

Demons by Alex Woolfson

Amanda felt her mind sliding back into focus as they strode down the dim, windowless hallway. It was a sensation that was becoming familiar. She knew exactly where Spooky's office was located, but the recent protections he'd put in place still took effect. The last thing she remembered clearly was telling him they needed to secure the Heartcrush scepter in his safe. The Necromancer's mansion had blazed hot behind them, its warm breath on her neck, Spooky had agreed, she'd reached into her jacket pocket and felt the key Spooky had given her over a year ago, and... everything after that point was a jumble of images and moments that fled from her whenever she tried to bring any one to mind. She couldn't even remember if they had called the fire department. If they were going to keep working together, she'd have to talk to Spooky about excluding her from the obscurement spell.

Spooky smiled at her as he opened the door. And not his usual kid-like smile. Quiet, confident, *proud*. They'd done good. The Necromancer had crippled three adult teams in the last two years, he'd been responsible for the deaths of dozens of children, and they'd taken him down in a single night. Her strategy had paid off, but it was his ability to improvise that saved their lives when the evil wizard recklessly ripped open the Dark Gate. Spooky's magic was becoming stronger, more controlled. They made a great team. The receptionist, just inside the door, greeted them with a tray of three crystal glasses brimming with champagne.

Amanda glanced away before taking her glass and tried to catch herself before they could see her frown. Spooky was 16 years old, she was still 18, and an adult providing them with alcohol was against the law. But Cassidy Moore believed in ceremony, and Amanda knew Spooky wouldn't have more than a sip. And really, why shouldn't they celebrate?

Cassidy herself only finished a quarter of her glass before she picked up her coat to leave. When she had applied for the job a year ago, Amanda didn't like her. A blonde in her late twenties--white silk blouse, tight wool skirt, push-up bra, and Amanda swore some kind of girdle

underneath--she looked like she belonged in a classic film noir. Like she was deliberately playing the role of the femme fatale, the perfect façade to take advantage of Spooky's boyish attempt to ground himself as an "occult detective." Spooky, then underage, had already slept with adult women, putting both himself and those foolish women at great risk. It was one of the few things Amanda and Spooky had fought about. She had been sure that Cassidy was another of these crazy grown-ups with poor judgement. She had been sure that Spooky would get hurt.

But their relationship had remained strictly platonic. Instead of being some unbalanced seductress, Cassidy made sure Spooky ate three meals a day, had clean clothes, and got outside in the sunshine at least twice a week. And she was good in a fight. When Spooky's office was attacked by the Grim Seven, she took out three dark magic users with her .38 Special. So she liked to look and talk like a character from an old movie--well, so did he sometimes. She had shown she was good for Spooky. And that's why Amanda insisted that she stay and finish her glass with them. After all, without her digging through old deeds at City Hall, they never would have found Brecher Mansion.

"No, no, no." Cassidy waved her off lightly. "This is your night. You kids have fun. And don't forget to lock up this time, Spooks. I don't even want to know what crawled into the wastebasket this morning. But I'll tell you it took three cans of Lysol to kill it."

"Don't worry, Ms. Moore," Amanda said. "I'll make sure everything's locked up before I go."

Cassidy smiled and held Amanda's eyes. "Oh, I know you will. And how many times do I have to ask? It's Cassidy. Ms. Moore was my mother and she's dead." Cassidy's eyes flicked to Spooky and then back. "I'd tell you to be good, sister, but that's never been your problem, has it?"

Cassidy smirked, and Amanda was sure she was playing up her brassy Brooklyn accent for effect. Spooky's receptionist had a bit of matchmaking zeal for her boss and the tough military girl he went on adventures with. And she was savvy enough to know nothing would ever happen without Amanda making the first move.

Amanda tried to shrug off the ribbing by hiding behind another gulp of her champagne. She usually had no patience for romantic nonsense,

but for some reason, Cassidy's nosiness always made her feel bashful. Spooky's glass looked like he had barely touched it. Amanda's was nearly empty.

Cassidy closed the door behind herself with a wink, leaving Amanda and Spooky alone. And silent.

