

Fashion and the

Fashionable Demon

A Robert Diablo Tale

By

William Pattison

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Cover design by William Pattison

Cover Illustration by William Pattison

Editor K R Morrison

Praise for William Pattison…

“This book is brilliant and it is a story the reader won’t want to put down…”

Angel Faron—Independent Filmmaker

“Leaves me waiting for more, on the edge of my seat.”

Amy Russell –Wicked Things Blog

“The story in not only rich in plot, but in characters and settings.”

Shawn Buffington –Director of The Horror Seasons

**Other Titles by William Pattison**

 Psychotic State: The Novel

 The Traveler: A Conflict of Interest

 Friday the 13th: Mother’s Day

 Friday the 13th: Jason’s Curse

 Friday the 13th: The Carnival

 Friday the 13th: Road Trip

Friday the 13th: The Mask of Jason Voorhees

 Symphony of Death, Part 1

 Symphony of Death, Part 2

 Symphony of Death, Part 3

Symphony of Death, Part 4

Introduction

**W**elcome, brave reader, to my glorious return to the world of Robert Diablo.

 In 2016 I released the first book in my six part anthology series Symphony of Death. This first installment included the story Robert Diablo, which was based on a script idea I recycled from a chat I had with the Twisted Twins, Jen and Sylvia Soska. The twins had an idea of doing a film that was a reimagining of the classic film, Harvey. In their reimagining the eccentric main character would be friends with a demon instead of a six foot invisible talking rabbit. The Soskas had said they planned to do BOB, which was going to be the title of the film, after their second film, American Mary.

 Well, instead of doing BOB after American Mary the Soskas got into a three film deal with WWE Films and did the films See No Evil 2 and Vendetta before leaving WWE Films and doing an installment in the anthology ABCs of Death 2 and hosting two seasons of the game show Hellavator.

 So, figuring, that the Soskas had left the script idea for BOB behind. I decided since I was planning my six part anthology book series, Symphony of Death, I would recycle the reimagining of the Harvey story as a short story. I developed the story idea and created my short story Robert Diablo.

 I love dark fantasy stories especially if they are humorous. Some of my favorites are The Yattering and Jack by Clive Barker or Doctor Issac Asimov’s Azazel stories about the two inch demon. I wrote Robert Diablo to be very much in this vein. It is a morality tale that expresses a commentary on aspects of modern society. Of course, with a generous dose of sarcastic humor.

 Unfortunately, a bunch of the friends and cult-like fans of the Soskas didn’t find it funny. With the typical immaturity that these people tend to embrace, these Soska supporters immediately threatened my publisher and told her they would drive away her client authors through harassment unless she immediately pulled all my books. What is amusing is that my publisher had sent a copy of the manuscript to The Soskas to look at. A representative of the Soskas sent back a reply that Jen and Sylvia Soska had said Robert Diablo didn’t resemble their BOB and they had no problem with her publishing it. But, with no real choice, and out of fear of losing her business because of the actions of these Soska supporters, my publisher broke all her contracts with me and pulled all my books.

 For two and a half years I went to independent small presses only to find the Soska supporters had gotten to these publishers and threatened them as well.

 So, in the end I decided to start my own label and re-release my books. In 2018 WCP Enterprises Publishing put out re-releases of my books Psychotic State: The Novel, The Traveler: A Conflict of Interest, and Symphony of Death Part 1: Robert Diablo. Also, in 2018 it released Symphony of Death Part 2: The Darkest Secret. Then in 2019 WCP released Symphony of Death Part 3: Blood and the Rose. Since then, in 2020, WCP signed on and released the first two novels by my protégé, Christopher Highland, thus changing my self-publishing business into an actual publishing house. Also, in 2020 WCP put out the fourth installment of the Symphony of Death series, Symphony of Death Part 4: Shadowman VS The Undead.

 Now, I know what you will be asking. After all that drama why would I ever want to write a sequel to Robert Diablo? Well, the reason is simple I love the world of Robert Diablo. It is a world populated with interesting characters that have a lot to say. In this new story I really got to get into the background of Robert and also we get a better look at The Blackthorn twins and what makes them tick. I had a lot of fun writing this story and it came to me at the right time with the Covid-19 situation. It gave me a perfect framework to tell this continuation of Robert’s story. It also has helped me deal with the mental stresses the quarantine has caused.

 So, in the end this is a win/win for me. I come out of this with a great new story. Also, given the Soska supporter’s stance on Robert Diablo you get a chance to check out the forbidden fruit, which always makes it that much sweeter. Win/win.

 It has been said that you know you’ve made it when you have haters. If it wasn’t that your work struck a cord you would hear only crickets, not a symphony of voices mentioning your name. But the fact that people are focusing on you, even in hate, means you are saying something meaningful and that is extremely attractive and powerful. Because, if you weren’t they wouldn’t have anything to scream about. Thus, my friend, check out what all the drama is about and enter this world I have created.

Enjoy…

William Pattison

The Covid-19 Pandemic

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A Robert Diablo Tale

By William Pattison

Dedicated with a smile to Jen and Sylvia Soska

**T**he coming of the Corona-19 virus was a nightmare for the humans living in Blackthorn Manor, but for its resident demon, Robert Diablo, it was pure bliss. How could it not be? He had a captive audience to torture to his heart’s content.

 Given how dysfunctional the Blackthorn family was, it was way too easy to screw with them. After all, they despised each other. Amusingly, even the twins held deep-seated resentments for each other, though they were so hidden in their psyches that they were unaware of them. But Robert knew about them, and that was fertile ground for him to harvest.

 Then there was his favorite sister—the blond one, the domineering one: Jessica. The truth was that she wasn’t even a Blackthorn by blood. In fact, she was the daughter of the now-butler Dean Charles, who had at one time been her mother’s driver. It had been rather obvious, since Jessica bore no resemblance to her siblings, but she did with the blue-eyed, blond-haired, butler Dean Charles.

 Vincent Blackthorn had known the truth. He’d actually promoted Charles to the position of butler so he could keep an eye on him. It was also the reason why he gave all his money and businesses to his bookworm of a son, Christopher. No bastard child of the help was going to get his hard-earned riches. It had been a hard choice for Vincent, since his son was such a disappointment to him. Of course, the only alternatives were his twit twin daughters, and that was never going to happen.

 Jessica had been infuriated by the will. She had gotten nothing, except that she could live in the manor as long as she wanted, and assist Christopher with the family businesses. She considered it an insult, given the fact that she was the only sibling who did anything for the businesses, and pretty much ran everything when Vincent’s health failed. Yet still, the will was what it was, and poor Jessica and her sisters were trapped with their reclusive and weak-kneed brother holding all the power.

 Then came the opportunity for Jessica to gain full control of the businesses and family wealth, when her dear excuse for a brother was accused of murdering his security guard. The guard’s head had been twisted clear around, which seemed impossible for the five-foot, six-inch, spindly Christopher Blackthorn. Unfortunately, there was no one else around when the murder actually happened, and there was an odd glitch in video footage that prevented investigators to see if Christopher actually did it.

But of course, it wasn’t Christopher, but his dear old friend from Hell, Robert Diablo. However, none of these foolish humans believed it. Jessica was thrilled because, with the help and eventual death of the psychiatrist Edmond Harte, she was able to prove her brother had mental issues and had him sent to a mental home, hopefully for the rest of his life.

 The thing was, Christopher had wanted to be committed. For both him and Robert it was the perfect situation. Christopher had wanted to be away from the family he despised. As far as the businesses and the money, they could have it all and choke on it for all he cared.

And Robert? Except for the occasional doctor or attendant, he had Christopher all to himself to train, so that he could eventually take Christopher down to Hell as his new apprentice in the torture pits. Also Robert could, in between training sessions, jump from the mental home to Blackthorn Manor at his whim, and have fun playing with the family without them even knowing he was there.

 It was a happy time for Robert. Having Christopher’s family all locked down in the manor, thanks to the pandemic, with only the staff for company, was just that much more fun. It was a recipe for chaos that would thoroughly entertain any demon.

 One thing he was doing was nurturing the hatred and the need to revolt in the staff of Blackthorn Manor. It was almost pathetically easy, since the family treated their servants like garbage. Now that the staff was stuck wearing protective masks and gloves, the family treated them even less like human beings, and more like automatons whose existence was to tend to their comforts and needs.

 Robert would follow the maids one by one and whisper in their ears, “These fucking rich assholes treat you like dirt. They need to be taught a lesson. You’re angry and want to do it. You want to make them pay!”

 He knew it was starting to have an effect on the staff, because suddenly accidents started to happen. First it was with the ceramic figurines accidentally getting knocked off shelves and broken when the maids were dusting.

Oopsie.

But it got worse. Soon paintings were being knocked off the walls and their frames broken.

But the best was when the huge crystal chandelier in the Great Hall somehow broke loose from the ceiling and nearly fell on Jessica Blackthorn. Jessica had managed to jump out of the way, and landed face-first on the hard wood floor. Charles had gone to help her up, but she had slapped his hands away. The four maids in attendance had been on the two stairways leading up to the upper floor of the manor. They acted concerned, but Robert knew they were all smiling under their masks.

 Of course, Robert didn’t restrict himself to the cleaning staff. Nope, not Robert. He also had the cooking staff to play with as well. His favorite one was Carmelita, the head cook.

 On this particular day, he made his rounds in the kitchen when they were working on lunch. Carmelita was finishing off the vegetable soup when Charles came up and verbally prodded her.

 “Isn’t that soup ready? You know how Madam gets when luncheon is late,” Charles said in a harsh tone. “Just remember, your job is not set in stone.” He gave her that cold stare he always gave when he wasn’t pleased, which was hardly ever.

 “No problem, Mr. Charles. Soup will be ready,” she said, her voice subservient through the white protective cotton mask she had to wear that covered her nose and mouth.

But then, as he disappeared out of the kitchen, her eyes narrowed. “You want soup ready, *Bastardo*, you get it.”

 Carmelita pulled a glass jar out from under the prep table behind her. It was her secret ingredient, to which she and the other kitchen staff had contributed. She’d even let it sit out for several days to make it that much more flavorful.

She opened the lid, and the odor nearly made her want to gag. The urine smell was strong. She quickly dumped the yellow liquid into the cooking pot and stirred it in.

“Enjoy your meal, *putas*!” she said, grinning with satisfaction under her mask as she stirred.

 Robert chuckled with glee.

 Robert went to the main dining room to watch the family chow down on their lunch, which had been lovingly created by Carmelita and her staff. He wondered what other special ingredients had been added to the menus. Well, that was the chef’s secret.

 Of course, none of the family wore protective masks. After all, they were the lords of the manor and were above such things. It was the duty of the servants to suffer, wearing the stifling masks and white surgical-style gloves all day during their shifts.

 Even Charles, who was dressed in his perfectly-pressed black coat, vest, tie, slacks, and shining, polished matching dress shoes had to wear a black protective mask, as well as white cotton gloves. But being a gentleman’s gentleman, he did not show his discomfort.

 Charles supervised the serving of the meal, while Robert spent his time going from him to Jessica, whispering in their ears. It had become a regular routine for him to remind the two of them of who they truly were. With Charles he would remind him that Jessica was his daughter, and would try to push him to tell her the truth. “Come on, Charles, you know the truth. You need to tell her. She needs to know.”

 On this particular day, Robert noticed a slight twitch in Charles’ jaw, even under the mask. It was subtle, but it showed him that he was having an effect.

 Then he moved on to Jessica, who looked more like a spinster than a powerful and successful business woman. Her blond hair was wrapped up in a bun on her head and she wore an unadorned gray power suit with a very plain white blouse. She had gotten less choosy about her outfit; she was wearing matching flats instead of her usual heels. In addition, she had also stopped wearing makeup weeks before. After all, who was she dressing up for?

