



Hosts and Hellions:  
the complete trilogy

By Mia Michele

**\*\*excerpt\*\***

## Prologue

Lucian watched the light gleaming on his ring. All light in HellQuarters was artificial since underground fortresses couldn't have natural light, but the weaker rays from the fluorescent bulbs still played like sunlight among the engraved symbols. Two reversed 'f' letters with an extra hash on the staff, a 'y' in between and a regular, yet hooked, reversed "f" made up the design. He often pondered the ring's intricate carvings and his mind always returned to the same question. *What does the ring mean?*

The hell if he knew.

Jewelry wasn't uncommon among the demons; in fact, most of them were walking fashion statements with their multiple piercings, wrists lined with bracelets, and heavy, elaborate strings of beads. Lucian wore only the single piece, as though it held a far deeper significance than the layers of metal his cohorts displayed. The ring had fascinated him for centuries. He felt as though its meaning was locked within his subconscious and he just couldn't quite access the memory.

He shook his head and tried to focus on Penny, the copper haired woman pacing around before the small group that had gathered. She was always a tad dramatic- that's why she had been assigned to work with the Heretics after all- but no one tossed the word *war* around HellQuarters just for fun. War among demons was no laughing matter.

"I want no part of it," Penny said, throwing her hands down emphatically. The bracelets that created a coil around her wrist jangled in agreement. "I made them, but if they want to fight the Hellions, then that is a stupid I can't fix." She turned her gaze to Lucian and, for a moment, she seemed to lose her focus. Penny was beautiful- all the demons were- and had been trying to

garner a relationship with him for decades. She blushed lightly before turning away, as though having his undivided attention was too much for her to bear.

Lucian still wasn't interested.

It was rare that the demons didn't flirt with one another. Monogamy didn't exist within their culture and it wasn't uncommon that demonic lovers linked themselves together for a period of time in order to create a union of power that would mirror their physical connection. While Lucian had enjoyed the fleeting company of most of the female Hellions, and even the occasional Heretic over the centuries, he had never once felt an attraction strong enough to find a pseudo-mate.

His attraction to Penny was even less; he saw her as a younger sister. Lucian had been responsible for luring Penny into the Hellions, and she had told him once that he was the real reason she had fallen from Heaven. He wasn't sure if that made him feel better or worse that he ignored her advances. At the least, since he was, in part, liable for her addition to Hell's Legion, he thought it made his siblingsque feelings make sense. And, if he viewed the Hellions as some sort of dysfunctional family, it wouldn't be a far cry from the truth that Penny was everyone's little sister. The lowest Hellion on the Cape, her superiors never let her forget it.

"Penemue," The chief demon said, his voice deep and seductive as he used her full name, "there are always rumblings among the lesser demons. What makes you so sure they would attempt to follow through *this* time?"

The waves of her hair, which she had long and free flowing tonight, were dotted with all sorts of gemstones. As she pitched her head back and forth between the three Hellions around her, the rocks picked up the artificial light just as Lucian's ring had. "Blood," Penny said, softly, lifting her hand and opening it so that the image of two women appeared. In conversation, they

walked out of a bookstore and to a car in the street. “This time, they have blood,” she repeated, as a stained chair, sticking out of a raised hatchback, came into view.

Lucian stepped closer to Penny, coming in line with the leadership at HellQuarters. Galia, by default the site’s commandant as second in command to the Leader of Hell himself, stroked his long beard, his nails resembling talons burying themselves in a thick, salt and pepper goatee. His black eyes were full of rage and, oddly enough, a small amount of amusement as he watched the scene unfurl. When Achi, Galia’s first officer, shook his head, his long earrings clinked against one another like crashing glass. “Fools,” he muttered with disgust. “Absolute fools.”