Spooky set down his drink. Their eyes met. His quiet, confident smile returned. And for some reason, Amanda felt... unsettled. Which was ridiculous because she was with Spooky, the lost boy she promised to protect from monsters over two years ago, and someone she trusted more than anyone else. It had to be the adrenaline from the fight. She looked away, sniffed in a quick breath, and finished her champagne. Maybe it would wash away the taste of copper in her mouth.

Spooky grabbed the scepter and unlocked the door behind Cassidy's desk. "I should put this away." He stepped inside his gumshoe-styled office and revealed the safe behind an oil painting on the wall--another classic film touch. He locked the deadly artifact behind protections both earthly and arcane. Then he strode towards a side door next to the filing cabinet. He kept his eyes on the floor. "I actually have some chocolate almond milk in the other room. Would you like some?"

Chocolate milk. There was her lost boy. This would be just like any other night they spent hanging out. She smiled, and felt the small tension in her stomach evaporate. "I'd love some, Spooks."

"Cool. I'm just going to change and I'll get it. Paper cups OK?" He didn't look back as he went through the side door to his small bedroom.

"Of course." Amanda removed her jacket, uncovering her dark tank top, and sat in the middle of the long, black couch against the far wall. It was only after she had settled into its plush leather that she noticed the slashes on her inner forearm.

Damn. She had let a zombie get too close to her. The cuts weren't that bad, but there was blood.

She pressed against the long cuts gingerly with the fingertips of her other hand. Yep, there was real pain there. Spooky noticed her injury the moment he stepped back into the room.

"Jeez! Why didn't you tell me you were hurt?" He set down the cups of flavored almond milk on his desk, and walked quickly over to her.

Instead of his usual heavy layers, he was now in grey sweatpants and a white T-shirt. Barefoot. No cap. Sometimes, after a big fight, he wouldn't feel cold for a couple hours. Wearing short sleeves was a rare treat.

"It's nothing."

"Something dead and animated by demonic magic scratched you with its fingernails. Yeah, let's roll the dice with that." He shot her a look and took her bare arm into his hands. They were warm.

There was no point in protesting. Of course, he was right. But the feeling of his healing magic on her had the same effect it always had. It felt erotic.

First, she felt her skin tingling. Then all pain disappeared. It was replaced with a sweet, pleasurable wave that spread through her upper body. It was like her chest was being dipped in warm honey. She gritted her teeth and tried to replay the darker moments of the night's battle in her mind. But even while picturing rabid zombies, she still couldn't stop herself from grunting softly as another wave of warm pleasure lapped down into her belly and back up under her breasts.

"Sorry, this will just take a minute. I'm almost done." Spooky assumed his healing magic was painful for her, and she hadn't ever told him otherwise. She sometimes wondered if she was the only one who had this reaction, but she'd seen men with light injuries straighten themselves in their seats and cross their legs while Spooky worked on them. He was still 14 the first time he healed her and completely baby-faced. She'd been unprepared for the effect, and the erotic warmth had filled her from head to toe, lasting for hours afterwards. It was very disturbing. She'd refused as many healings as she could from that point on.

But as she looked at him now, his eyes closed, his brow furrowed with concentration, she could see he had changed. His jaw was solid, stronger. His face was still roundish, but longer now, more mature. As he guided his glowing hand up and down above her wound, his bicep flexed, and there was real muscle there. It bulged in an intriguing way. With how they met, it was easy for her to think of Spooky as a little kid. But while she hadn't been looking, he had grown up. He'd become a young man. And to her surprise, one that she thought looked pretty

handsome right now.

"You OK?" He had finished. The wound was completely gone, there wasn't any trace that it had ever been there at all. She extended and retracted her arm a few times, flexing her fingers.

She placed her hand on his shoulder and smiled. Gave him a squeeze. A friendly, grateful gesture. "Good as new, Spooks." But she kept her hand there.

Spooky was pleased. "Cool." They then fell silent. It was only for a few moments, but it felt longer. His head cocked to the side slightly, and his eyes softened with warmth as they held hers. He really liked her. You didn't need to be able to read minds to see that. Then that confident smile rose on his face again. The one that seemed so grown-up.

