag relatives. But we have another problem I don't think you realize."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean when's the last time you fed?"

My eyes return to the fading stars, letting out a sigh as I try and remember my last kill. Thanks to Halloween, I could only recall cheating my diet the past week.

"...I dunno, few days ago, why?"

"Well if there's no more humans to eat, then there's no more us." His claws grip tightly into his arms, and my voice releases a tiny gasp.

"We can starve to death...?" My expression becomes more fearful, while he just shakes his head.

"Not exactly. What was that old picture you showed me, with the Count Doorlocks?"

My head tilts confusingly, while I purse my midnight coated lips.

".....Count Orlok?" I correct him, after taking a moment to finally realize what he's talking about.

"Right, the gangly looking thing. Ever wonder where the inspiration for that comes from? We can get real un-pretty real fast."

My own arms cross over my hefty bosom, resting myself against the balcony. I can feel the cool wind blowing against my exposed skin, and I turn away from him to look out across the vast countryside.

“.....I've done this to her.”

“What?”

“When I summoned you back from Purgatory…I caught that thing's attention…This is all my fault.”

"...Listen Cara, the rest of our kind can go fuck themselves. But I can't watch something like vampiric regression happen to you."

As I listen to him, I run my claws together before draping my arm over the ledge, thinking briefly about how unnatural it was to not hear a wolf’s howl or even see one single bat flying.

"Or to me for that matter.....Or my brother Grishnak, since he's the only one who visits us." Nefastus stops when he takes notice of how disturbed I look.

On top of everything, I still can't get over the feeling of that cunt's fingers twisting around inside my head, or the painful memories she was poking into.

My eyes flutter away more tears, tilting my face down while my husband takes a more solemn look across his own young expression.

"Hey...Cara, look...You clearly knew what you were doing when you saved me. So any ideas you have, I'll follow."

"Really?" His fingers interlock with mine, our respective claws gently touching the other's hand.

"You're my Queen of the Night. Whatever your play is here, I'll back you up."

My lips briefly smile at his sweet words, before descending back into a sad frown.

"Even without my spellbook, I could still take the burden of her soul. But there's a lot of hellfire in me....I....I don't think I could do that to her."

There's a quiet trembling in my voice, studying his shirt collar at my eye level.

“So…what can we do about that?”

"...I know of a tree on the borders of Hell, one whose roots touch into the Ninth Circle." My voice whispers.

"All the way down to Treachery? But that would mean..."

My head slowly nods to his words.

"Maybe the ice that keeps Lucifer dormant...It might be enough to also keep Beatrice safe within me."

"And...What about the other problem?"

It's hard for me to care about anyone else, but he does have a point. Starving into mindless regression is not how I wanted to spend the holidays. I had to find some way to kick this bitch into submission.

"Beatrice outsmarted that thing somehow. With my help she can do it again."

"...I don't know, Cara…If it really is the Grim Reaper we're dealing with here, then this thing has been around for even longer than we have."

"So? Maxwell's been on earth longer than anyone-"

Suddenly my voice stops, and my eyelids open wide. A flickering pentagram light bulb appears above my head, and my black lips curl into a large fanged smile.

"Wait....That's it!" I cackle, rushing across the balcony. Nefastus follows me to the furthest ledge, and my devilish grin only widens as I look to the ocean of black tendrils reaching up into the sky.

“Cara-Li-Li….Cara-Li-Li….Cara-Li-Li…”

That stupid bitch was so focused on digging around my brain looking for Beatrice...

But she doesn't know anything about my pet shoggoth.

"I don't think Death realizes the creative mind it just fucked with." I grip the iron ledge, descending into evil laughter.

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My hips give a tantalizing shake as I strut back through the living room, cigarette holder in my left hand claws. Marley sticks his head through the wall as I pass his box, following me with pupil-less eyes.

"Don't touch my shit while I'm gone, loser." I puff a skull his direction, reaching down to gently scoop Beatrice from the couch.

The poor spider feels much lighter in my grasp than usual, her legs wrapping around my hands in a fuzzy hug, and I place her inside my cleavage, feeling her nuzzle around between my breasts.