 The twins, Janet and Sandra, also didn’t look their usual fashionable selves. In fact, they were wearing matching frilly pink nightgowns and bathrobes to the luncheon table. Both had their raven hair bound up in glittery curlers, covered in pink hair nets with dyed pink fur around their rims. Unlike their sister, they had their faces done up in full club-going makeup, which made them look that much more ludicrous.

 Jessica sat at the head of the table, sipping her delicious bowl of soup. She seemed as if she were trying to avoid looking at her companions, who were sitting together as always--giggling to each other and playing with their phones as they ate. This was something Jessica would usually not tolerate; yet today she just sat silently, with a sour expression on her face.

 A beautifully-presented Crab Louis a la Carmelita was sitting on the table in front of Jessica, as well as a basket of fresh-baked rolls.

*With or without ground glass in them?* Robert mused. For a demon like Robert, such food items weren’t appetizing anyway, even without the added ingredients. His food was pain and negative emotions. Well, that and, of course, he and his brother demons would partake on the roasted flesh of damned souls as it was shed into the fires of Hell. To him, humans had too much of a diverse diet for his liking. Demons were by comparison simple to satisfy.

 He went up to Jessica and leaned in to the left side of her head. “You know you’re not a Blackthorn,” he whispered. “Vincent knew it. That was why he gave his money and businesses to Christopher. He knew your mother was unfaithful. He knew Charles is your real father, as does everyone else.”

 Jessica dropped her spoon on the table and wiped her mouth with her napkin. She got up from the table in a rather stiff manner and addressed Charles, though she averted her eyes from looking at him.

“I’m feeling unwell,” she said in a glacial monotone. “I’m going upstairs to lie down.”

 The twin twits looked up at her with surprise, but immediately went back to slurping their soup, in that annoying way they did, and giggling at each other, totally in their own world.

 *Don’t worry, girls, I haven’t forgotten about you*, Robert thought to himself, looking over at the twins. In fact, Robert had set aside the entire afternoon to focus on them. But currently it was Jessica and Charles’ time, and he didn’t want to waste a moment.

 “Would you like me to send you up some tea, Madam?” Charles asked, in a tone as equally emotionless as Jessica’s.

Was that concern he detected in the butler’s tone? Robert was amused.

*A daddy concerned for his little girl. How beautiful.* Robert snickered sarcastically.

 “No. That won’t be necessary. If I want something, I’ll call the kitchen.” She turned and started out of the dining room.

 “As you wish, Madam,” Charles said after her.

 Robert licked his lizard-like tongue over his razor-sharp lower teeth, causing it to bleed over them. It was a habit he had when he was truly enjoying himself. He knew it was only a matter of time before one of those two broke. For him, it was like drinking a glass of fine wine, or so he assumed. But it would be nothing compared to the gourmet meal he was building up to. That would be glorious.

 For the next couple of hours, Robert continued whispering into the ears of the cleaning staff, who were still dusting around the huge house. This resulted in more expensive ceramic figurines and several vases being martyred for the cause.

 But now it was time for his main project of the day. The thought of the twins gave him a sadistically warm feeling. It was going to be a pleasure to watch these two fools suffer at his hands.

 Robert always felt like he was going to gag whenever he entered the twins’ bedroom. The smell of multiple perfumes and powders polluted the air. Also, the room was so sickly sweet it made his stomach turn, and to cause this reaction to a demon without the use of religious symbols or spoken words was quite a feat. The amusing thing was that these two were as far from God as humans could get. Yet, it wasn’t their closeness to the Heavenly Father that affected him; it was these two pathetic humans’ choice of décor that burned his senses.

 The room was painted in a dark pink shade, and was filled with tan-shaded wooden furniture, which had intricately-carved animals carved into them. The two queen-sized beds, which were next to each other, were made up with matching bedding in a rainbow-colored unicorn pattern. There were also piles of brightly-colored, fluffy stuffed animals stacked up against the pillows on each of the beds. Every animal was duplicated on each bed, which made them doubly grotesque to Robert.

 Next to the beds were nightstands, with a single vase of fresh flowers on each. Currently the vases had purple orchids in them, but the flowers changed daily depending on the girls’ moods. Behind the vases were gold-framed photos of one of the girls smiling. Robert gathered the picture was of the opposite twin, but knowing these two it could be of themselves, for all he knew. It was truly hard to tell.

 Above the beds were two portraits of the twins, dressed as cheerleaders and holding pink pom-poms in the air over their heads. Their sideways poses were provocative, and their grinning faces looked sadistic. Each girl was facing in the opposite direction to the other, and hanging from the upper corners of each gold-painted wooden frame were two sets of pink pom-poms. It was obvious that the girls weren’t real cheerleaders though, since real cheerleaders didn’t wear fishnet stockings and red elevator boots as part of their uniforms.

 Robert figured that the closest thing these two sluts would ever have to what could be considered “school spirit” was to have a threesome with the star of the football team, if even that. The image of that scene in his head brought bile to the back of Robert’s throat. He chuckled slightly, because he realized he was now actually able to relate to the late Doctor Harte on something.

 At this moment, the girls were sitting in front of the large mirrored wood vanity table, which was located against the wall in front of the beds. The table was loaded with the noxious perfume bottles. The twins had their laptop computer open on the table and were both looking at it. They didn’t look happy, which made what they were looking at of interest to him.

 He moved up behind them. The flowery smell of the perfume on the table assaulted his sinuses and made him light-headed and woozy. He wished he had one of those protective masks the humans were required to wear in public. Honestly, right now he would give up his precious finger necklace, which he’d collected over the centuries, for one of those masks at this moment. Anything to block the repugnant smell that choked him.

 As he got close to the twin on his left, he heard a low growl issue from over her shoulder. It was then he saw the face of a pink-dyed Pekingese dog staring up at him with its beady dark little rat eyes.

He knew this dog well. It was Janet’s pet dog Agnes, which she kept with her like an added appendage. The dog was an annoyance to Robert, because the damned fluff ball could sense him even when he was invisible. It was constantly distracting him by running up to him and barking in his direction. Luckily, the twins never put two and two together and realized the dog was trying to warn them about an invisible intruder. Nope, instead they would just assume the dog was bored or just looking for attention. For the most part, either Janet or Sandra would absently throw the dog’s pink glittery ball in its direction or Janet would pick the dog up and talk baby talk at it. The last option hurt Robert’s ears more than the accursed barking.

 Ignoring the annoying canine, Robert moved in closer to see the screen in front of Janet. On the screen was a webpage, which was full of thumbnails for videos on it. In the left corner was a logo that read “ViewTube.” Under each thumbnail was typed the word “views” and a number, which he assumed was the number of times the video had been viewed.

 Again, the damned pink fluff ball gave him a warning growl. The twin that was holding the cursed pet shushed it and made kissy faces at the dog.

“Naughty, naughty, naughty, Agnes,” she said. “Naughty bitchie, bitchie, bitchie. Yes, you are!”

The acid filled Robert’s throat once again. He cringed and tried to control himself; he needed to learn more about the twins’ dilemma.

 “This is a fucking disaster,” the other twin complained, which he saw now was, in fact, Janet, because she was slightly skinnier than the one in front of him. “We’re gonna die. I swear we are gonna fucking die. I mean, look at those views.”

 “Yep, those views fucking suck,” Sandra agreed, glancing at the screen before getting back to making kissy faces at her sister’s dog.

 Robert looked at the number of views on the thumbnails and was perplexed. Yes, he noted that the views on the videos had lost a few thousand after the lockdown had been ordered, but what could the twins expect? The videos before the lockdown were of parties and the twins socializing. Obviously, those would be popular with other pathetic humans, especially undersexed young men. They would get excited over the twins’ and their friends’ gyrations and, of course, the occasional appearances of celebrities. For some reason, undersexed young male humans loved famous people. It perplexed Robert. Thankfully, his apprentice had no interest in such things.

 Of course, Robert knew what celebrities were. The fact was, many of them had made deals with crossroad demons from Hell and were on the road to damnation. And, of course, those who hadn’t made deals would eventually become corrupted and would join their associates in the torture pits. It was inevitable. Robert smiled at the thought of what he and Christopher had planned for the twits when they finally got to Hell. It made all of this worth the effort.

 But, getting back to the thumbnails: The videos after the lockdown were makeup and fashion tutorials, as well as something called a “livestream,” which appeared to be the girls dancing around their room pretending to be at parties. These videos barely earned over five thousand views each.

Robert was confused. Why did these numbers matter so much? He found out a moment later.

 “Fuck!” Janet said, raising her voice in frustration. “We are the fucking Twisted Duo! We don’t get no pathetic five thousand views. We are fucking fabulous, and people are supposed to worship us! This is a nightmare! What’s wrong with these fucking losers?”

 Sandra actually sighed. “Well, we have been doing a lot of fucking makeup tutorials. Those wouldn’t be interesting for dudes,” she admitted. “Seriously, Sis, do you really think dudes want to see us without our makeup? Yuk!”

 Janet cringed, and so did Robert at the thought. “I see your point, Sis. But we did fucking party livestreams and we got shit views for those too.”

 “Yeah, but that was just you and me fucking dancing around this room getting drunk,” Sandra pointed out.

 “Yeah, but it’s fucking interactive. The viewers were part of the party too. They were supposed to comment and tell us how cute we are and admire us for being so fucking fabulous like they do at the clubs.”

 “That’s the point, Janet. It’s not like at the clubs. In the clubs we’re socializing with people face to face. They’re buying us drinks. We’re in a crowded room that shows our fucking fabulousness. Here we’re just two cute girls on a screen trying to look fucking fabulous.”

 Robert was stunned. This was the most he’d heard Sandra speak--ever. Also, it was fantastic because the girls were at odds with each other and he didn’t have to do a thing to prod them. It was beautiful. The mutual waves of frustration flowed from the sisters and filled the demon with its energy. He was so distracted by the warmth of it, he didn’t notice a fluffy pink face with beady eyes appear over Sandra’s shoulder and look up at him intently.

 Suddenly a streak of pink shot over Sandra’s shoulder, and pain shot through Robert as the damned beast locked onto his snout with its needle-like teeth. Robert bolted back from the girls and started shaking his head hysterically to try and knock the annoying fluff ball off. The dog growled, but it was firmly locked on the side of Robert’s snout.

 He continued to stumble back, and his hooved legs hit the foot of one of the twins’ beds, which had been right behind him. He lost balance and nearly fell backwards onto the bed, but at the last second caught himself.

 He noticed, as he futilely attempted to free himself from the dog, that the girls had turned and looked in his direction with shocked looks on their faces. Well, of course they did, because from their point of view Agnes was somehow flying back and forth in the air in front of them.

 Robert grabbed the dog and tried to pull it free, but the dog wouldn’t budge. No matter how much he pulled, it refused to let go. He imagined the girls found that an amusing vision as well.

 Finally, he realized there was only one way to free himself of this annoying pest, though he didn’t really want to do it, because it meant the game would be up. He would have to make himself visible.

 Suddenly, in front of the Blackthorn twins, a pillar of fire arose out of their floor in front of Sandra’s bed. Sparks of electricity, like lightning, encircled the pillar.

 One of the sparks hit Agnes. She let out a yelp of pain and was propelled away from Robert, landing hard on the floor. She stumbled around on the floor for a moment with her tongue hanging out of the side of her mouth. Her eyes were bulging from their sockets. Smoke wafted from her singed pink fur.

 The pillar of fire exploded and disappeared, along with the electricity. In their place was a huge ten-foot-tall horned creature with its arms extended out and its clawed hands open wide. A rotten-egg smell filled the room, and the girls retched.

 Robert snarled dramatically to show his dagger-like teeth before saying in a loud roar, “Fear me, pathetic humans! I am Roberticus Rexius Diablo!”

He used the Roman version of his first name and middle name because it sounded impressive to humans. Also, there was that whole “giving his true name thing” and thus giving them power over him. Don’t want to make that mistake.