Why she did what she did next, she couldn't say. She usually planned everything days in advance. Something like this, she might have debated internally for months. Maybe it was the champagne. Maybe it was the residual effect of Spooky's healing magic. Maybe it was that they had just shared a heart-pounding, near-fatal adventure that no one else would ever understand, and that they'd been spectacular while doing it. Three hours ago, she would have said "Never in a million years."

She slid her hand behind Spooky's head and pulled him into a kiss.

"Mm." Half grunt, half whimper. After a moment for surprise, there was no hesitation. He kissed back. His arms glided behind her, moving their upper bodies closer. His head turned a bit to the side, and he took the lead. His lips gently sucked on her upper lip. Then her lower lip. Smooth, gentle, confident. Massaging her. Teasing her. Finally, he brought his mouth against hers, and the kiss became hungry, strong, passionate. She actually felt her stomach jump a little when the pressure increased. Butterflies. It made her kiss him even harder.

Nothing felt rushed. He knew when to explore her mouth further and when to hold back. The kissing felt so connected that she stopped thinking about her lips or his lips, instead she indulged in a new feeling of lightness in her chest, the feeling of how good it felt to just be so close to Spooky right now. She really liked him too, and now, for whatever reason, she could let herself feel it. They took turns exploring each others lips and mouth, still both seated upright, and yet this felt

more intimate than when she'd been in a full naked embrace with lovers she deliberately courted.

She'd kissed girls, men and women before, and all of them had been older than her. She would have expected kissing Spooky to be awkward, fumbling. She usually had to have repeated discussions about her likes and dislikes with her lovers. She *always* had to have repeated discussions about her likes and dislikes with her lovers.

But it was like he knew just what she wanted even before she knew.

She was heating up faster than she ever had with anyone before, and she liked feeling a little out of control. The feeling that this was forbidden but somehow inevitable. She pushed him down, his back against the couch, and slid on top of him. She locked her eyes with his. He looked back up at her, mouth parted with obvious desire, and responded to her boldness with a smile curling the corners of his lips. This was no lost boy.

What he was, was the person she most enjoyed being around. He was funny. And cute. And sweet. And strong. He'd literally been to Hell and back. And they fought monsters together! She'd forced herself on dates with college-aged men with no depth, who could barely understand her, let alone please her. Why had she waited so long before seeing Spooky as an equal, before *letting herself* see him as an equal?

She wasn't going to waste any more time. This was happening now, and she wasn't going to stop it. She moved his chin up and to the side with her fingertips and brushed her lips along his neck. She let her hot breath tease him, and the soft whimper he made let her know he was extra sensitive there. As she moved back for another pass, she inhaled through her nose. His skin gave off a faint vanilla scent. Even when under great stress, Spooky always smelled good. It was another side effect of his time in Hell. They'd spent the whole night fighting monsters, and the dried sweat in his armpit smelled like sandalwood. She now wanted to know what he tasted like.

Sweet. She sucked her way back up the muscle of his neck, and he moaned loudly with gulping breaths in response, his arms shuddering tight around her upper back as he was overwhelmed with sensation. There was a spicy, sweetness to the taste of his skin. Was it like cinnamon? No, it wasn't like any food she knew, but it was delicious.

She could suck on his skin all night. And she could feel that he would love that. He loved having his neck sucked hard. Even harder than this. Like hard enough to leave a mark.

She was beginning to feel what he was feeling. Her own lips on his neck. His desire for her. It mixed with her own desire. Her own pleasure. Something earthy, needy, and driving. And it felt amazing.

Usually, she was careful to guard her mind. She never read people's thoughts without their permission, unless it was life or death. With people with strong wills, like Spooky and Cassidy, it took deliberate effort to get even surface impressions, so it was easy to keep her own head clean and clear. And during sex there was so much distraction going on, even more open minds would be out of reach to her. Which suited Amanda just fine. She really didn't want to know what was in their heads. Especially not in a moment like that.

But for some reason, with Spooky, the normal barriers were falling away. His physical sensations, his emotions, his arousal were adding to hers. And he was clearly aroused. She could feel his stiffness against her hip. Spooky had never been modest, and when they first hung out, he'd occasionally been careless when changing around her, so she knew he wasn't small. But she found herself surprised at how thick he was. Thicker than anyone she'd been with.