"And put something out for Maxwell if you still want a room when I get back." I give another angry puff, stepping down the hallway while she makes herself comfortable in my boobs.

"Are you so sure you're coming back, witch?" The ghost calls after me, causing me to pause. My claws grip themselves into fists, and hot flames slowly ignite across my hands.

"That's the thing about me, ghost. Just ask my fans." I tilt my head, reaching back as fire completely engulfs my wrists.

"I'm always.....*COMING!*"

FWOOOOOOOSH!!!

The front entrance disappears with a loud explosion, burning wood and decor flying all over the place, the surviving paintings all looking at me with frightened eyes.

"....Maybe pick up some Tampax while you're out..."

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Smoking rubble continues to sting my nostrils as I set across the open field, listening to the faint pained screams emanating from the far distance as we leave through the crater in our home.

Walking at my side is my husband, now clad in a very sleek and sexy leather cloak, the light from his phone illuminating his beautiful face.

"...This thing is amazing! And yet you keep insisting it isn't magic..."

It's been about thirty minutes since our departure, though I could still clearly see the Phlegethon with my perfect vision, the front entrance smoking from my outburst.

Behind our Manor a vast forest of Maxwell's tendrils writhe in the air, his slimy tentacles reaching into the sky towards the absent moon while his unforming mouths gurgle mindlessly.

“Cara-Li-Li….Cara-Li-Li….Cara-Li-Li…”

My attention is suddenly pulled away from the cute shoggoth when I feel Beatrice sinking deeper and scampering against my breasts.

"Careful, sweetie." I fix the top of my gown so her eyes all visibly pop back up, her fuzzy legs tickling me as she nestles around.

"Remember when you almost fainted in there."

As our dirt path transitions to a stone bridge, I soon find the scenery changing to a vast pumpkin patch, the endless gourds stretching for miles as the three of us pass a few with scribbled and half-carved faces.

I've still yet to see a single bat or night creature, the only noise just our footsteps, with the occasional sigh from the wind.

"Cara, look at this! I've got ten likes, eleven with yours!”

Nefastus beams with a smile, showing me his phone, while my own face remains sad. I let myself trail back down to the dirt path, the spider in my chest tightly hugging onto my right boob for support…

Ever since the night I died, Beatrice has always been there for me. She's more than just a fun girlfriend or a useful minion, she was like the little sister I've always wanted...Even if she was technically five centuries my senior.

I still clearly remember when I first awoke to find myself a vampire, and how she crawled across my open palm to say hello. Such a giant spider should have terrified me or made me faint, but instead I found her…*beautiful.*

It was that moment with her when I first realized I'd become something better.

This was beyond heartbreaking to feel her suffering. I wish I could switch places with her...If there was anyone here actually deserving of punishment...

"The autumn days...grow short and cold..." My voice wistfully sighs out in a quiet tone, kicking a small pumpkin with my heel.

"It's Christmas ti- OW!" A sharp, intense burn suddenly fills my mouth, my tongue briefly feeling like it's on blessed fire.

I cool my mouth with a few frantic hand waves, while Nefastus looks at me with concern, gently brushing my flowing locks over my shoulder.

"You okay?" He asks in a lower tone, and my slit irises glance down, unable to meet his gaze while I rub my face, still wincing slightly from the pain.

"...Yeah. Just thinking of all the ways I'd like to kill the Yeast Infection From Yuggoth."

"Hey that's not cool. I actually dated a Yithian girl before we met."

"Really, how'd that work out?"

"....Ehh she only wanted me for my body." He grumbles, placing his phone inside his cloak as we quicken our pace...

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The pumpkin patch soon disappears, replaced with a thick, dense cornfield, stalks reaching up even taller than we are.

I think for a moment how much this reminds me of the type of place I would've played in all day as a kid...But that feels like another life, even before I was a vampire.

This field seems almost endless though, and we continue walking for what feels like hours, before a sudden shifting in the air catches my attention...

"...Hm..."

Instantly my hunter instincts kick in. There's definitely something else consciously dead nearby, and my irises dilate wide open as I stop in place. I watch my unholy betrothed go on for a moment, glancing behind me as the stalks begin faintly glowing…

But my senses relax when the only thing that emerges is that stupid ghost, his arms crossed and giving me an irritated glare from his empty eyesockets.