“I am a demon from hell. My eyes are fire!” He made his eyes glow brightly. “My teeth are knives!” He smiled and showed his teeth to them again. “My claws are razors…”

He was going to bring his hands together and click his nails, but Janet picked up a large diamond-shaped perfume bottle from the vanity and threw its contents into his face.

 The noxious liquid burned his eyes, and he stumbled backward again. This time he tripped and fell down hard on the foot of the bed. There was a loud crack, and the bottom half of the bed fell down and hit the floor. The wooden foot of the bed broke loose from the frame and fell to the floor, taking Robert with it.

 “AAAAAWWWW!” Robert screamed in pain from his still-burning eyes. Then he choked as the perfume filled his lungs. He managed to catch his breath and howled, “AAH! What are you trying to do, kill me with that foul-smelling concoction?”

 “You want more?” Janet threatened, holding the bottle out at him.

 Robert’s vision was slightly blurry, but he caught the gesture and pulled back as best as he could and held up his clawed hands protectively. “No, please no. I could not bear another splash of that stuff!”

 “Well, excuse me. That was a few hundred fucking dollars’ worth of Dior you got doused with, bitch,” she said, lifting her eyebrow critically at the demon. “That smell you farted out at us, now that was fucking gross. What the fuck have you been eating, dude?”

 “Yeah, nasty,” Sandra agreed, from her spot a couple of steps behind Janet and to her right.

 “I am a demon from hell. When I appear, I bring the smell of fire and brimstone with me.”

 “Well, it stinks,” Janet complained. “And you…you look a fucking mess. Haven’t you ever heard of a bath?”

 “Yeah, a bath,” Sandra echoed in a tough tone.

 “I spend my days in the torture pits of Hell, punishing damned souls for my dark master. I have no time for such things. They are the vanities of pathetic humans.”

 “Well, you’re disgusting. Don’t you have any professional pride? Honestly, your dark master should make a dress code for you people. Sloppy appearance leads to sloppy work. My daddy told me that while he was alive. He always looked proper and businesslike.”

 *Not anymore*. Robert thought with amusement at the memory of his last trip to Hell, where he had seen the late great Vincent Blackthorn hanging naked over a flaming fire pit, with demons ripping out his guts with long rusty hooks. Nope, he didn’t look clean and proper then. Robert nearly chuckled, but held it in.

 Janet’s eyes narrowed. Robert actually felt uncomfortable. She seemed to be thinking, which wasn’t a good thing.

 “You’re The Stain’s supposed ‘friend,’ right? Robbie?” she asked. Then she answered her own question. “No, Robert. That’s it.”

 *We got a real brain here*, Robert thought, but he answered her. “I am indeed your brother Christopher’s best friend.”

 “Wow!” Sandra said, but moved behind her sister when Robert glanced at her.

 *Make that two*, he thought with amusement.

 “Well, Bobby…” Janet started to say confidently, but Robert got up and glared at her. His eyes were like lasers boring into her very flesh.

 His eyes were blazing red, as if they were made of fire. “Don’t you ever call me that name again! That name is an unforgivable insult in my native tongue. If you do, I’ll rip your head off and piss down your throat.”

 “Okay! Over-react, do we?” Janet said, lifting her eyebrow at him. She raised her hand, palm up.

 “Yeah, over-react,” Sandra said softly from behind her sister, making sure to keep her eyes lowered and avoiding his glare.

 “Doctor Harte and Christopher’s security guard--I believe Manny was his name--called me by that name, and you know their fates,” Robert told the girls, cocking his head to his right and snarling to show them his teeth again.

 “Okay…Robert,” Janet said carefully. It was obvious that she’d gotten Robert’s message. “I got an idea that might be mutually fucking beneficial to all of us.”

 Robert sincerely doubted it, but he said, “Speak.”

 Janet turned to look at her sister. When she saw her hiding behind her, she pulled Sandra forward roughly and gave her a critical glance. Then she turned back to Robert and put a big smile on her face.

 “So, Robert, me and my sister are in a bit of a bind, and I was thinking since you are a fucking demon from Hell and all, you might be able to help us out. You know, like that fucking guy Festis in that play? The one that sold his soul?”

 “You mean Faust. You want to make a Faustian deal with me?”

 “Hell fucking yeah!” Janet said enthusiastically.

 Robert was smiling on the inside. This was better than he’d expected. These twits didn’t realize that he was a torture demon, not one of those prancy, pompous, crossroad demons like his overseer, Samhain. Those kinds of demons were salesmen and managers, unlike Robert who was an artist with suffering and pain. It was the crossroads demons who made the deals, not torture demons. Torture demons didn’t have the authority. Still, what better way to cause pain and suffering than to make a fake deal, promote hope in these twits, and then take it away. These stupid fools had given him the weapon he desired.

 He smiled at them and flicked his snake-like tongue over his lower teeth, staining them red. “What is it you want from me?”

 Sandra looked at her sister with confusion. “What the fuck is it we want from him, Sis?”

 Janet turned to her and gave her a wide smile, lifting her eyebrows for emphasis. “Our subscribers want us to deliver something fucking fabulous. We are going to blow them the fuck away.”

 “How?” Sandra asked.

 Robert was also intrigued. He had to admit that this pathetic human knew how to sell an idea, almost as well as Samhain himself. She would make a fine crossroad demon, if it wasn’t for the fact that she was destined to be meat in the torture pits.

 It had actually been Samhain who had convinced Robert to come to Earth to recruit an apprentice. Of course, he wasn’t the first. Samhain had also convinced his brother Glen, aka Glenicougue Rexicus Diablo, to come to Earth, where he’d picked up a rather talented apprentice who only went by the name Jack, who was from Whitechapel in London.

Yes, crossroads demons were very convincing. But, now to this fool’s deal.

 “Robert, what you say we give you a complete makeover and make you look fucking fabulous?”

 Robert smirked at her. “Makeover? You want to somehow change me in some way?”

 “Fuck yeah,” Janet said confidently. “You’ll look so stylish when we get done with you, you’ll be thanking us.”

 Sandra just looked at her sister with surprise.

 Robert also looked at Janet with surprise. “You wish to change my appearance to make me fit with your human social esthetic? I’m a demon from Hell. I am a vision of pain and suffering, not some…”

 Janet gave him the hand again. “Excuse. Your look is so fucking twenty years done. All that Heavy Metal/Rock/ Road Warrior crap is so fucking nineties. Only old biker guys with beer bellies wear that shit. And, also, by the way,” she rolled her head in a gangster way, “Scarification is so fucking 2005. You need to catch up with the times, dude. This is 2020. Fucking Millennials rule. Meaning us!” She pointed her fingers at herself in a dramatic way.

 Sandra smiled at her sister and pointed at herself as well. “Yeah, we fucking rule!”

 Robert’s claw went up to his chest, which was covered in scars and sacred demonic symbols that had been cut into his flesh. He was surprised that this pathetic human dared talk to him in such a fashion, and say such things. Most of his scars came from the war in Heaven when he was the angel Romiel, before he fell with The Morningstar. The rest he acquired through hard work in the torture pits.

 He had to fight down the urge to rip Janet’s head off. It was hard, but the idea of waiting and watching these two twits destroy themselves was too precious for him to miss out on. Plus, he would have an eternity in the torture pits to make them pay for any indignity they would make him suffer through on this day.

 “And how would costuming me up like some doll or your pet dog help you with your situation?” He glanced over at Agnes, who was still stumbling around like a drunk, but at least her fur had stopped smoking. He held back the urge to smile.

 Sandra gave Janet a questioning look, but stayed silent.

 “Oh, cleaning you up is just part of the fucking plan.” She smiled at Sandra, who smiled back at her like she also understood. “What we are going to do is show you off to all those fucking losers on ViewTube. We are going to show them a fashionable demon, and we are not just going to get fucking views and new subscribers…” She paused for emphasis. “We are going to be internet fucking goddesses. No one will ever be able to deny our fucking fabulousness!”

 Sandra let out a hysterical screech and clapped her hands excitedly. “Fuck yeah!” she screamed. “Fucking goddesses!”

 “So, tall, dark, and groady, what you got to say?” She gave him her confident smile again. “You want to make internet history with us?”

 Robert felt like he wanted to explode. This was perfect, so perfect. He gave her his biggest smile and his tongue rolled over his teeth again. “I believe we have a deal.”

 “Okay, so what we do to solidify the deal? We got to cut our hands and sign a contract in blood or what?” Janet asked. “That’s what the guy in the play did.”

 Sandra looked at her hand and cringed. “Gross.”

 Robert knew for a fact that the girls hated blood. They had to be knocked out just to get a blood test. It wasn’t a pleasant experience. Robert decided he wouldn’t require that. Also, a crossroads demon would require the deal to be sealed with a kiss and there was no way he was kissing either one of these sluts. He might get germs.

 “No, I believe we are all honorable beings here. I think we can settle with a shaking of hands—a gentleman’s agreement. If that is all right with the both of you?”

 Both Janet and Sandra looked relieved.

 “Sounds good to us. Right, Sis?” Janet looked over at Sandra.

 “Fuck yeah,” Sandra agreed.

 Robert held out his clawed hand, and Janet reluctantly walked up to him and took it. Robert made sure to make it as unpleasant an experience as he could, thanks to a little ability unique to torture demons.

Torture demons can secrete a greasy liquid from their skin. The secretion is to protect them as they work around the fire pits of Hell. Robert allowed some of the liquid into the palm of his hand just before Janet grasped it. From the subtle look of disgust that flashed across her face as her hand contacted his, it had the desired effect.

 Janet shook his hand and put on a fake smile, but it was obvious that she was uncomfortable. He waited a few seconds extra, to really give the secretion time to soak her hand thoroughly, before he released it.

 Janet pulled her hand back and tried to rub her greasy hand on the side of her bathrobe without anyone noticing. But Robert noticed and enjoyed her discomfort.

 Then Robert turned to Sandra and said, “Your turn.”

 Sandra looked at him with surprise. “Excuse?”

 Robert grinned at her and his tongue slid across his lower teeth. “You both must shake or the deal will not be legitimate,” he lied.

 Sandra’s eyes grew larger. She backed up a couple steps.

 “Come on, Sis,” Janet said, pushing her forward.

 Sandra approached the demon slowly and forced herself to take his hand. Once again, Robert did the thing with the secreted greasy liquid.

 Sandra grimaced with disgust as the demon shook her hand. Robert enjoyed Sandra’s discomfort more than her sister’s. She was definitely the weaker of the two of them, which made her that much more fun to torture.

 He released her hand. Sandra immediately jerked it back and started shaking it to try to get the clear goop off. But it was useless.

 “Gross!” Sandra exclaimed, as she wiped her hand on her robe in a less discreet manner than her sister.

 “Good,” Robert said, giving them a toothy grin. “So, ladies, how do we begin?”

 “Well, first we got to change, so you just stay there and look scary,” Janet said, giving him a confident smile.

 “What?” Robert cocked his head and gave her a questioning look. “Why must you change your clothes and make me wait? I thought I was the one getting a so-called makeover.” Even after torturing them for millennia, he still didn’t understand humans, especially the females.

 “Well, look at us. You don’t think we can be fucking creative looking like this?” Janet opened her arms and looked down at her pink night gown and robe with disgust. “Gag me with a spoon. *We* need to look fucking fabulous to make *you* look fucking fabulous. Right, Sis?”

She looked over at her sister, who was still rubbing her hand on her robe. “Right, Sis?” Janet asked again, but more firmly, and motioning at her.

 Sandra looked up at her glaring sister with slight confusion. “What? You say something, Sis?” she said absently, and stopped rubbing her hand on her bathrobe.

 “We got to change our fucking clothes so we can do this fucking makeover,” Janet repeated, rolling her eyes. “Get with the fucking program, Sis.”

 “Change our fucking clothes,” Sandra echoed. Then suddenly, like a switch was hit, she brightened up and got excited. “Fuck yeah! Let’s do it!”

 “Now that’s what I wanted to fucking hear.” Janet gave her sister a big smile.