She could feel the soft line of fabric of the seam inside his sweats, and that's how she could tell he wasn't wearing any underwear. That choice felt oddly kid-like and adult at the same time. She pressed her hip against him and indulged in the spurt of pleasure that pulsed down the shaft of his penis, like a sharp line from just under the front of its head to its base, feeling the sensation as if it were her own, feeling his grunt as if it came from her own throat. Which it did.

She moved off his neck and looked into his face again. Sandlewood-scented sweat beaded on his forehead. His eyes gazed back, lustful and a bit helpless. And glistening with happiness. He was really into this. But so was she. He moved his hand to gently cup her left breast, and his thumb skillfully brushed against and around her nipple, which caused Amanda to gasp. Spooky gasped at the same time, his back arching a bit. Another brush, and another shared moan, louder than the last time. She could feel his pleasure, but he could now feel hers. The

sweet tickle as her nipple stiffened against his touch. How it made his own chest ache with longing. She felt him enjoying the sensations of her body, which doubled those sensations for her, which in turn multiplied the pleasure for him. It was like a feedback loop, where a small, sensual graze rapidly ballooned into a bright bloom of pleasure for them both. It was one of the most intimate, erotic things she had ever felt.

She couldn't tell whose idea it was that they shift position with Spooky now on top. They both wanted it equally. And so it just happened. One of them thought about removing her shirt and sucking on her other nipple, to be able to share that sensation together, of her hardening, of his hot mouth, but just kissing on the lips was so amazing now. Why would they ever want that to stop? Spooky moved his groin to press against hers (or was that her idea?), and he pressed his hard thickness against her, in just the right spot, and the sudden, intense bloom of pleasure, sparking between her hips, squeezing along his shaft, flooding into their pelvises, knocked the breath out of both of them.

They sensuously kissed each other on the lips, tongues exploring each other mouths, while slowly, ever so slowly, grinding into each other. There was a balance that could be struck where they were both flooded with pleasure, pleasure that throbbed from one of their bodies to the next and back again, an ocean of pleasure they could submerge themselves in, that they could make last forever. But it wasn't just the erotic physical sensations. There was joy. Pure, bubbling joy in both their chests. Together, in this moment, they were completely in sync, completely right for each other. It was beautiful, and wonderful. He had wanted it for years, for her it was a revelation, and they could do this any time they wanted now. There were no more limits, and they could *feel* this way any time they wanted.

It felt like nothing separated them now, and it made them want to share everything all at once. Not just the private urges and thrills of their bodies. But every secret, every hidden part. Walls they had built up around themselves, for themselves, over years and years, were dissolving away in that ocean of joy. Every barrier, every door inside them was opening, *unlocking*.

They had been kissing for nearly an hour but it felt like no time had passed at all. It was better than the movies, better than any romance story ever told. It was so right, so perfect, so blissful, Amanda barely noticed they were no longer alone.

She felt the newcomer before she saw him. Felt him kissing the back of Spooky's neck, in Spooky's favorite spot, the one that always made his arms weak. The spot that sent the shivers down his back. Amanda opened her eyes to see another boy above Spooky. Maybe a little older and a bit taller. Built like a young wrestler. Naked. Smooth red skin. Short black hair. Small white horns. With a sweet, trustworthy face glistening with desire and warmth. And eyes only for Spooky.

Amanda felt his extra weight as this boy climbed onto Spooky's back, and how in response, Spooky's heart filled with recognition, with *fulfillment*. And her own heart followed, sharing Spooky's happiness, wanting this as much as he did. *Wishing* for this as much as he did.

She felt the boy press against the loose fabric of Spooky's sweatpants, easily stretching it between the cheeks of Spooky's behind. At full erection he wasn't as big as Spooky, but with the novel sensation of Spooky being kissed on both sides, of delightful pressure coming from both sides against Spooky's most sensitive parts, combined with the pressure of these two beautiful young men against her own body, it left her gasping. And it was like gasoline on the fire of Spooky's arousal. Delicious tingles sparked up from her vagina as Spooky squeezed himself harder against her, picking up speed, steady pulses of pleasure from Spooky's penis and testicles sparked into him as he felt the stiffness of her brushed cotton pants through his thin sweats, and then there was this new sensation of intimate, needful pressure now pushing inside Spooky's cheeks. The horned boy pressed down in a rhythm that was a perfect counterpoint to Spooky's thrusts against her and her thrusts against Spooky. She heard the horned boy coo softly with delight (or was it Spooky? or her?). And a new feeling entered their chests. It was more than erotic pleasure, more than joy. It was love. A sweet, pure devotion that had been born a long time ago.