Penny’s hologram rotated around the two women in the Cape’s small downtown. One was clearly a Heretic with her spiky hair and overdone makeup, the mark on her wrist confirming her status as a young demon fully visible. While the quartet of Hellions watched, she gracefully lifted the large chair whose flowered fabric was covered in blood and dropped it into the other woman’s waiting arms. The arms of the human sagged under the weight, and she stumbled to adjust what couldn’t have been more than forty pounds. The pair entered another store, this one an upholstery business, and dropped the chair. The Heretic spoke to a male demon while the woman walked out of the scope of view. *That’s a shame. She was cute for a mortal*, Lucian thought as he continued to view the scene between the two Heretics. The man lifted the chair and moved towards the back of the store while the girl followed.

Achi chuckled and Lucian knew that his thought hadn’t been private. None of a lesser demon’s thoughts were cloistered when they were in the presence of a higher level demon who wanted to read their minds. Achi didn’t seem to know how to turn off his telepathy or he didn’t *want* to. He took great pleasure in knowing what the demons around him, both Hellion and

Heretic alike, thought. “Want me to give her to you, Lucian?” He chided quietly, leaning his body closer to Lucian’s as though they were sharing some sort of secret joke.

Lucian grunted in return. *Just because you can make every human woman turn herself upside down and inside out for you doesn’t mean that I’m interested.* “I can make my own way.”

Achi shrugged, again the clash of earrings. “Suit yourself.”

“Why not just read them?” Lucian’s words caused Penny to look towards him. “You are their superior after all. Just look into their minds and find out what they are planning.” *I could do that*, he thought, *and we could all go back to entertaining ourselves with the mortals.*

Penny looked down and swallowed. Her unease was felt throughout the War Room. “I can’t,” she said finally, her voice tight with both angst and fear.

“What do you mean, *can’t*?” Galia stepped forward, his tall body dissolving the vision from her hand. He took her harshly by the wrist and pulled her forward, causing her to stagger against him as she reached out with her free hand to brace herself against his chest.

Penny looked up at him, her terracotta colored eyes wide. “I can no longer see into the minds of the older Heretics,” she said. “The newly made? Yes. I can monitor their visions and remove the impediment of their mortal stupidity. But,” she shook her head and shut her eyes tightly, evading his intense gaze, “*someone* has blocked me.”

Galia was quiet and released Penny’s wrist with a push, causing her to stumble in between the male triad. Lucian reached out, stopping her from falling against a table and she gave him a feeble smile. “Blocked you?” He questioned, shaking his head before he looked at Galia. “Who?” Even as he asked, Lucian knew that the only ones capable, outside of the three men gathered, would be the two demons responsible for creating the Heretics.

Achi walked in front of Lucian as he began to pace. “The only possibilities are Mari and Nia.” He opened his hand, the muscles beneath his wrist tattoo flexing, but no image appeared. His momentary shock gave way to anger as he growled, “Where are Mari and Nia?” He tried again, opening and closing his hand but the only visible image was his Hellion wrist ink, the ten stars around the snake angrily twinkling with each movement. The Heretic parent demons, from the Eighth Realm and Ninth Realm, were seemingly off the grid.

Galia’s rage was all the more dangerous the quieter he was and he was silent while his first officer paced and cursed. In contrast to Achi, who reveled in the fear he caused by his words before he struck, Galia had his victims begging for mercy before they even knew what had hit them. Lucian would hate to be Mari and Nia when Galia found them.

Penny seemed to feel about her commandant’s anger just as Lucian did and she tried to put distance between them. “I don’t know where they are,” she said, walking to one of the large tables in the War Room. “I haven’t been able to contact them since yesterday. Their thoughts have always been closed to me, but now all of my telepathic methods- including a distress call- have failed.”

Galia turned to Achi. “Get Bez and Dre here. They need to locate Mari and Nia- *now*. Lucian,” he turned and fixed his coal black eyes on the younger man. “This human. Go find her. Find out what she knows.”

“And, if she knows anything?” Lucian asked, anticipating the answer.

“Kill her.”