 With that, the girls rushed to the other side of the room, where there was a large walk-in closet. Together they pushed a large bamboo vanity screen in front of the entrance to the closet. Then they slipped behind it.

 “Don’t peek!” Robert heard one of the girls, he suspected Janet, say from behind the screen.

 Robert rolled his eyes. Like he would have any inclination to look at the two of them as they were dressing. No, his voyeuristic interest would be aroused later, when they were hanging from hooks in the torture pits, having their flesh rendered by his dear apprentice Christopher. That will be worthy of his interest, and a pleasure to watch.

 So, Robert was stuck having to stand where he was and wait. He had to endure listening to the two of them giggling and chatting with each other while shuffling around behind the screen. Thankfully, he couldn’t understand a word they were saying, but it still grated on his nerves.

 Very quickly, he became bored standing around doing nothing. He decided he would play with Agnes the dog while he waited.

He started lobbing electrical bolts at the dog, which made her jump. Of course, to humans such actions would be judged as animal abuse, but he was a demon of Hell and thus immune to such moral restrictions. All things that had the spark of life were his to torture, and he made no exceptions.

 He recalled with pleasure a time several years ago when he took a short vacation to the forests of Northern California, where he started a forest fire. It was glorious.

 Not only did a large number of humans lose their lives, but he got the pleasure of listening to the silent screams of the trees as they burned. It was like music to his ears. He figured once dear Christopher had made his reputation in the torture pits, he would take him on a trip to the forest and they could enjoy another forest fire together. It would be most enjoyable.

 Unfortunately, his fun with Agnes was short-lived, because the damned dog soon became wise to his game and rushed under Janet’s bed and hid.

“Damned pink fuzzball. No fun,” he complained, before sighing in frustration.

 But thankfully, for his sanity’s sake, a few minutes later the twins came out with their usually overly-annoying flare--both coming out on either side of the vanity screen at the same time, holding silver-topped walking sticks in front of them and posing in what human females considered a seductive manner.

“Tah-dah!” they hollered in unison.

 The girls had dressed in matching outfits. They wore shiny red vinyl short skirted dresses paired with black shiny high-heeled shoes. They also wore black aprons, and black rubber gloves covered their hands. They had discarded their curlers and hair nets, and had let their curly raven locks tumble down their backs.

Robert was unimpressed. He found human females very unattractive. Give him a scared and sweaty torture maiden from the pits any day, especially if she knows how to bite and claw him in the way he liked. That’s what got his loins fired up.

 “Okay. You’ve prettied yourselves up.” He nearly choked on those words. “Now what?”

 “Strip,” Janet said, with an amused smile.

 “Excuse me?” Robert asked, giving the girls a surprised look.

 “We need a blank fucking canvas to work from,” Janet explained. “Now, take all that fucking stuff off. Especially that filthy diaper-looking thing.” She waved her hands at him with a look of disgust, like she was trying to swat it from her sight.

 “Gross!” Sandra agreed, copying the gesture.

 “It is called a loincloth, and I worked hard in the torture pits to make it look that way. It is stained with the blood and bodily fluids of all the damned souls I’ve tortured.”

 “It’s fucking gnarly and disgusting, and needs to be tossed out.” Janet flicked her hand as if fluffing off everything he had said. “Just remember, we have a deal and you are fucking supposed to do as we say.”

 “Fine.” He let out a frustrated sigh. He took off his spiked belt and dropped it on the floor. Then he removed his loin cloth.

 The girls took one look at his groin area and their jaws dropped.

 “What the fuck is that?” Janet asked, giving him a shocked look.

 Sandra was speechless and just stared, like she was in a trance.

 Robert rolled his eyes and sighed. “It’s called a penis. I would think you two would have a lot of experience with them.”

 “It has fucking spines all over it,” Janet said, blinking. She was mesmerized like her sister by the vision before her.

 “Spines,” Sandra said, breathlessly. She was unable to look away.

 “Yes,” Robert said with pride. “And the females love it.”

 “I really doubt that.” Janet shook her head and gave the huge speared genital a look of disgust.

 “Spines!” Sandra said again, trance-like.

 “Put that rag back on before she has a fucking heart attack,” Janet told him.

 “As you wish.” Robert snickered as he put the loincloth back on.

 “Okay, Sis.” Janet said, seeing that the spell was broken and her sister was back to herself. “Your first assignment is to come up with a fucking stylish replacement for that thing.” She indicated the loincloth.

 “I’m on it, Sis,” Sandra said. Then she took one more look at Robert’s groin area and winced.

 Shaking her head to erase the image, she took off back behind the vanity screen and into the walk-in closet.

 “And what are we going to be doing while she is doing that?” Robert asked.

 “After you take off the rest of your shit, I’m going to give you a bath.”

 Robert gave her a stern look. “I told you, demons from the torture pits of Hell don’t bathe.”

 “Well, this isn’t the torture pits of Hell, and fucking fabulous people here are bathed and well-groomed. So, you will be too,” Janet informed him.

 He started to say something, but she immediately stuck her hand up in front of his face.

 Robert was startled by this move, which was what he gathered was the intention of the gesture.

 “Now give me the bracelets and that funky necklace, and let’s get going,” she continued.

 “They are called gauntlets, and I wore them when I fought beside the Morningstar against our Father in Heaven,” Robert said, incensed as he took the gauntlets off and handed them to her.

 He pointed at his finger necklace. “This necklace is made from the fingers of the first souls I ever tortured. They are irreplaceable and precious to me.”

 “How lovely,” Janet said, honestly moved. “But they’re gross and need to be made more stylish, so hand them over.”

She took the gauntlets over to the vanity and left them there while he reluctantly untied his finger necklace.

 “You treat these with respect, or I swear your intestines will decorate these walls,” he told her as he handed them to her.

 “Don’t worry, Mr. Whiney, we’ll make your mummy fingers look stylish. I promise.” She took the necklace and put it with the gauntlets.

 Then she escorted him over to a large object halfway between the beds and the walk-in closet. It was covered with a white sheet. Janet pulled the sheet off to reveal a large old-fashioned shiny brass bathtub. The tub had large bolts decorating the edge of it, which made it look rather steampunk. On the right side of it were a couple of pipes that came up from out of the floor, with faucet heads attached to them. Red and green hoses were hooked to the faucets and fed into the bathtub.

 Robert looked questioningly at this big brass monster before him.

 Janet noticed and replied, “Sandra and I like to take baths together. I’m sure this thing will be big enough to handle you.”

 “Indeed.” This wasn’t comforting to him. He still felt uneasy at the idea of taking a bath. It was unnatural to him.

 “Get in,” Janet encouraged him. “It won’t bite.”

 Honestly, he would have liked it better if it did.

Robert cautiously got in the tub. His hooved feet clanked on the metal on the inside. He saw that there was a wide metal seat in the tub and he sat down. Indeed, the thing was big enough for him to be in.

The metal was cold on his behind and tail. The device reminded him of a cooking pot he’d seen humans boil other humans in long ago. Though he doubted that the twit, Janet, intended to boil him, the thought was still in the back of his mind. In fact, he would soon be wishing for that fate in comparison to the horrific trauma he was about to endure.

 Janet turned on both faucets, and hot and cold water started to pour into the tub and mix. The water was of a medium heat. Not too hot and not too cold, but definitely not hot enough for a demon from Hell. Robert didn’t complain though.

But it was what Janet did next that started the suffering.

 Janet went over to the vanity and pulled a glass bottle from a side shelf. She returned to the tub, took the cap off the bottle, and dumped some of the clear liquid into the bath water. Immediately a cloud of flower scents enveloped him and burned his sinuses.

 “Satan’s breath! What is that foul potion you are trying to poison me with?” He began to cough.

 “Oh, give me a fucking break.” She gave him a hard look and put her hand on her hip, like she was addressing a complaining child. “Here you are, supposed to be this big nasty tough demon, and you can’t take some fucking bath oil.” She shook her head. “Not impressed.” Then she did that hand-swatting gesture that both she and her sister did.

*What was that!*

 Robert again held back the urge to rip this frustrating human’s head from her shoulders. He assured himself that, for every moment he suffered this day, both this human and her sister would suffer a hundred years of pain, until their souls were broken and their bodies rendered and harvested. That thought made him feel a bit better, and he leaned back in his seat as the water rose in the tub. Though he would find a tub full of crucifixes and holy water less jarring to his senses than this damned bath oil. *Why did humans have such a fixation on flowery smells!* his mind raged. All he knew was, he didn’t like it. He didn’t like it at all. His throat now hurt and the flower smell burned its way down, threatening to gag him.

 After the tub filled to Janet’s satisfaction, she turned off the hoses. She headed back over to the vanity again, opened a drawer on the right side, and took out a plastic bottle and a sealed square package.

 *Oh, The Morningstar*, he thought. *What new pain is she going to inflict on my body now?*

The truth was that, from what he was experiencing, Christopher’s potential for torture was genetic. But the choice had been made, and there was going to be only one Blackthorn who would apprentice in the torture pits. The rest would be meat on hooks to play with. He was thankful for that.

 “What concoction is that?” Robert asked, looking at the plastic bottle suspiciously.

 Janet gazed at him with amusement. “It’s just some liquid soap. Sandra and I fucking hate bar soap. It’s just so hard and scrappy and common. It’s not fucking fabulous like us.” She held up the square package. “I got a fresh sponge for you. Don’t worry and try to relax. Baths are supposed to be soothing.”

 *Relax…soothing?* Robert couldn’t believe what this human was saying. He was suffocating on the scents of flowers and immersed in lukewarm water up to his waist. How in the name of Lucifer was he supposed to relax?

 Janet came over to the tub and put the soap bottle in a metal holder on the side of the tub. Then she opened up the pouch and pulled out the sponge. It was pink, naturally. She dropped the packaging on the floor; obviously, she expected the help to clean it up.

 She dipped the sponge into the bath water and squeezed some of the water out of it. Then she picked up the plastic soap bottle, opened it, and poured a generous amount onto the sponge. Then she started rubbing it onto his back.

He felt a soft, tingling feeling on his back, which he gathered was the foam. He’d watched the cleaning staff washing items and saw the foam form. It wasn’t an unpleasant feeling, which made him feel more uncomfortable. Demons didn’t like pleasant feelings.

 Then the smell hit him. The damned soap smelled of lilac! The odor mixed with the other flower scents and overwhelmed his senses. He became extremely dizzy, and after a few moments passed out.

 “Hello!” Janet said, waking Robert up. She was standing in front of him holding a large pink towel.

 He woke to the feeling of his head throbbing and a burning in his throat. Drool was dribbling down over his chin and onto his chest. At least, he thought, he wasn’t choking on that damned flower smell any more. It was still there, but now it had become reduced to a more tolerable level. Either that, or it was burned into his sinuses and he was doomed to smell the foul odor for the rest of his existence. He hoped it wasn’t the latter.

 The bathtub was slowly draining, and was making a gurgling sound as the water escaped. It caused his head to pound even worse.

 “What happened to me?” Robert asked. His voice sounded hoarse.

 “Oh, you fell asleep,” Janet said with amusement. “See, I told you that bath would soothe you. Don’t you feel fucking wonderful?”

 Robert’s mouth dropped open. *Soothe?* he thought. *Feel wonderful?* That torture was far from soothing or wonderful. He would have rather been dropped in a boiling pot and had his flesh served as soup rather than experience the attack on his senses in that supposed “soothing” bath. He had feared that he was going to end up falling into the eternal emptiness that all demons went to when their existence ended. He had been a master-level torture demon for millennia, and was honestly surprised by that intense agony. Soothing? Wonderful? He would have given his right arm for a rusty metal spear at this moment. He’d show this human soothing and wonderful.

 Janet opened the towel and held it out to Robert. “Now you get out of there and towel yourself off.” She gave him a smile. “We got a lot more fucking work to do before you’re ready for your unveiling.”