Anaado. That was the boy's name. They were with Anaado and what had been perfect before was now even more perfect. Everyone Spooky loved was here. This was right. This was bliss. This was-

"W-wait..."

Spooky's voice sounded ragged. She could feel the flood of contentment he felt in his chest and stomach, how beautiful this was for him to be embraced by this other boy, by her, how he had wanted both for so long, and now had both at the same time. How he never wanted it to stop. But there was a small part of him, the tiniest sliver in the back of his mind, that felt like something could be wrong. Not dangerous, because Anaado would never hurt them. Not ever. Never ever. (Right?) But all of them together... And Anaado with them... Here, now... What was happening was so powerful, so overwhelming... He just needed few seconds to collect his thoughts, just needed a few seconds to breathe...

Spooky pulled back from Amanda and inhaled sharply. And for that moment, they were separate. Her thoughts were hers. His thoughts were his. But that sudden arch of his back also pushed his thick, stiff penis harder against her groin. And it felt tremendous. She felt a pulse of pleasure and desire, throbbing inside her, and he looked so adorable gazing down at her with confusion, so strong and weak at the same time. She didn't want this to stop, there was no reason for it to stop. Without thinking, her heart graspingly reached out to his, instantly making contact, and she felt him flooded with the throb of her pleasure, and then felt a second delight swell within him--his awareness of what she was *now* feeling. Her original pleasure, echoing sweet and high through his shaft, groin, and tummy, even the straining muscles of his chest and arms, returned to her, brighter, richer. But it wasn't her pleasure anymore, it was *their* pleasure, *their* desire, fueled by its own building fire, and it ballooned out with a rush, growing stronger and more powerful than ever before.

Spooky mashed his lips against hers, abandoning all doubt. Wanting the same thing with all his heart that she wanted. For this to never end. For this to go all the way to the end.

The three of them continued their clothed love-making. Spooky and Amanda were thrusting against each other, now with needful purpose. Anaado sucked hard on Spooky's neck, just the way her friend liked it, surrounding him with delicious, intimate sensation. She could feel the orgasm building in Spooky's testicles. Tightening, filling. Strange,

urgent, terrific! And she could feel her own orgasm forming, a huge wave, building, building, building. It would crash down harder than anything she had felt before. This would be more than kissing. This would be more than sex even. This would be the deepest intimacy two people could ever experience. Years of denial of what they could be to each other, the arbitrary rules, the mistakes he'd made, her false protective instinct, it would all end now. Washed clean. They would bring each other to climax and would then be together forever.

But he said...

Spooky let out little cries with every thrust. His eyes squeezed into crescents. His voice becoming more high pitched. The grunts moved from his chest to the top part his throat, becoming quicker, almost squeaks. And she could feel she was close too. Her own, deeper grunts, matched his. He'd had a silly moment of hesitation before, sure, but it didn't matter, not with her need, not with Anaado now here. He was surrounded by his protectors. He couldn't be safer. This was going to happen. Nothing in the world could stop them. Nothing in the world had any right to stop them. They would all explode and release and come together as one and it would be *divine*.

But he'd said "wait"...

Spooky had wanted this to stop. Even if just for a few seconds. Yet he didn't stop, not really. And she realized now, with what was happening, he couldn't.

She sure as hell didn't want this to end. Being able to feel sex from both sides, pure *love* from both sides, from everywhere all at once, in a beautiful, ever-growing feedback loop. And then to share a climax together! With someone she liked so much. Who she trusted so much. Who felt the same or more for her. Maybe nobody had ever felt such delight, would *ever* feel such delight as they would feel. This is what she wanted. And she could feel he wanted it too. More than anything in the world.

But it meant nothing if she ignored his feelings. If she put her own needs ahead of his. She had the power here. And her Spooky, her lost boy needed her. And that trumped everything.