Ugh…

"...Someone order ghosted dick?" I sigh, pushing Beatrice back up in my chest before storming away from the spirit.

He just lifts his box under his arm and floats beside me, scowling the whole time.

"Yeah, your boyfriend did, actually."

A chill rushes through my dead flesh when he phases through me, and I have to stop in place to shiver. My eyes fill with small pentagrams as he turns back around, fishing inside his box.

"Oh, and you forgot this in the top shelf liquor cabinet." His chains rattle as he tosses a portable car vacuum to my heels, and I smirk when I see the Ghostbusters logo drawn in my handwriting.

"I have my own booze, witch. And by the way, the whole vacuum cleaner thing is honestly bordering on racial stereotype, you should be embarrassed."

"Then how'd ya know it was rigged?" I grin, hands on my hips. But the specter just gives me a devilish smile in return.

"Same way I know Lincoln was rigged."

My eyes bulge wide open at hearing that, before returning back into a scowl.

".....Bullshit….."

"That's right, stay in bed little sheep." Marley cackles evilly as I rush ahead with a huff, kicking up chunks of dirt and grass with my heels...

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The night breeze sways the corn stalks around us like an enticing dance, seeming to bring with it the faint cry of a woman screaming, before another wisp carries the tormentful agony of a man's voice yelling in pain.

But I can focus on neither.

With his chains rattling, and his dumbass box dragging along at a snail's pace, we were bound to reach Hell sometime next century.

"Come on...Stupid thing..." I hear his ghostly voice grumble out a poem of curses as he yanks the translucent container along with him.

My half lidded eyes roll back towards Nefastus, still engrossed by his phone beside me.

"This is gonna take forever with him dragging his shit. He's slowing us down and wasting time Beatrice doesn't have."

"Trust me, he's got his uses. And you know, he has been my best friend for like, three centuries now. "

It seems almost impossible to believe that such a hot guy would pal around with this loser. Then again, ever since he bit me, I have seen a lot of impossible things...But nothing that far fetched.

"No he hasn't! He's a fucking criminal mooching off you because you're a Prince of Hell! He doesn't give a shit about anyone but himself!" I shout angrily.

"That's not true, you don't know him like that, Cara."

"Do I know you? We've been married for like, half a decade already and I have no clue what your real name even is!" My hair flows upwards as I snap.

"What, did you just pop outta the womb as a grindcore band or something?"

I'm not even sure what I just said, I'm just so caught up in the moment with all this stress, but Nefastus looks suddenly hurt by my words.

I can see his eyes widen as he recoils, lowering his phone to drop his head low. Instantly regret siezes my icy heart, and I touch his shoulder with my claws.

"Hey, sorry...I..." He releases my hand, and I watch in shock as he blinks back a few blood tears.

"I-I.....I'm Sorry..."

"It's fine."

I stop as he speedwalks away, dropping my arms limply to my sides. Fuck, I didn't know his name was a touchy subject, or I wouldn't have gone there.

"Nefastus...." I whisper, my hand extending.

"Oooh nice one witch. Now all you gotta do is piss off the barbecued bug in your tits and the whole house'll hate you."

My head snaps around exorcist style to shoot flaming pentagram daggers at Marley, looking more smug than ever.

"Oh fuck you, Casper! Your mother sucks ding-dongs in Portland! Why don't you just crawl inside that box and stay there?!"

I release a loud, angry hiss, while Nefastus annoyingly puts his earphones in. His fangs smile as the sounds of *'Blood Fire & Death'* drown our arguing.

"Eh go flick your bean to some Disney shi-"

A loose chain becomes tangled with his legs, the box pulling him down to the earth as he tumbles. My body snaps around to match my head, and I cackle a shrill laugh at the tumbling ghost, neither of us paying much attention to the moving stalks...

"Hey that ain't right, laughing at my torment!" He dusts himself off as he rises back up, floating right into my face.

"This shit sucks, not all of us were lucky enough to get booby magic!"