 Robert did as he was told and got out of the tub. He reluctantly took the fluffy pink towel and started to rub it over his body. The soft, cushy sensation made him feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. Also, like everything this pathetic shit factory had given him, it smelled like something a cheap whore would use to rub the taint from her body. The sweet odor got his gag reflex started again, but he forced it to stop. He did not want this hairless ape to see his discomfort.

 Then the thought hit him. What if some of the higher-ups in Hell decided to check up on him at this moment? Oh, dear Morningstar! He would never be able to live it down, and more than likely it would cost him limbs once he got back to Hell. Thankfully, he could feel it if they were monitoring him.

 He was starting to wonder if he had made a mistake trying to play these foolish humans. Were the results truly going to be worth the horrors that he was going to have to endure? He would just have to see.

 “While you were out, I cleaned your ears,” Janet told him. “You can say fucking thank you, because those things were gnarly. I’m sure you have to have at least twenty-five percent better hearing now that I pulled that bird’s nest of shit out of there, literally.”

 Robert was so distracted by Janet’s patting herself on her back that he didn’t notice the other sister come up to them. She was holding a leather object in her arms.

It looked distressed, which was definitely appealing to him after all the pink fluffiness and flower scents. He could smell that it was made of the hide of an animal. It actually got his mouth drooling again, and he wiped his mouth with his arm. However, the smell of the lilac soap still remained and shocked him back into attention.

 “I think I actually outdid myself this time.” Sandra said, holding up her creation with pride. “It’s awesometacular!”

 Janet looked at the replacement loincloth and nodded her approval. “Fucking fabulous, Sis! Where the fuck did you get cowhide?”

 “Oh, I used that coat Jensen left the last time he came over.”

 “Fucking cool, Sis.” She held it up so that Robert could see it better.

 Sandra’s design was made up of two large flaps of distressed cowhide with thin strips. Below, it had a wider strip that became wide-cut curved ends. These were glued to the flaps, and went between the legs and supported Robert’s groin area and backside. The curved ends allowed for freedom to urinate as well as leaving a free area around his behind for defecation. Also, it had a curve on the back flap to accommodate Robert’s tail. Sandra had even added belt loops on it, and had included a belt with a large silver belt buckle. There was a tick tack shaped red jewel set into it.

 Robert had to admit he was impressed. This new loincloth was indeed glorious. It reminded him of the ones the archangels wore. It would be something he would have no issue wearing.

 After warning the girls to avert their eyes, he took off his loincloth and put the new one on. He was surprised at how well it fit.

He tightened the belt and walked over to a nearby full-length mirror to look at himself. It looked pretty good on him, he had to admit.

 “So, what you think?” Sandra asked. She looked excited to get his answer.

 Robert hid his enthusiasm; he just glanced at her and said, “It will do. It’s fine.”

 Both Janet and Sandra looked at him as if he’d just slapped them both.

 “Is that it? That’s all you got to say?” Janet asked, giving him a hard expression.

 “I’m a demon from Hell,” Robert reminded her, loving the waves of anger that issued from them both. “Vanity is a human weakness. What your sister created is useable and I will accept it. That is all I will say on this matter. We have an agreement, and I will abide by it. That is enough.”

 Robert loved the look of hurt Sandra gave him. For him, such looks were like those French pastries the late Doctor Harte had enjoyed.

 Janet’s eyes narrowed. When she spoke, her voice was cold as ice.

“Okay, sister, time for your next project.” She pointed at Robert’s chest area. “We need something to cover all that fucking mess.”

 “These scars are symbols of honor to me,” Robert reminded her. “Don’t disrespect them.”

 “Oh, really?” She raised her eyebrows at him. “I thought you said you had no fucking vanity.”

 Robert gave her a look of surprise. Had she just turned the tables on him? Amusing.

 Janet flicked her hand at him in that annoying way she did. “Well, here they’re gross. They’re disgusting, and no one here wants to look at them. They’re fucking garbage.”

 “Yeah, so fucking twenty years ago, dude,” Sandra added, with false bravado.

 Rage filled Robert, and he let out an ear-splitting animalistic roar. It sounded like a lion or a tiger, but more intense. The sound waves hit the girls and literally knocked them back a step. His eyes blazed like fire.

If these humans wanted to play, he’d give them a good idea of what they were playing with.

 Sandra jumped backwards and leaped behind her sister, who was also backing up, with a frightened expression on her face.

 “Where I come from, you humans are only meat for our hooks. We carve your flesh, muscles, and organs, and then regenerate them to do it again and again until your souls are used up. Then we toss you like so much garbage. Do not earn my ire or I will give you a sneak preview of what you will be getting in Hell. It would give me the greatest pleasure to do so.”

 But then his voice softened. “But we have work to do.” He gave the girls a disinterested look. “You wish to cover my scars with a shirt, then do so. Time is wasting, and I’ve given your foolishness more time than it deserves. Don’t push my patience.”

 Robert had to hold back the smile that threatened to appear on his face. The waves of fear hit him like waves in the ocean. It was almost dizzying. It felt so satisfying.

 “Well?” he said to the girls, who were still standing like they were frozen in ice.

 After a few moments, Janet came to life. She looked over at Sandra and said, “We need measurements. We don’t need to fuck this up.”

 “Indeed, you don’t,” Robert agreed.

 Sandra blinked a couple times and said, “Yeah. I’ll get the tape.”

 “I think we’ll use the white sheets that Aunt Gretchen sent us,” Janet added.

 “Yeah, those things were so plain,” Sandra commented. But then she glanced at Robert and fear returned to her face. “But they’ll make a fucking fabulous shirt,” she added, before making a beeline into the walk-in closet.

 Robert chuckled inside. It was way too easy with that one.

 A few moments later, Sandra returned with a measuring tape, note pad, and pen. She also carried a stepping stool, which she brought over to Robert. Stepping up on it, Sandra used the tape to measure around Robert’s chest area, shoulders, around his arms, and the length of his arms. Janet listened silently and wrote down the numbers.

It was the longest Janet had been quiet. Robert rather enjoyed it.

 After the measuring work was finished, Janet handed the note pad to her sister.

 Sandra gave her a concerned look. “You sure you don’t want to help me with this?” She gave a nervous glance over at Robert.

 Janet gave her a confident smile. “I got this under control. You just come back with something fucking fabulous.”

 “No, problem, Sis,” Sandra said, giving her sister a smile back.

 Robert could sense that her smile was fake. She was exuding nervousness and anxiety.

He was enjoying it. She feared him. That was good.

 Then as quickly as her legs could move her, Sandra rushed behind the vanity screen and into the walk-in closet, which Robert now thought of as their secret work shop.

 “So, what do we do now?” he asked, giving Janet a bored look.

 “I’m going over there,” she pointed at the vanity table, “and I’m going to be cleaning up your fucking bling.”

 “Bling?” Robert hadn’t fully acquainted himself with the modern slang.

 She looked at him with a surprised expression on her face. “Your bracelets and freaky necklace. I got to clean them and make them more fucking presentable.”

 “Okay, proceed,” he said, waving her off. “And what should I do while I’m waiting?”

 “Whatever,” she snapped, shaking her head. “We got fashion mags over by the beds. Read those... Just do whatever makes you happy.” Then she quickly made her way to the table.

 “Oh, I wish I could,” he said under his breath. What would make him happy was seeing the two of them impaled on metal spikes, but that wasn’t going to happen soon. So instead, he decided he’d continue to play with his new friend, Agnes the dog.

 Robert called up some electrical energy and formed it into a ball in the palm of his hand. It wasn’t strong enough to kill the dog, but it would give her a nice jolt.

 “Agnes?” he said, going over and looking under the bed.

She wasn’t there.

“Agnes, puppy, I got a surprise for you.” Robert started looking around the room for his prey.

 It took another two hours before Sandra came out from behind the screen carrying what she considered a shirt. By then, Robert had given up the hunt for Agnes. The damned dog had outsmarted him. Now, he was sitting on Sandra’s broken bed looking through one of those fashion magazines with a bored and dejected look on his face.

 The moment he saw Sandra, he immediately dropped the magazine and headed over to her like a hungry dog rushing up to its master for its dinner. He had to admit that his impression on the girls at that moment probably wasn’t very good.

The “shirt” appeared to be made of folded cloth. It was literally all folds.

 “Oh my God!” Janet said, rushing up.

 Robert cringed and felt nauseous at the sound of that name.

 Janet obviously noticed this, but kept on gushing. “Sis, you’ve outdone yourself again.” Janet looked over the shirt adoringly. “This is fucking beautiful!”

 “This is not a type of shirt I recognize,” Robert told them, cocking his head as he looked at the creation.

 “Well, it is more like a blouse than a shirt,” Sandra admitted.

 “I thought only females wore such things. I noted from those magazines that I was forced to read out of boredom that I only saw females wearing blouses,” he pointed out.

 “We see a lot of dudes at the clubs wearing stuff like this, especially the muscular ones like you. They wear them because women think the look is fucking hot,” Janet said.

 “Yeah,” Sandra agreed. “Fucking hot.”

 “So, you are trying to say that you want to make me more sexually attractive to human females?” He fought the urge to cringe. Just asking that question made him feel nauseous again. Being attractive to repulsive female humans was the last thing he would ever want.

 Janet looked at him with complete revulsion. “Oh, fuck no. Gross!”

 “No.” Sandra shook her head and actually looked as sick as Robert felt. “Gag me,” she said and waved her hand at him.

 *WHAT IN THE NAME OF LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR DID THAT ACCURSED GESTURE MEAN!* Robert’s mind raged.

 “No.” Janet told him. “But we want to make you look good for your fucking body type.”

 “My body type is that of a torture demon,” Robert reminded them.

 “Yeah, we’ve suffered through that,” she admitted.

 “Royally suffered,” Sandra agreed, with a sigh.

 *Indeed, you have,* Robert silently agreed, a slight smile coming to his lips. *But the real pain is yet to come.*

 “Come on,” Janet coaxed him. “You might feel better about it once you see it on you.”

 Sandra pulled the stepstool over, got on it, and helped Robert put his arms through the arm holes.

“Here, let me help you put the two sides together. It’s got hooks to clip it together,” Sandra said, as she hooked the four hooks together on the front folds of the blouse/shirt.

 She got down and looked at him for a moment. “Okay, can you take that excess material and slip that into the waist band of your loincloth?”

 “As you wish,” he said, and did as he was instructed.

 Sandra went behind him and did the same in the back. There was a split in the back of the shirt to accommodate his tail.

 Sandra came around and looked at her work with approval. She looked over at her sister and asked, “What you think, Sis?”

 “Fabulous,” Janet said, giving her sister an enthusiastic smile. “Fucking fabulous. You hit it out of the park, Sis. He actually does look sexy.”

 “What are these things on my shoulders?” he asked, pointing in the direct of his left shoulder.

 Sandra looked at him with surprise. “Shoulder pads.” Her tone made it sound like it was an obvious answer.

 “And why are these pads here on my shoulders?” he pushed.

 “To level out your shoulders,” she told him. “It’s a fashion thing.”

 Robert was about to ask the next obvious question, but didn’t. He simply rolled his eyes and let out a sigh.

 “Aren’t you interested in how you look?” Janet asked, indicating the mirror. “Well, go check it out, Studley.”

 Robert’s mind filled with images of ripping these annoying humans’ heads off. It was comforting.

 He reluctantly walked over to the mirror and looked into it.

He was amazed. He wasn’t really repulsed by what they’d done to him. In fact, the attire reminded him of something an archangel would wear in heaven.

Memories flooded him, and tears started to form in his eyes. It had been so long since he had been reminded of his former life as the messenger angel, Romiel. He fought back the emotions and tears. He didn’t want these pathetic humans to see his weakness.

 He turned away from his reflection and forced his expression into cold disinterest. “It will do,” he told them blandly.

 Sandra exploded in rage and frustration. It made him feel so much better. It was sweet as candy to him.

 “You fucking prick!” she screamed at him.

 Janet grabbed her sister. “It’s okay, Sis,” she told her sister, trying to calm her.