She grabbed Spooky's shoulders and pushed him back with all her strength, sure that the weight of two strong boys on top of her would

require it. But Anaado wasn't there now, and Spooky roughly tumbled back to the far end of the couch.

Whatever psychic connection they had evaporated immediately. The feedback loop collapsed, and it left her feeling achingly empty and alone.

They now looked at each other, panting hard. Shock on both their faces. Spooky was curled on his back, his knees splayed open, and he did nothing to cover himself. She knew they hadn't climaxed, but she could see a large, irregular, dark patch covering the tent on the front of his sweats. She could feel her own moistness. They'd been close. Seconds away. And for some reason, it felt important that they hadn't finished.

Amanda brushed her hair behind her ear and tried to pull herself back together. "I'm- I'm sorry, Spooky. I didn't mean to push you so hard."

Spooky's face was flushed, his own hair was drenched in sweat. Rivulets streaked from his temples to his cheeks. "I know. You didn't want to. But you did it- you did it for me."

"I.. I really was liking what was going on... So please don't think that I felt like you... like you were..."

"I know. I know. I felt the same way. But you did the right thing."

Her thoughts were clearing. Then instinctively, the muscles in her arms and upper back tightened. Where was her head? They hadn't been alone!

She glanced to the side and kept her voice low and even. "Spooky... are we in danger?"

"I... I don't think so." Spooky's eyes glowed softly white for a moment. "The protections in the office. They aren't broken. I can tell that now. We're safe."

She now openly scanned the room. The beautiful, white-horned boy was nowhere in sight.

Spooky followed her eyes. "You could see him too?" His voice sounded small.

"Yeah. It was something with our powers. My ability mixed with your magic. It was like..."

"It was like we were one person..."

"Yeah. I've never... Nothing like that has ever happened to me. I swear, if I had known..." She could feel her heart rate falling back to normal. Her usual, cautious mind returning. "He felt completely real to me. I was *sure* he was here. But he wasn't, was he?"

Sadness flooded Spooky's eyes before he could look down and away. "No. He couldn't be."

She moved next to him and touched her fingertips against his shoulder. She did it gently, like his arm might break.

"Spooky... who was he?"

He looked up at her. He looked directly into her eyes, his own eyes haunted. But he didn't answer. He just looked back down at his bare feet. And in that moment, he was no longer the strong hero she fought monsters with just hours ago. Or the sweet, confident young man she had been kissing just moments before. He was that boy she met in the police station two and a half years ago. Completely alone. Not able to speak.

His thoughts and feelings were now closed to her. But she knew he wouldn't answer. At least not tonight. That he couldn't. If they were going to be together, romantically together, she'd want to know who that was and who he was to Spooky. She'd *have* to know. But for the moment, it felt right to sit quietly. Each wrapped in thoughts and feelings that were completely their own.

They sat there in silence together for a long time. And then Spooky made a joke. She wouldn't be able to remember later what it'd been, but she'd laughed even though it wasn't all that funny. They both wanted things to be back to normal. Whatever else Spooky was, she knew he was her best friend. Her only real true friend, the only one who really understood her. The one who shared her need to fix the world, and who did it with a grin, even when faced with tremendous pain.

Nothing was worth risking that friendship. She would keep things strictly platonic. Like Spooky and Cassidy. To keep him safe from the demons of his past. To keep their friendship safe from anything that might summon those demons.

They'd now share some chocolate milk. They'd tell their own side of the night's victory against the Necromancer. And go over all of it once more and once more again, the tale building and the compliments and

jokes increasing. She would then yawn, and Spooky would change back into his layers of long underwear, his wool socks, his jeans, his coat, his cap. All bundled up nice and tight. And when she was sure he really was going to go to bed, she'd leave the office and carefully lock the door behind her with the key he'd given her. The one that could always lead her back here for further adventures and late night heart-to-hearts, even if she couldn't tell how she made her way. Those long hang-out sessions where they would talk about anything and everything important except that one year he'd been away. Which was okay, because that was his story to tell. When he was ready.

On that night, she vowed to herself never to kiss Spooky Jones again. A choice she made to keep both of them safe.

But it was a promise she would break. And more than once.