"Aw but those chains look so good on you, Swayze. Takes all the focus away from your bald spot."

He angrily grits his teeth, before tossing a glass bottle that shatters in my face.

"Ugh, you can't even *pretend* to be gentlemanly for one second! You suck so much you fucking dipshit alcoholic!!"

"At least I don't actually suck for real, bat slut!"

There's more rustling neither of us pay mind to, slowly drawing closer...

"Stupid fuckin' jerk-off loser, get the hell out of my afterlife and go haunt the unemployment line already!!"

"Hey up yours, bimbo! Bite my glowing green a-wait, are those the fans you were talkin' about?"

WHAM!

I barely have time to react as something crashes into my shoulder, forcing me into the dirt with a shout. I land on my back, and Beatrice slides from my chest across my neck.

"Give it to me! Give it to me!!!" A decrepit corpse thrashes against my shielding arms, desperately reaching its rotting hands out for my girlfriend.

Its eyes glow brightly with the light of Death, wearing a face twisted into a permanent smile of decaying flesh.

"*Give it to me!!!!"* Two separate voices scream from its grinning mouth.

"Agh, it's prom night all over again!! Take a hint, Jeremy!!" I stab my right heel deep into its chest, kicking and swinging my leg in the air as I leap back to my feet, sending this bleeding corpse flying across the field.

Only its quickly replaced by three more, then another three, and soon the Deathites surround us, glowing eyes and twisted smiles, their limbs falling apart.

"Give me the witch, Hellspawn!!!" One of them cries, and I hold Beatrice safely to my chest, an inferno engulfing my free hand.

"I GOT ALL THE WITCH YOU NEED RIGHT HERE, SKANK!!!"

My voice echoes with an angry, banshee-like scream, tossing flames into the surrounding zombies. Many of them ignite but continue shambling towards us, unaffected by any pain.

Marley throws his chains into one, ripping it apart with his hooks and spraying black tar everywhere like an oil geyser.

"Ugh! Fucking Christ!" He shouts in disgust, managing to shoot another with his flintlock before two more overwhelm him to the ground.

"Oh, nice. So you can say that word but I can't, real classy."

A sharp punch to the jaw stumbles me backwards, and I feel a mess of claws digging into my flesh. My skin quickly regenerates as I toss them off, before I'm surrounded by even more like some deathly mosh pit.

All I can do to keep Beatrice safe is raise her high into the air, at least I'm much taller than these tweaker ass Korn fans, but they're quickly overwhelming me!

With a disgusted grimace I place my lips to the peeling cheek of one, leaving behind a smoking black kissmark that sizzles its rotten flesh before causing its head to explode in a mess of gore and brains.

Beatrice looks quite sickly as I shake her around to keep her away from their grabbing hands, my voice releasing a cry as I'm swarmed.

"GIVE IT TO ME!!! GIVE IT TO ME!!! GIVE IT TO ME!!!"

"Cara."

Suddenly I hear my husband's voice, calling out in a low, unphased tone. Nefastus pockets his phone and holds his open hand out to me.

His expression remains unimpressed as I toss Beatrice through the air, the spider's eyes all rolling around in dizzy circles as she lands in his palm.

Slowly the Deathites all release us, their horrid smiles widening as they begin to crawl towards him instead.

“Gimme the fucking witch, pretty boy!!”

But he simply holds his free hand out to them, and I can see a small, bluish flame appearing, before everything's overcome by white.

FWOOOOOOOSH!!!!!!

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When the smoke clears, all that remains of Death's minions is charred bits of ash. A flaming wrist falls beside me, inching towards Nefastus before I kill it with a step from my heels.

Marley slowly floats up, his chains clanging together as dusts himself off. He flips his box closed and takes it in his hands, loudly burping right in my ear.

"If you two are finished." Nefastus tucks Beatrice into the front pocket of his cloak, while she sputters a small bit of tar from her fangs.

"It's a long road to Hell. And so far, I haven't seen any good intentions."

As he returns to the road, I watch him take his phone back out, placing one of the earpods to her legs so she can listen, while Marley and I just glare at each other.

"...Bitch."

"Asshole."