 “No!” Sandra screamed. “I bust my ass and this fuck says it’ll do. Fuck you, asshole!” Tears streamed down her face. She had her hands at her sides and they were clenched into fists.

 Janet looked at Robert with pure fear. This situation could go deadly at any second.

 Robert was enjoying the feelings hitting him, but didn’t let it show.

 “Let it go, Sis,” Janet told Sandra. “Let it go. It’s not worth it. You and I know you fucking blew it away.”

 This seemed to calm Sandra down a bit. “Yeah, I blew it away.” She sniffed and wiped her eyes, which smeared her makeup. It made her look like a raccoon.

 Janet hugged her sister and the tears started anew. Janet laughed and said, “You’re really gonna have to fix that fucking face of yours before the livestream. Or are you gonna start a new fashion trend?”

 Sandra started laughing. Then she said, sniffing yet again and wiping her eyes, “Yeah, I bet those bitches on ViewTube would love that shit.”

 Janet patted her sister on her shoulder. Then she turned to Robert. “Why couldn’t you give her a just little fucking praise? After all, we are working hard to do this makeover.”

 “I’m a torture demon,” Robert reminded her yet again. “I don’t give praise. I give pain. That is all I do.” His eyes narrowed at them and flared red. “Are we done with this amusing emotional display? It was very enervating, but we have business to attend to.”

His eyebrow raised. “What do we do next?”

 “Time for us to give you some bling,” Janet said, heading over to the vanity table. She picked up stuff off of it, and brought it over and set it on Sandra’s bed in front of Robert.

“Now tell me if this is ‘just okay,’” she said, giving him that smile he hated.

 Robert looked over the items, and was surprised to find there was an additional necklace. It was a wide gold band, and dangling from it was a large cross-like symbol, but with a loop at the top.

 Robert picked it up and looked it over. “The ancient Egyptian Ankh symbol. The symbol for eternal life. How appropriate.” He nodded his head at Janet. “I will wear it.”

 He carefully got the band over his horns and around his neck. The band was long, and the Ankh dangled down near his stomach. He looked down at it one last time and nodded again.

 “Very appropriate,” he said in a soft whisper.

 “Where did you find this glorious symbol?” he asked aloud.

 “Oh, one of our friends is a rapper named DCube. He leaves us presents when he comes for parties…Actually, he gets wasted and forgets to take stuff with him,” Janet said.

 Robert gave her a critical expression.

 “Hey, finders keepers,” she said defensively.

 “Yeah, finders keepers,” Sandra echoed, as usual.

 Robert was reminded that his new loincloth was made from Jensen’s, whoever that was, cowhide coat. He fought down a chuckle. These twits weren’t even trying to avoid Hell.

*Good.*

 He turned back to the bed and picked up his finger necklace, and was immediately surprised. Somehow this human had made the fingers look fresh again. The flesh was soft, rather than leathery and mummified.

 He looked over at Janet, held up the necklace, and asked, “How did you achieve this?”

 “Oh, that?” she said, giving the necklace a casual wave. “I just cleaned them up and soaked them in some moisturizer. They were royally dried out.”

 He wanted to mention the fact that they were dried out to preserve them, but he didn’t, because he figured all he would get is a lecture on how dried-out appendages were so last century or something equally idiotic.

 “And the reason for this colorization?” he asked, indicating the fact that Janet had painted the nails red.

 “Well, I thought it would make them really fucking pop.”

 “Pop?”

 “Yeah, make them stand out,” she explained. “I thought black would be too bland, and gold would be just too fucking tacky.”

 Robert gave her a confused look. He wished he hadn’t brought up the subject in the first place. Her yammering was making his head ache again.

 Janet saw the look on his face. “You said they were so important to you,” she pointed out, “so I thought you could show them off a bit, and red nails are fucking hot right now.”

 Robert simply nodded his head at her and said, “Fine.”

Anything to shut her up. All this fashion talk was so beneath his interest. He couldn’t believe humans put so much value on such foolishness. He did understand that it had to do with mating. Demons didn’t waste their time with such adorning and displaying to find a sexual partner. With demons, it was a matter of wishing to release sexual energy, and seizing the nearest female who was willing to spend several days in lustful ripping and biting. Simple.

 But enough of thinking of pleasure; he had work to do and agony to deliver.

Robert went back to examining the last remaining pieces of his so-called “bling”—his gauntlets.

 He picked up one of them and looked it over. It was far from clean. The pathetic human had left much of the discoloration, but had shined up the raised areas. He kind of liked it. He remembered when his gauntlets were clean and shining with the golden reflections they once had, when he wore them as an angel of his holy Father.

 The thought of his heavenly Father caused pain to shoot through him. His nerves seared for a moment, and then it ended. It was a curse God had placed on the fallen to remind them of how much they had betrayed him. After all, unlike popular belief of these times, the Father was not a merciful god. The mutilation he had inflicted upon The Morningstar was proof positive of this.

 He unhooked and opened the gauntlet. Then he put it on his arm and looked at it again. It looked appropriate. It retained its weathered look, but gave an indication of the golden luster that was hidden under the corruption that covered it.

 He put the other gauntlet on and admired them both together. Yes, he definitely approved.

 He turned around and held the gauntlets up for Janet and Sandra to see.

 “I did the best I could with those,” Janet said in a defensive tone, holding up both gloved hands. “That shit was hard to fucking scrape off.”

 Robert held one of his clawed hands up at her. Now it was his turn to give her the hand.

 “They are more than acceptable,” he told her in a neutral tone, which was as much of a compliment as he was willing to give.

 “Well, don’t overwhelm us with praise,” Janet said, clearly annoyed by his reaction.

 Robert sucked in all her anger.

 “I don’t plan to,” Robert answered. He enjoyed the burst of anger they both gave him.

 He headed over to the mirror and admired himself. He did somewhat like his new look, though he would never admit it to anyone, especially any of his people. They would say that being on Earth as long as he had been had softened him and corrupted his demonic nature.

He had to admit there might be some truth in that. The Robert Diablo who had come to Earth to recruit an apprentice would have never put himself through all this just to cause these twits to suffer. He had far easier methods.

He feared that being around Christopher and these other pathetic humans had had an effect on him, and not in a good way. That all he would need is for a monitor to suspect him. Then all of his work with Christopher would be wasted, and he would have to explain himself to The Morningstar. Not a good situation.

But this was not the time to ponder this. Definitely not the time.

 “So, are we done with this foolishness?” he asked, his tone icy.

 “Um, I just got a couple fucking minor details to finish,” Janet told him.

 “And those are?” he pressed, sounding a bit annoyed.

 “We need to fix your face,” she told him.

 Robert gave her a surprised look. “My face? What’s wrong with my face?”

 “A lot, but we won’t get into that. This’ll only take a few moments,’ she told him, using a cautious tone. “I promise.”

 Robert sighed. “Very well. But it better be as you say.”

 “Over here,” Janet said, motioning toward the vanity table.

 Robert gave her a hard look. “No perfume or flowery smells. I’m warning you.”

 “You got my promise,” Janet assured him with her hand up.

 “While you guys are doing that. I’ll go get one last thing that will make this ensemble really pop,” Sandra said.

 “More?” Robert said. He really didn’t look happy.

 Janet gave her sister a warning look.

 “Believe me, you’ll both love this. This will make you really look fucking fabulous,” she said enthusiastically. “I’ll have to do a couple of simple alterations, which should only take me ten minutes at the most.”

 “Don’t tax my patience,” Robert warned. “Make it quick.”

 Sandra rushed over to the walk-in closet and disappeared behind the vanity screen.

 Robert looked at Janet and lifted his eyebrow. “The same goes for you.”

 Janet escorted him over to the vanity table and had him squat down on one of the pink wooden chairs.

 A perceptible smell of different perfumes attacked his snout. He hoped this human was being honest about the time this was going to take. His head was starting to throb.

 Janet picked up a white jar off the table and opened the lid. Inside was a white cream. She scooped some of it into her hand and started to rub it round on his forehead.

The cream had a light smell that Robert could only describe as…creamy. It didn’t bother his senses. In fact, he found the cool feeling of the cream and the massaging motion of Janet’s fingers rather pleasant, though he would never admit it.

 “What is this concoction you are putting on my face?” Robert asked.

 “It’s a moisturizer,” she told him. “I noticed your skin was really dry and leathery. This will give it moisture and soften it up. You’ll be surprised; it’ll take years off of you. Sandra and I use this all the time, and people are always telling us how fucking beautiful our skin is.”

 It didn’t matter to Robert how his face looked or how young it looked. But it was obviously important to these idiots. It seemed their appearance and what people thought of them was the most important thing to them. They did not realize that it was a weakness that could be used against them. That was perfectly fine with Robert.

 For the next few minutes, Janet massaged the cream over the rest of Robert’s face. It seemed like she hit every groove. Then when she finished, she wiped her gloves off on a folded pink hand towel that had been lying on the table.

 “There you go,” she said. “That looks a bit better. Take a look.” She turned his head to face the large mirror attached to the table.

 Robert was unimpressed. Yes, his skin looked softer, but that didn’t matter to him. He didn’t look any younger, as she had promised.

 “So, what you think?” she pressed.

 “It is acceptable,” he told her, even though he didn’t believe it.

 Janet’s eyes squinted. “Wait a moment. You need just one more little fucking thing.”

 Robert’s eyes rolled, and his tone was thoroughly annoyed. “More?”

 She selected another jar off the shelf, as well as a big brush.

 “What is this?” Robert let out a sigh. He was so close, he reminded himself. So close to satisfaction, and the twins’ exquisite pain.

 Janet opened the jar and dipped the brush lightly into its contents. Then she brought the brush up to Robert’s face, and carefully stroked the brush across his cheeks.

“There.” She looked at his face with satisfaction. “Look at that.”

 Robert glanced in the mirror and said, “I look like a painted whore.”

 “Oh, stop acting like a big baby,” she told him. “Your skin was too pale and gray. That little highlight of color brings out your fucking cheeks.”

 “I’m a demon from Hell. Such things mean nothing to me.”

 “Well, we have a deal, and making you look your best for this viewing means the most to us, so I guess you’ll just have to suffer it.”

 Robert kept his face neutral. Oh yes, he had suffered much at the hands of the sisters, but in the end, it would be their suffering that would be the sweetest. He promised that.

 At that moment, Sandra reappeared from behind the screen and came running up to them with a deep purple-shaded item hung on her arm. She held it up for them to see.

It was a coat. Sandra had cut the sleeves off of it, but it was definitely a coat.

 “Isn’t that…” Janet began, but was cut off by Sandra.

 “Fuck yeah,” Sandra said excitedly. “DCube again. It’s that fucking-assed awesome coat he left us during the New Year’s party in 2018.”

 “You do recall I had plans for that? I wanted to make a dress out of it.” Janet was a bit annoyed.

 “Well, I think this is more important,” Sandra reminded her. “But we could always still use it for that dress after we’re done.”

 Janet looked from Sandra to Robert and back. “After he’s worn it? Fuck no!”

 Robert sucked in Janet’s frustration. It was like an hors d’oeuvre to him before the main meal. A light snack.

 Sandra got up on the step stool and helped Robert put the coat on. It hung down nearly to his knees. There was a slit cut down the middle of its back, which allowed his tail to stick out.

 “So, what you think, Sis?” Sandra asked as she stepped down from the step stool.

 Janet actually jiggled excitedly. “Now that’s fucking fabulous!”

 “Check it out, Handsome,” Sandra said, motioning for him to go to the full-length mirror.

 Robert went over to the mirror. He looked at his image and immediately felt uncomfortable. Purple was the color of royalty both on Earth and in Heaven. Only a select few archangels and the Father himself wore that color and such fine attire. Even when he was in his former existence as the angel Romiel, he would have never been seen wearing anything close to this. He had been unworthy.

Now he was even more unworthy, because he was a simple torture demon. He felt ashamed. He felt like an imposter.

 He suddenly felt dizzy, and his legs went weak on him. He stumbled backwards slightly.

 The girls ran up to him with concerned looks on their faces. “Are you okay?” they asked together.

 The question brought Robert back to himself. He let out the breath he was holding and forced himself to straighten up.

He turned away from his reflection and looked at the girls with cold eyes. “I’m fine. Can we get this farce over with now? I’ve spent far more time than it is worth, and I’m weary.”

 “Go sit on the bed and we’ll send out the word,” Janet told him.

Both she and Sandra pulled off their gloves and dropped them on the floor. It appeared that the makeover was finished.

 Sandra and Janet went over to the vanity table and started working at the computer.

 Robert did as he was told. While he waited, he looked around for Agnes. He figured playing with the dog would make him feel better. He built up a little energy in his hand just in case he saw her. It was better than sitting there, feeling the way he did.

 After a while Robert became bored trying to find the damned dog. Agnes wasn’t any fun. He ended up heading over and looking over the girls’ shoulders at the computer screen. It was loaded with small squares, with images of people in them.

 “Who are these people?” Robert asked.

 “These are all the top cool fucking social people on the internet,” Sandra informed him. “These are the people you want to be friends with and impress, because they control not only the fucking internet, but they also have their hands in all the who’s who social events. Getting on their good side is essential for survival in the social world.”

 Robert was loving what he was hearing. “Can they see us?” he asked.

 “Oh, no. They won’t be able to see us until the livestream starts.”

 “Yeah, don’t want to give up the show too soon,” Janet added.

 “Who is that pig-faced human with the pyramid of red hair on top of his head?” Robert pointed at the screen. “The one wearing the orange sweater with all the gold jewelry.”

 Janet looked at Robert with surprise. “You got a good eye, but no taste in style.

“That sweater isn’t orange. Orange is so nineties. It’s *tangerine.* Tangerine is so incredibly stylish,” she informed him. “That person you just called a fucking pig-face is none other than Gregory Ruthford Tiderington. He’s a fashion icon, a legend amongst fashion socials. He’s one of the two main people we must impress. He has thousands of high-profile fucking social friends, and has his fingers in nearly a hundred of the coolest clubs around the country, though they are all closed because of this fucking virus bullshit. Not so cool.”

 “Really?” he said. He liked what he was hearing.

 “Yeah!” Janet said.

Then she pointed at a black girl who was wearing what looked to Robert like a yellow toga. Her head was shaved on one side, with stray cornrows hanging down. The other side was done in a seventies-style afro. It looked insane to Robert, but he gathered it was stylish. She had large loop earrings in her ears and, like a number of the others pictured on the screen, had multiple necklaces around her throat.

 “That’s Zena, The Queen of Fashion Divas. She has nearly as many subs and friends as Gregory. She’s the other one,” Janet informed him.

 “How about this person?” Robert asked, pointing at a raven-haired, thin, pale, man who wore all black and had on a silver necklace with a ruby set into it, like Robert’s belt buckle. He was the only person Robert could see that he could actually relate to. He was deliciously morbid.

 Janet gave the man a disinterested glance. “Oh, him, that’s Morbeus. He’s Goth. Goth is so fucking eighties. So fucking worn out and uncool. He’s lucky we even sent him an invite.”

 “Really?” Robert said with surprise.

 “Yeah. Now, if you impress both Gregory and Zena, we got it made. We will be fucking set.”

 “Good to know. We’ll definitely make a strong impression. I can promise you that.” Robert smiled a sadistic grin that neither one of the girls noticed. They were too busy looking at all the socialites that filled their computer screen, and, of course, the counter that represented all the people they couldn’t see, which was at that moment getting near to two thousand. This was too perfect. The twins were setting up their own downfall and had no clue they were doing it.

 “When do we start?” Robert asked. He could hardly wait. The feast was about to begin.

 Janet turned to him. Her face was glowing with excitement. “We just got to wait for a few more people to arrive, then we’ll be ready.”

 “Good,” he said simply. *Oh, yes, the more the merrier when you fall,* he thought. Her excitement was painful to him now, but her pain would be so sweet in the end.

 “Now we got to freshen up real fast for our fucking appearance,” Janet said. She and Sandra took off their vinyl aprons, and headed over to a hardwood armoire next to the vanity table and opened it. It was loaded with jewelry.

 The girls went quickly through the armoire and found two sets of matching silver earrings with matching necklaces and bracelets. After they put on their jewelry, they headed over to the vanity to freshen up their makeup. They each fixed the other’s makeup, something they seemed adept at doing. It was quick and efficient. Then they snatched up their two silver-topped, round-handled walking sticks from between the vanity table and armoire. Robert hadn’t even seen them place them there.

 “All right. Are we ready to go?” Janet asked. She and her sister were practically shaking with excitement.

 Robert was now struggling from all the positive energy that was hitting him. He’d held up against exorcists spouting the word of God; he would not let these twits’ exuberance take him down.

 “Okay, Robert, go over there, away from the camera.” She pointed to a spot over to his left with her walking stick.

 He moved over to where Janet indicated. Anything to get this over with. He actually felt himself getting excited as well. Everything was coming together perfectly.

 “When we say together, ‘We present to you the fashionable demon!’ you come into the frame between us and raise your arms over your head and give them a big smile.”

 “I really like that,” Sandra said.

 “Thanks, Sis!”

 The two sisters got into position in front of the computer, holding their walking sticks in front of them. Janet moved out of position to go over and quickly type on the computer. Then she rushed back to her spot and put a smile on her face.

 Suddenly the thumbnail of Gregory Tiderington enlarged to fill half the computer screen, and a loud effeminate voice issued from the computer.

“Okay, Janet and Sandra. What you got? You know that I and a number of people on here are busy. Our time is precious. This had better be good.”

 The voice sounded cranky. The angry emotion actually made Robert feel a bit better. He also seemed to be getting negative emotions from others issuing out of the computer. This was unexpected, but definitely welcome.

 Then Tiderington shrank, and the black woman in the yellow toga, Zena, enlarged. “This better not be you two dancing again.” She didn’t sound very happy either.

 Robert loved her anger.

 “And it better not be another makeup lesson. If I wanted a makeup lesson, I wouldn’t come to you two. This had better be worth my time or I’ll cancel you.”

 Gregory replaced her. “I will too. This is your last chance. Don’t fuck it up.”

 The girls remained smiling, but Robert could feel the nervous tension running between the two sisters. It was delicious.

 “Members of the ViewTube community and the social elite,” Janet said, with fake confidence. “It is my sister’s and my pleasure to present our most fucking mind-blowing project yet!”

With that, both girls lifted an arm up and pointed between them. “We present to you the fashionable demon!” they said in unison.

 As instructed, Robert clomped over between them, raised his arms, and gave the viewers a big grin, showing his dagger-like teeth.

 After a few seconds, Gregory’s thumbnail enlarged again. “Okay, we’re waiting. Show us what you got and stop playing around. I’m not impressed.”

 Both Janet and Sandra got surprised looks on their faces. Janet looked over at Robert, who was standing as requested with a big smile on his face.

 Janet looked back at Gregory Tiderington and pointed over at Robert. “He’s there. Right there. The demon.” Desperation started to come into her voice. “You can’t miss him. He’s standing right there!” Her voice was now pleading.

 “Yeah, he’s right there!” Sandra confirmed in the same pleading tone.

 “I don’t see a thing,” Gregory said, with definite annoyance in his voice. “I don’t like being played around with, girls. I gave you one last chance and you pull this.” His eyes grew large with rage. “You’re cancelled.”

 Both Janet’s and Sandra’s mouths dropped open.

 “But…!” Janet pleaded.

 “Talk to the hand,” Gregory said, before his thumbnail disappeared. It was replaced by Zena, who looked equally angry.

 “I don’t know what happening,” Janet told her apologetically. “I don’t understand why you can’t see him.”

 “Don’t make a bigger fool out of yourself by trying to bullshit me with this immature crap. You’re done.” Zena’s eyes narrowed and her red lips tightened. “Cancelled.” With that, Zena disappeared.

 After that, one by one, the other thumbnails disappeared from the computer screen and, like a stopwatch counting down, the number of subscribers started to disappear rapidly.

 “Noooo!” both girls screamed at the computer screen.

Then the girls looked back at Robert, who was lowering his arms. The wide grin was still plastered across his face.

 Tears were running down the girls’ cheeks.

“Why…?” Janet started to ask, but she couldn’t get the rest of the words out.

 “Why?” Robert looked at her questioningly. “Oh! Why couldn’t they see me? Oh, yes, I didn’t tell you, did I?” The grin returned, but now it looked sadistic. “You see, demons don’t register in photographs or on video. I believe it is because we were once angels, and angels don’t either.”

 “Why didn’t you tell us that? We had a deal. You said you’d make us famous,” Janet said. Both she and Sandra were now shaking with rage.

 “And I did, or more like I made you infamous. As I’ve said so many times, I’m a torture demon from Hell. Torture demons don’t make deals. That is the purview of crossroads demons, and this isn’t a crossroad. I’m a torture demon. I cause pain, and the two of you are suffering gloriously.”

 “You fucking bastard!” Janet wailed, as she charged at him with her red-painted nails held up at him like claws.

 Robert lightly swatted her with his clawed right hand, like an insect. The impact sent her stumbling; she landed hard on her backside and slid on the hard wood floor.

 Sandra came at him too, but Robert swatted her with his left hand, and she went stumbling backward into the oak shelf unit display of twin dolls they had set up on the wall next to the bedroom door. A large number of the collector’s dolls came tumbling off their shelves onto Sandra and broke on the floor. Sandra dropped to her knees and started to bawl like a child as she picked up the remains of her and her sister’s precious babies.

 Robert started to laugh. Of course, he wasn’t done with them yet. For the first time in a while, he was full and he needed to expend some energy. What better way than to cause them further pain?

 “You wanted a fashionable demon. Here I am. In Hell, pain and destruction never go out of style. You gave me your idea of a makeover. Now see mine.” He raised his hands above his head, and electrical bolts of energy shot between them.

 He pointed one hand toward the left side of the room, and tendrils of energy shot from it, searing the pink walls and leaving black burns across them. He moved his arm slightly, and lightning bolts of energy hit the upper part of the doll display. The shelves and their contents exploded, showering Sandra with splinters of wood and burning doll fragments.

 Sandra quickly started scooting away over the broken dolls, screaming and holding her arm up protectively. Her eye makeup was smeared down to her cheeks. She reminded Robert of a sad clown, which was the perfect look for her, in his opinion.

 Robert turned and happily pointed his other hand to the right. Bolts of electricity hit the vanity screen and started it on fire. Then more energy shot out of Robert’s hand and flew into the walk-in closet.

 “No!” both girls screamed, as smoke began to issue from the closet. “Our clothes!” The glow from the burning clothes lit up the interior of the walk-in closet.

 *Oh, did your fucking fabulous fashionable clothes go bye-bye?* *Oh, not that!* Robert thought, laughing with glee. After all he had suffered to get to this point, he was going to get his suffering’s worth. The pain, fear, and helplessness that was coming out of the girls was his sweet reward.

 Then he turned toward their beds. He pointed his hands at the two portraits of the girls as cheerleaders.

 “I think you two are lying to people with these. Naughty!” he said happily, and let loose on them.

By the time he was done, both paintings had been reduced to ash, leaving a large burn mark on the wall as a reminder. The remains of the smoking wooden frames and flaming pom-poms fell among the stuffed animals on the bed, igniting them as well as the disgusting unicorn-patterned bedding.

*Good riddance,* he thought. He could feel from the emotions of the girls that they thought otherwise. Oh well, this was his makeover, and he chose what stayed and what went.

 But Robert still hadn’t finished with this part of the makeover yet. There were still the bedside tables with those annoying flowers and the photographs. Those definitely had to go.

 He looked over his shoulder at the two girls. Sandra had managed to crawl over to her sister, and they were both holding each other protectively. They were watching him with shocked expressions and were shaking with fear. It was precious.

 Robert gave them a false pitying look with boo-hoo lips. But his expression couldn’t hold for long; his amusement and his smile resurfaced. “Human greed and ambition. It is fertile ground for pain and agony.”

He turned back to the now-burning beds. With a flick of his finger, the two photos of the girls exploded, and the orchids in the vases shrived and died.

 “So much better,” he mused. “Oh, but where was I? Oh, yes, greed and ambition. It is something that is always ripe for harvesting. It is a flaw in you humans. It is why my master, The Morningstar, turned on our Father. He saw all the flaws in you pathetic humans, and would not bow and promise loyalty to you like our Father ordered him to.”

With that, he shot a bolt that exploded the vanity table. The mirror shattered, and cream and makeup containers flew into the air. Perfume bottles flew up as well, but their contents ignited to form an umbrella of fire over the destruction, which quickly burned out.

 The remains of the girls’ laptop hit the floor with a wet splat. It was nothing but a puddle of melted plastic, with fragments of metal pieces sticking out of it.

 Robert lifted his head and let out a deep sigh of satisfaction. “AWWW! Now that is what you call a dramatic and exciting finale. Any demon would be proud. Don’t you think?”

 He looked at the girls and winked at them. “But I’m not every demon.”

He lifted his hand and pointed at the armoire. “Make a wish, girls,” he said, before one final bolt of energy shot from his hand. The armoire exploded.

 The girls screamed and held their arms over their heads as they were rained on by earrings, bracelets, necklaces, tiaras, and even a couple of small crowns.

 “Now that is what I call a finale,” he said, with a chuckle.

 The girls were grabbing up their jewelry off the floor and hugging them to themselves while crying hysterically.

 “Well, ladies, it has been a pleasure torturing you,” Robert said with a satisfied grin, “but I must get back to my dear apprentice, Christopher. I’ll send him your regards. I won’t say goodbye to the two of you, because we will see each other again in Hell. Your pit is already reserved for you, and what I’ve done to you today is nothing like the sublime agony I have planned for the both of you once you get there. But don’t worry, you’ve got plenty of time before the fun begins. I’m patient…very patient.”

 Flames shot up around Robert, and the purple coat and the blouse caught fire and burned away to expose his chest. His scars were glowing with energy. Bolts of energy encircled him.

 Then there was the sound of a low growl and a yip, as Agnes came shooting out of the remains of the vanity table. She charged at Robert and bit him on his leg.

Smoke issued from the dog’s mouth, and there was a flash as Agnes went flying and tumbling through the air. Janet jumped up off the floor and caught her.

 Agnes’ fur was smoking, and even more singed than before. The fur was burned away from around her muzzle, and blisters were forming. Her eyes were bulged to the point where they were nearly popping out of their sockets. Her tongue was hanging limply out of her mouth, and she let out a weak whimper.

 “Precious!” Janet cried, looking at her pet with both shock and amazement. “You’re alive!”

 Robert had disappeared. Only the smell of sulfur and brimstone remained.

 Sandra got up off the floor, and they both looked around to be sure Robert was gone.

 Suddenly they jumped and let out startled yelps, when a moment later the bedroom door burst open and Charles came stumbling in. His usual immaculate suit was in tatters, and he was red-faced and breathing heavily. He slammed the door and quickly locked it.

 “Hurry up! We need to barricade this door. They’re coming!” he yelled at the girls excitedly.

 Then he stopped in his tracks for a moment and glanced around the room with a surprised look on his face.

 “Bloody hell! I swear one of these days you two are going to burn this manor house down with all your crazy partying,” he said in an annoyed tone.

 He quickly ran to the wall beside the bedroom door and grabbed up the fire extinguisher that was sitting there. Then he went over and shot it at the burning beds. With a blast of white fog, the flames went away, and all that was left was the dying smoke that came off the remains.

 “I don’t even want to know how this happened,” he said, shaking his head.

 He had started to head toward the smoking walk-in closet when there was a soft knock at the door. Charles came to a stop and jerked around, his former panic renewed. Then a sweet-sounding voice came from the other side of the bedroom door.

It was Carmelita, the head of the cooking staff.

 “Mr. Charles. Please come out, Mr. Charles. We need to talk to you,” she said.

 “Don’t open that door!” he screamed at the girls. “They’re going to kill us. I barely made it up here, thanks to that bitch of a sister of yours. She locked me out of the panic room. I had to run through that insanity out there. They’ve all gone insane! They tore apart the dining room chairs and are using them as clubs!” He was hysterical.

 Then, once again, Carmelita’s voice came through the door.

“Girls, please open the door. We won’t hurt you. It’s me, Carmelita, from the kitchen. Remember? I’m the one who makes you those delicious chocolate chip and almond cookies you like. All warm with gooey chocolate. If you open the door, I’ll take you down to the kitchen and make you a big batch of them.”

 Janet looked over at her sister and was surprised to see that Sandra had a contemplative look on her face, like she was pondering.

 Sandra noticed her sister looking at her. “What?” she asked innocently.

 Janet cocked her head and gave Sandra a hard look.

 “What?” Sandra asked defensively. “I’ve been through a lot, and I’m hungry.”

 Janet rolled her eyes at her and shook her head.

 Now the tapping on the door became pounding.

“Girls!” The once-sweet voice of Carmelita now sounded angry and frightening. “Open this door now. Open it, you rotten little whores!”

 “See? I wasn’t fooled,” Janet bragged.

 “Sorry,” Sandra told her companion. “But chocolate chip and almond…!”

 Charles gave Sandra an ‘I told you so’ look.

 “Help me find something to barricade the door with, before they break through that bloody door!” he urged the both of them.

 The girls looked around them at the disaster area that had once been their room. All the furniture was in pieces.

They looked at each other. “We’re completely fucked!” they said in unison.

 Robert, who had been invisible the whole time, was watching the situation playing out before him with interest. Though he was feeling a bit full from the literal smorgasbord of pain and fear from before, he was still enjoying the drama. After all, he had planted the seeds of all this. He could at least have the pleasure of viewing the outcome…

 “…And it was glorious, my apprentice,” Robert said to Christopher Blackthorn, who was sitting in a wooden chair on the other side of the table with the intricately-carved chess board on it. Robert was squatting down on his own chair.

 The room they were in at the Hawthorn Institute Psychiatric Department was set up like Christopher’s room back at Blackthorn Manor. It even had all of his books, since his family had never expected him to come home. Both Christopher and Robert found it very comfortable.

 “That’s it?” Christopher asked. “What about Charles and the girls? Are they all right?”

 “Why do you ask, my apprentice?”

 “Well, I don’t want them to die,” he told Robert. “At least not yet. Not until I’m out of here and in Hell so I can be the one to torture them.”

 “Your words make me proud,” Robert said. “Unfortunately, your sisters are indeed still alive and in reasonable health. But they are a bit less cocky than they once were. Also, they now know what awaits them, which will cause them lots of lovely stress and paranoia for the years to come. Charles and your half-sister are also fine. The house is a wreck, and the only staff left to clean it up is Charles and a ninety-seven-year-old, partially blind and deaf maid named Veda. “Veda was still dusting the shelves while the staff was running around destroying everything. She was even continuing on with her duties while the Riot Squad was taking the rest of the staff off to jail. Since she had nothing to do with the rioting, the police simply left her alone and allowed her to just keep cleaning.”

 Christopher chuckled for the first time since Robert had known him.

 “That’s great!” Christopher said enthusiastically. “But I just got one question for you,” he added.

 “Indeed? Ask.”

 “Well, how did you get rid of the flower smell from your bath? Because you definitely don’t smell like flowers now.”

 Robert gave him an amused smile. “After I left the manor, I went to the sewers and rolled around in there. It was very invigorating, and I felt so much better after.”

 “Okay,” Christopher answered simply.

 “I believe we need to celebrate,” Robert said. “I say we call Gomez and ask him to get us a pot of Earl Grey tea. Also, some of those pastries Doctor Harte was so fond of. I think I might like to try one. I’m feeling adventurous tonight.”

 “Really?” Christopher said, with surprise. “I thought demons never ate such things.”

 “Yes,” Robert said. “Well, they are fashionable, and I am after all the fashionable demon.”

 This started Christopher laughing.

 “Yes, I’m fucking fabulous,” he said in a monotone. Then he broke down and joined his apprentice in laughter.

Afterword

So, there you have it, Robert Diablo is victorious. The Blackthorn twins have learned a major lesson about fame and how transient it can be. They’ve also learned not to make deals with residents of Hell, because that never ends well. We’ve had an annoying dog BBQed twice, not once but twice! We’ve had two incredible makeovers happen in one story, one that will be felt for months to come. Both fucking awesome! And Blackthorn manor has been left in complete chaos and in a complete wreck. Hey, Robert knows how to party hardy! What more can you ask for?

 Yep, this story was a real treat for me. When the spark hit me I was really feeling like crap. I was stuck in a pandemic and San Mateo Health had cancelled my MediCal because my income was twenty dollars over their new maximum they had implemented for 2020 without any real notice. Amusingly, these bastards had just in the middle of January sent me a notice that they were renewing my MediCal for another year. Then during the second week of February I went to use my free ride to the pharmacy and found out my MediCal along with all my benefits had been cancelled.

 I ended up having to quit my second job I had besides my in-home care job because I found out that even if I kept that job I wouldn’t be able to afford medical. So, that started three months of me jumping through hoods to get my Medical reinstated while living in fear of getting Covid-19 and not having medical insurance. It was a nightmare. Five times I went in and gave these assholes paperwork and have them telling me my benefits would be back in two weeks only to have them send me notices with demands for more info.

 During this time I had had to delay the release of my latest book because of lack of funds due to having to quit my job, I lost over three hundred dollars a month because of this bullshit. Thank you San Mateo Medical.

 Anyway, it was while I was stuck in the waiting area of the San Mateo Health office out in the boonies of Redwood City, seven miles from home. I got stuck going there because the closer office in Belmont had been closed down due to the pandemic, how white of them.

 My sister and I, she was my ride, had been stuck there for ninety minutes and I was bored and wanted to find any way to block out the sterile nightmare before my eyes. Thankfully, I’ve developed my imagination and can use that to entertain myself in situations like this.

 I went with the idea of how I thought the Blackthorn family was handling the pandemic. As I played the ideas of what would happen ideas flooded my brain and a story formed.

 I knew Robert would be having a ball and he would be finding ways to make the family’s lives hell. This was when I came up with him trying to start a revolt with the staff and to torture Jessica and Dean Charles with the truth of Jessica’s parentage. It was later in the day that I came up with the whole twins and ViewTube idea.

 I got the idea from watching all the idiocy on YouTube. Competition and just trying to one up others to gain social points was on the rise. Because they were locked away in quarantine, people who once built their identities through shallow socialization with other shallow ego cases were finding themselves cut off from the clubs and other social venues that they inhabited to get their hit of false praise and worship by their sheepish followers. They were finding it hard to keep their social status in this new compact reality. Thus, out of desperation they were doing things they never even thought they would do for their social fix, even at the cost of their sanity or very lives. Thus, came the idea of the twins selling their souls to do a demon makeover and show it on ViewTube.

 I find this both sad and funny. I find these narrow minded idiots annoying and pathetic. After all social status and fame is fleeting. Your soul is forever and to sell it for something as petty as fame or social status is just lunacy. Eternity is a long time to pay for something so fleeting.

 As an artist I would never, and I mean never, sell my soul for fame or fortune. A true artist knows that such things are transitional, they come and go as quickly. For me it is the work that matters not the fame or the money. Having a fan email me and say my books meant something to them means more to me than awards or social status, but that is me.

 So, there you have it, the story around the story. I hope you enjoyed it and I’m hoping you have been keeping it together with all this insanity caused by the pandemic. Like fame and social status this is not a permanent situation. Just remember that and endure. That is what I’ve been doing.

Keep safe and catch you later…